

## Minutes of the Liberal Studies Committee (LSC)

April 21, 2016

UC - Cardinal

Members Present: Baldwin Sanders, Brent Kinser (Chair), David Onder, Elizabeth McRae, Erin McNelis, Gayle Wells, Jim Deconinck, Jen Schiff, Leigh Angel, Paromita Biswas, Randa Hodges, and Sean June

Members Absent: Carol Burton, Damon Sink, Ethan Schilling, Jeanne Dulworth, and Robert Crow

Recorder: Deidre Hopkins

1. Minutes were completed but not sent to the committee for review. Brent will send to the committee and will vote to approve/disapprove at next week's meeting.
2. Curriculum Update
  - All consults have come through and all recommendations made by the committee have been made. Everything that was on the Liberal Studies Committee docket has been moved forward to Faculty Senate. It should be on the Faculty Senate overflow agenda.
3. Discussion of the P3 Assessment Report - the P3 Assessment Report was provided to committee members and members were provided the opportunity to review the document.
  - Summary from Jen Schiff: the biggest problem with the assessment was that at least one faculty member (possibly more) did not choose a learning outcome for their artifacts. This meant that there were 44 possible outcomes for the artifacts. The team was unsure how to proceed and spoke with David Onder who indicated that it was up to the team to make a decision as to what they wanted to do. The team decided exclude from data any learning outcomes for artifacts that they felt were irrelevant. If half of the team felt that an artifact was irrelevant for a certain learning outcome the team excluded that outcome. Once this was done, there were 20 outcomes that applied to P3 (see page 4 of the assessment report for the list). The team found that 15 of the outcomes showed that at least 50% of the artifacts scored either at "achieving" or "exemplary".  
*LSC Response to the issue of faculty not selecting an outcome for the artifact: we will switch the process of the Assessment Survey and that faculty will now submit the artifact to the folder for a specific outcome.*

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Question #1(a): Are we delivering what we say we do in terms of the Liberal Studies Document?

- **Delete "Demonstrate an excitement for and love of learning" from the Liberal Studies outcomes.** The team was unsure how to measure an excitement for and a love of learning.  
*Discussion:* AAC&U has identified the Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning and created a rubric. They have identified this as a core aspect that university students should exhibit. Brent is concerned if we remove it we may have to add it back later. The AAC&U rubric discusses skills and dispositions that indicate a commitment to this type of learning and can be assessed. Our efforts to introduce HIPs into the FAD and mapping those experiences, would it be an alternative to revisit this outcome and revise it so that it's not completely removed.

*The committee supports the idea that the LS assessment may not be the appropriate location for determining how well students achieve this outcome, and that at the very least the outcome should be revised to address some assessable skill or disposition. As opposed to simply eliminating the outcome, however, the LSC proposes to invite the director of assessment to consider a more appropriate place and way of determining how well WCU students pursue activities that indicate the dispositions and skills relevant to lifelong learning. This new approach might include focus groups for seniors to determine future plans and goals. It would then be useful to conduct focus groups with graduates who have been graduated at least 5 years.*

***Action item:** Director of Assessment to deliver to LSC possible options for migrating and assessing the outcome, fall 2016.*

- **Encourage departments to be mindful as they create and revise liberal studies classes to consider opportunities for community engagement and applied assignments.** While not every class can or should contain an engaged element, each department that offers liberal studies classes should search out appropriate places for connection to the 2020 Vision 1.2.4.

*The LSC concurs with this recommendation and feels the best avenue for administering is through the Faculty Activities Database experiment in capturing High Impact Educational practices in Liberal Studies courses.*

***Action item:** In fall 2016 the LSC will work with the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies to promote the inputting their HIPs into the FAD, and in particular to educate the faculty on the flexibility afforded to them by the FAD, in which they are allowed to capture activities that may be considered HIPs even though they do not precisely conform to the standard list established by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU)*

- **Delete the following language from the Liberal Studies Document, as the ideas are already included within the broader liberal studies objectives:**

*“In addition, each Perspectives course will be expected to include emphasis on one or more of the following: critical analysis of arguments, oral communication, service learning, moral reflection, and cultural diversity.”*

*The LSC concurs with this recommendation.*

***Action item:** the deletion to the Liberal Studies Document will be proposed by the chair of LSC to the Faculty Senate in fall 2016.*

- **Reassess the need or feasibility to monitor writing as stated in the following section of the Liberal Studies Document:**

*Every Liberal Studies Course will emphasize writing, and its companion proficiency, information use. The Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies will monitor Perspective courses to see that they provide writing experiences that form a bridge between the first college writing courses and the needs and expectations of the major programs.*

*The LSC concurs with this recommendation and has consulted with the Associate Provost on the need and feasibility. WCU’s program assessment is conducted on the basis of five institutional level learning outcomes, one of which focuses on “effective communication (written and oral)” and another, which is the “integration of information from a variety of sources.” Student achievement of these outcomes are tracked as part of the annual assessment of student learning in every program.*

**Action item:** Associate Provost of Undergraduate Studies and the director of assessment will, beginning in fall 2016, provide assessment teams with access to the data collected in the annual assessment of programs, so they can integrate their perception of student learning in the context of the Liberal Studies outcomes with the data gathered for university-level assessment. Further, beginning in fall 2016, the presence of writing and information use in courses will be made a point of emphasis in the curricular process for Liberal Studies.

