

Minutes of the Liberal Studies Committee (LSC)

September 6, 2016

UC - Cardinal

Members Present: Alicia Cameron, Baldwin Sanders, Carol Burton, Elizabeth McRae, Erin McNelis, Ethan Schilling, Gayle Wells, Hugh Jack, Jim Deconinck, Jen Schiff (Chair), Jessica Zellers, Julie Johnson-Busbin, and Leigh Angel

Members Absent: Damon Sink, Kae Livsey, Katherine Mathews, and Steve Wallace

Recorder: Deidre Hopkins

- Introductions around the room.
- Liberal Studies Outcomes in Syllabuses Document
 - Brent Kinser wrote this at the end of the Spring 2016 semester.
 - This document came out of the P3 Assessment Report. The purpose of this document is to give instructors the Liberal Studies (LS) language and Outcomes that are necessary for that particular course.
 - This document will be sent to Department Heads as guidance for creating a syllabus for anyone who is teaching a LS course.
 - Discussion:
 - Carol Burton confirmed that SACSCOC does not stipulate how much or little needs to be present on a syllabus, it is the decision of the committee.
 - It was decided that all of the LS outcomes do not need to be listed in the syllabus. The LS faculty will choose which of the 7 LS outcomes that would be assessed by the course.
 - The committee agreed that there should be:
 1. a general description of LS;
 2. then the LS Outcomes that the course meets;
 3. a link to the larger LS outcomes
 - Jen will make these changes and bring the document before the committee next week.
- Update on Assessment Teams and call for LSC volunteers to help with assessment
 - For this semester (Fall 2016) we need teams for:
 - C2 - Mathematics
 1. Damon Sink (LSC)
 - P1 - Social Sciences
 1. Ethan Schilling (LSC)
 - ULP - Upper Level Perspectives
 1. Gayle Wells (LSC)
 - C3 - Oral Communication (*a report was submitted in the spring 2016 but there weren't enough artifacts so they are going to redo the assessment.*)
 1. Need a LSC member since Sean June is no longer at the university.

2. The other team members will remain the same as they were in the spring.
- FYS (First Year Seminar)
 1. Started in the Spring 2016 but we do not have an update as to where they are right now. Jeanne Dulworth was the LSC member but she is no longer on the committee. Carol Burton is going to reach out and see where the Team left off.
 - As far as the remainder of the Assessment Team members, Jen has reached out to others across campus and will hopefully have the teams finalized shortly. Still need a LSC volunteer for C3.
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- Update from Carol Burton re: SACSCOC Compliance Standards
 - 2.7.3 – Core Requirements on General Education
 - In order for an institution to be reaffirmed, it must meet all core requirements
 - SACSCOC tweaked the language a few years ago: A couple of guiding principles that they had become rules:
 1. Public Speaking could not be considered part of the Gen Ed program.
 2. Writing Courses could not be considered part of the Gen Ed program.
 - a. We had to give further explanation that C3 was not strictly a public speaking course and that C1 wasn't strictly a writing course.
 - i. C3 Foundations of Communication is more than a public speaking course.
 - ii. C1 Writing, Rhetoric, and Critical Studies is more than a writing course.
 - If for some reason we are found not to be in compliance the SACSCOC review team may want to meet with this committee.
 - 3.5.3 – Educational Programs: Undergraduate: Undergraduate Program Requirements
 - *The institution publishes requirement for its undergraduate programs, including its general education components. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs.*
 1. This is a comprehensive standard. We want to meet it but it will not jeopardize our accreditation if we do not meet it.
 - 3.5.1 – Educational Programs: Undergraduate: General Education Competencies
 - *The institution identifies college-level general education competencies and the extent to which students have attained them.*
 1. We did not meet this comprehensive standard last time.
 - a. The reason was we could not identify the extent to which our students met our competencies.
 - b. We had established competencies but we had not assessed the outcomes or had a plan to assess the outcomes. In a scramble, prior to the SACSCOC reviewers visit in 2007, the committee had only assessed a couple of areas. We were on the right path but had not done enough prior to the reviewers visit in order to pass the standard.
 - i. When you do not successfully pass all standards – the committee will render a decision of Non-Compliance. The institution had a couple months to submit a Focus Report. The focus report gives additional information explaining as to why we were compliant. The review

- team still found that we were not compliant and we then had a Monitoring Report. We had a year to get into Compliance and show good faith that we have been assessing, show information that our students have attained our learning outcomes. After all of this, we were then found to be in Compliance and they removed that stipulation.
2. We have been assessing our general education This is what we have been doing so we should meet this comprehensive standard this time.
- Discussion of the LSC Response and Action Plan to the C4 Assessment Team Recommendations
 - **Question 1(a) Are we delivering what we say we do?**

Average class sizes of 38-40 do not reflect the goals of the Liberal Studies program overall.
The LSC concurs.
 - **Question 2(a) Are students learning what we want them to?**

Ensure that students have completed the C4 category prior to the start of their junior year. In this way, students can maintain habits introduced in C4 while taking advantage of the campus resources related to wellness for their remaining two years.

