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### Creating Mosaics in IDSS

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# Creating Mosaics in IDSS



When Tina Washington returned to school, she never dreamed that she could one day receive a degree by using skills and experiences she has honed in her previous positions in health care and as an emergency responder.

But that's exactly what she's doing in the [Interdisciplinary Studies](#) (IDSS) program at [Governors State University](#) (GSU), a major that focuses on solving complex, real-world problems beginning with the ability to work collaboratively and think across multiple disciplines. Washington thinks of her degree as cooking.

“It’s like making soup, I want to have all the ingredients first before I decide what I’m going to make. I need to be in the right place,” she said.

For Washington, the right place is Governors State.

Transferring through Governors State’s signature [Dual Degree Program](#) in 2015, Washington visited campus once and was hooked. Governors State felt like home, but when it came to the degree she would be pursuing, Washington was lost.

With careers in law enforcement, emergency care, and firefighting already under her belt, she was looking for a degree that would help her to strengthen the skills she needed every day. That’s when she learned about Interdisciplinary Studies.

IDSS facilitates the development of skills in multimodal thinking, expanding beyond discipline-specific methodologies while developing knowledge of subject matter relevant to specific fields and problems. This framework to Dr. Crystal Harris, program coordinator for IDSS, creates problem solvers who play off their strengths.

To Washington, this was a degree that would support her myriad of interests.

“I don’t have to work towards a degree in something I already do in hopes that it will cover the subjects that I need. IDSS allows me to branch out and create a tree that you can add all these great components to and watch bloom.”

As students work through courses like Career Planning and Decision Making, a class designed to compare students’ strengths and experiences with career goals, they have a solid foundation to achieve in the real world.

Other courses, like Academic Writing Strategies, strengthen their skills not only in



writing but in information literacy.

These courses help students like Washington on a personal level, as well.

“The classes I’ve taken to put together my degree benefit me, and what I need specifically. I take my life experiences, supplement them with classes, and create a tool for myself to use in my career,” she said.

For the future, Washington wants to assist other police officers—she’s a full-time member of the Metra Police Department—in building relationships with their communities. When contemplating how to achieve this, she thinks back to the courses as parts of obtaining that goal.

The ideas she has for the future, to cultivate relationships and build communities, she sees reflected on campus. She takes inspiration from the community of Governors State and its work as a public square.

Walking through campus she admires the art dotted walls throughout the halls and in the prairies—art done by GSU students for GSU.

“These artists are on campus. I can see myself in the art and in the other students on campus. It’s a mirror of what you can be, of your potential.”