- **Reassess the necessity of including Initiative 1.2.4 in the Assessment Team charge, as each assessment team is asked to evaluate only one component of the overall Liberal Studies Program.** *The LSC concurs that the overall assessment has been impossible because of the confined quality of each assessment team. In the context of the previous Action item, providing teams with the data from program assessment that is geared towards the institutional outcomes will be useful in allowing assessment teams to provide their perspective on how well students are learning in the Liberal Studies Program in relation to their demonstration of achievement at the program/university level.*  
**Action item:** Revisit the issue, spring 2017, after the next round of assessment teams have access to the university-level assessment discussed in the previous action item.

**Question #1 (b): Are we delivering what we say we do in terms of the P3 Classes and Syllabi?**

- **Standardized language included in every P3 syllabi should read as follows:**  
This course satisfies the P3 Perspective requirement of the Liberal Studies Program. In it, you will be introduced to a distinct body of knowledge and tools of historical inquiry that shape and define it. In this course emphasis will be placed upon outcomes 1, 3, 4, and 6a (for example).  
*The LSC concurs with this recommendation.*  
**Action item:** Once the P3 report and recommendations are approved and online, spring 2016, the chair of LSC will write to the chairs of History and Philosophy and Religion to provide them with the standardized language to be included in the syllabus. Instructors of P3 courses in fall 2016 will be required to submit their syllabi on the H-drive. The director of assessment will administer this process, with the LSC and the Associate Provost for Undergraduate studies responsible for checking the syllabuses. The email to the chairs will be generalized and placed online in the Liberal Studies assessment area, spring 2016, as a way to instruct faculty in all categories about the requirement of placing this information in their syllabuses.
- **Map outcomes of course onto specific assignments in the syllabus.** This mapping would allow each assignment to be connected to the P3 objectives taught and evaluated.  
*The LSC concurs with this recommendation.*  
**Action item:** The chair of LSC will include information in his email to the chairs of History and Philosophy and Religion, and will also include it in the generalized instructional document to be published online. Completed, Spring 2016.

**Question #2: Are students learning what we want them to, as reflected in the assessment process?**

- **Establish a student survey or debriefing to provide focused information on student perceived learning, in addition to the extant artifact assessment process.**  
*The LSC concurs with this recommendation.*

*Action item: Once leadership is stabilized in the Coulter Faculty Commons, fall 2016, the LSC will work with the new director to implement focus group interviews of students.*

- **Instructors must identify the specific liberal studies objectives when completing the assessment survey rather than submit the entire list of possible objectives.** A list of 44 or more objectives to use to assess a single assignment proved untenable for the assessment team.

*The LSC concurs with this recommendation.*

*Action item: The director of assessment has altered the process for collecting student artifacts from faculty, who now place this work into a folder that corresponds with one outcome, thus eliminating the problem recognized by the P3 assessment team. Completed, spring 2016.*

- **Instructors should submit a copy of the assignment directions along with each set of artifacts.**

Specific parameters of the assignments would facilitate more accurate Team scoring.

*The LSC concurs with this recommendation. The issue arises from the process by which the assessment software tool functions. Because artifacts are randomized and all personal information of the student and instructor are dissociated from the artifact, it is difficult to attach the assignment to the resultant artifact. The most logical solution may be for the instructors to paste the assignment prompt into the document containing the student work.*

*Action item: The director of assessment will determine the best process for solving this problem and implement in the gathering of student work in the C5, P4, P5, and P6 categories (Fall 2016).*

- **Instructors should submit course-specific detailed syllabi rather than a general syllabus shared among several instructors.** Sufficient detail for analysis was not available on the more generic submissions.

*The LSC concurs with this recommendation.*

*Action item: The director of assessment will incorporate into assessment process, fall 2016.*

**Question #3: What can we do to strengthen the correlation between what we deliver and how well students learn?**

- **The New Faculty Orientation Program should include a brief overview of WCU's Liberal Studies Program and, as part of that emphasis, provide new faculty with the specific Liberal Studies requirements for syllabi.** Turnover within programs makes it critical that an understanding of Liberal Studies and the role of the syllabi in connecting delivery and learning be explored.

*The LSC concurs with this recommendation.*

*Action item: The Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies will work with the Coulter Faculty Commons to incorporate this instruction into the new faculty orientation, summer 2016.*

- **To improve the relationship between what we deliver and how well students learn, the University should establish an *Action Plan* for progressive implementation of the recommendations contained within this report. Such a plan should specify accountability benchmarks, along with descriptions of the personnel responsible for implementation.**

*The LSC concurs with this recommendation.*

*Action item: The LSC will revisit this document, which serves as the action plan, in early spring 2017 to assess the status of the recommendation put forward in this document.*

- Changes to the Report –
  - Page 15 mentions the “Quality Enhancement Plan” it should be noted that this is referencing the 2007 Quality Enhancement Plan (aka Intentional Learning Plan).
  - Page 19 missing a word: Are students learning what we want them to, as reflected in the assessment process?

Motion was made by Jim Deconinck to accept the P3 Assessment Report. The motion was seconded by Gayle Wells. No further discussion. All was in favor and the motion was carried.

4. Next meeting – April 28, 2016 – C3 and C4 Assessment Reports will be discussed.

Time of meeting adjournment: 4:24pm