The individualized major I have chosen to create is entitled “Health, Culture and Society,” an integrative major drawing mainly from the disciplines of allied health, anthropology, and human development and family studies. Through the combination of these disciplines, I will focus on examining health from a sociocultural and developmental point of view, supplemented by patient-caregiver interaction processes. I wish to create a plan of study that explores the humanistic side of health care, and facilitates a more thorough understanding of the different cultural and societal realms that influence it.

I believe that the courses I have chosen from the allied health, anthropology, and human development and family studies departments complement each other in a way that will produce an optimal understanding of health from this diverse point of view. The allied health course “Health and Wellness for Life” examines health from a holistic perspective, incorporating a myriad of both physical and mental health topics and models for optimal wellness. This is complemented by “Health Psychology,” which examines the interface between psychology and health. Additionally, courses such as “Counseling and Teaching for the Health Professional” and “Patient and the Healer” will provide me with valuable communication and counseling skills in order to best prepare for an interactive career in healthcare. The course “Aging: Implications for Health Professionals” has a distinct overlap with the human development and family studies courses I have chosen in the sense that it focuses on healthcare from a developmental point of view, whereas “Infancy through Adolescence” concentrates on the earlier developmental stages of human life. The course “Family Interaction Processes” examines development and
interaction processes from within the family of origin, which has distinct overlaps with “Sociology of Health,” which examines healthcare across larger societal contexts. Finally, the anthropology courses “Illness and Curing” and “Medical Anthropology” tie in healthcare and healing from a cultural perspective.

I believe that my academic focus successfully reflects both my personal interests and my future career goals. For as long as I can remember, I have thoroughly enjoyed working with people of all ages and learning about the different cultures of the world. Additionally, I worked as a volunteer at Yale New Haven Hospital this past summer, which I feel cemented my passion for caring for and easing the suffering of others. I believe that pulling courses from a variety of disciplines is the best way to incorporate all of my interests and passions and study them more intensively.

I believe that my individualized major will fit in seamlessly with my other personal, academic and ultimate career goals because of the variety of perspectives I am taking. My foremost goal is to pursue a career in healthcare as a nurse, with a focus on pediatrics and health abroad. The sociocultural and developmental focus of my major supports these goals nicely because a broadened understanding of humans and their backgrounds is necessary to any cultural experience. Additionally, the patient-caregiver interaction courses within my major will prepare me with the necessary interpersonal skills to become a successful and compassionate healthcare professional. My major is designed to supplement and enhance the required science courses needed for a career in healthcare, which I believe will make me a uniquely well-rounded applicant.
In the Spring Semester of 2013, I am hoping to study abroad in Copenhagen with the DIS Program, which will provide me with a valuable international and cultural experience. My carefully chosen coursework abroad will be counted towards my major, and I will also receive Honors credit, which will enhance my Honors thesis project. I plan on doing research for and completing my thesis project within my major—most likely studying a social phenomenon and how it affects healthcare or the patient-caregiver relationship—which will certainly add a new level of depth and understanding to my chosen focus. Additionally, I hope to find a summer internship within the next year or two in the healthcare field, which will give me valuable professional experience.

In conclusion, because I plan to pursue a career in healthcare and the human-service field, the thorough knowledge of cultural, developmental and social contexts that my major provides will facilitate a better understanding of my future patients and their personal backgrounds. I feel that the variety of perspectives my major offers, supplemented by coursework in the hard sciences, will put me on a non-traditional route to this career goal and give me a very well-rounded education that is not limited to one particular perspective. Additionally, the study abroad experience and cultural component of my major will prepare me for the professional work I wish to do abroad.