Degree Audit Program
Team Gorgonzola (Nick Zola, Mel Chua, Rob Quimby)

Team Members
Nick Zola – I am passionate about good user interaction. I believe I am a creative thinker, and also a good organizer, planner, and scheduler. I am friendly with people and happy to interview. I am an okay programmer, but lack experience and language knowledge.

Mel Chua – A former wannabe graphic design major, Mel remains on good terms with visual layout and art. She loves algorithms, discrete, and anything else related to math. Thanks to Frankly Speaking, she also knows how not to manage a large multiple-user web project. She loves interviews and knows next to nothing about web programming.

Rob Quimby – As far as personal strengths and weaknesses go, I am a reasonably competent programmer; and although I have relatively little experience with web design, I’d be thrilled to get some more. I’d like to think I have decent design skills, although I’ll freely admit I’m not the most artistic person ever.

Problem Statement
As the Olin College curriculum has developed into an accreditable program, completing a degree has also become a more complicated endeavor. There are credit requirements and subject requirements which must be balanced to graduate. To that end, various degree audit systems have been implemented to aid in determining what a student has fulfilled and what is left to fulfill. Yet with a complicated system has come a complicated interface, difficult to read and manipulate, uncustomizable, and lacking desirable features. We believe we can ameliorate the Olin Degree Audit system, incorporating end-user feedback into a final interface that is both pleasant to use and information-complete.

User Concerns
We envision three scales at which users will engage the degree audit system. All three are concerned with large amounts of widely varying (individually customizable) data at a few specific points in the year.

First are students attempting to plan their schedules. They want to know what they have left to complete for graduation. They want a quick and easy way to look at their past history and compare future options. Olin students want their course selections to be meaningful to them; although there are common requirements, there is no typical Olin student schedule. At the same time, they want advisors informed but don’t have time for a lengthy approval process.
Second are faculty advisors who need to make sure they’ve been notified of pertinent information for multiple advisees (changes of major, imminent academic danger) and not overloaded with quibbles (“I’m taking Spanish 5 instead of Spanish 4.”) They clear students for registration and graduation. During consultations with individual students, advisors want to see their entire academic history and understand the student’s future plans.

The above two groups would use the system both individually for planning and rapid schedule prototyping and as a facilitator of discussion during in-person advising meetings.

Finally, data from all students is needed by the committee who plans and schedules courses. They need an overview of what students want to do so they can find what they ought to be offering and notification of trouble spots to pay attention to, along with historical tracking of trends.

**User Interactions**

Since our primary goal is usability for the Olin campus, we'll interview and observe students from all four years, their advising professors, and appropriate administrative staff such as the Registrar's Office, Student Life, the Dean of Faculty and ARB. If a working prototype is complete by registration time, we'd like to release a beta (unofficial, unlinked to databases) version to campus, but this is awfully ambitious.

**Current Design Flaws and Possible Fixes**

The ability to compare majors would be nice, primarily for students who are undecided about their major. It would also help if the system told students what they still needed, and even better if it could match needs in a student’s history with courses offered in the future. As it stands, the system ([https://sis.olin.edu](https://sis.olin.edu) -> Degree Audit) tells you what requirements the courses you've taken fulfill, but makes no mention of specific requirements (such as design depth) that you have yet to complete. Rethinking the concept model to begin with the requirements as the primary concern rather than the courses taken would seem ideal. While there is a portion of the current display that does this, it doesn’t do a very good job.

There is some garbage information (blank course numbers, repeated information) that could be removed to allow all of these additional features to readily fit on the screen. Also, some degree of customizability in terms of what information is displayed would be nice, allowing students to focus on just one section of their curriculum, be that just the AHS courses, or only the unfulfilled requirements. We would like to add some additional graphical elements, including the use of color, to make the important features (such as unfulfilled requirements) more obvious.