The LSC concurs with this recommendation.

Action item: *The Liberal Studies Document should be revised to include language to encourage students to take this course before junior year, as has been done for C1. LSC will coordinate with advising to make sure that incoming students are made aware of the importance of taking these courses early in their undergraduate course of study.*

DISCUSSION: *In addition to the revision to the LS Document – a line should be added to the Liberal Studies Check Sheet that it is encouraged for students to take this course before junior year.*

Provide additional support for Health and Wellness C4 instructors and departments that teach in C4. In particular, additional faculty are needed to reduce class size.

The LSC concurs with this recommendation and will forward it to the program administrators so that they are aware of the assessment team's recommendation and the LSC's support of it.

DISCUSSION: *Jen will make sure that this recommendation is forwarded to the program administrators.*

The LSC concurs with the suggestion.

Consider opportunities and provide resources to create learning communities, linked classes, or even team-taught classes that would link C4 Liberal Studies goals with the goals of other Liberal Studies categories such as C5 (a link between an Environmental Science course for example and a HEAL 123 course that emphasizes hiking, or an ENG 101 or 202 course that uses nature writing or environmental writing or fiction with a C4 course).

The LSC concurs and will forward this recommendation to the relevant parties in C4 and in Learning Community development to facilitate this process.

Action item: *Provide specific expertise from Service Learning that links Liberal Studies courses in other categories with C4 courses to have students from multiple academic perspectives participate in activities that demonstrate the deep connections between Liberal Studies courses. For example, students taking a ULP in the History of American Education and C4 might participate in a service learning project that involves a 5K fundraiser for a local school.*

DISCUSSION: *Change the LSC Response to reflect an emphasis other HIPs.*

- **Question 1(b) Are we delivering what we say we do?**

The assessment teams should list in the report faculty and staff consulted from the academic areas or programs in the writing of the assessment report. This will reflect what the assessment teams are already doing without adding additional work to faculty and assessment team members.

The LSC concurs with this recommendation and will revise the charge accordingly. It will be the responsibility of the chair of LSC in consultation with the director of assessment and the Associate Provost for undergraduate studies to make sure that assessment teams have access to persons responsible or participating in each category.

At least once during the assessment process, have a member of the assessment team meet with a department head or program coordinator to get some summary data about Liberal Studies in C4 and to answer any questions that the assessment team might have raised.

The LSC concurs with this recommendation and will revise the team charge accordingly.

- **Question 2(b) Are students learning what we want them to?**

Liberal Studies Assessment Rubrics used in this assessment (see Appendix A) were developed in the 2014-2015 academic year and were very valuable in assessing the level of achievement of the Liberal Studies Outcomes our students have attained by the time they finish C4 requirement. Through the process of scoring student artifacts, some samples were more challenging to assess, and the Assessment Team has recommendations to strengthen this process.

- If the assignment involves a class presentation, the artifacts should include student notes for presentation or videos of the student presentation and not just, for example, the Powerpoint slides and bibliography.

The LSC concurs with this recommendation and will continue to work with the director of assessment to solve the problem of providing assessment teams with sufficient materials, in particular assignment prompts, for determining how well students are achieving outcomes.

- The assessment team liked the various assignments, but the unevenness of the distribution of artifacts that looked at Learning Outcome 5 (62) versus Learning Outcome 1 (6), means that our assessment of Learning Outcome 1 is not as meaningful as Outcome 5. We recommend that if a Learning Outcome selected for an assignment is not selected for a substantial portion of the artifacts that that Learning Outcome and those artifacts be exempt from the Assessment process.

The LSC concurs with this recommendation and further recommends that instructors in C4 focus their efforts on the delivery and assessment of outcome #5.

Action item: *LSC will consult with the program coordinators of C4 to explore this commitment to outcome #5.*

- The rubric for Learning Outcome #5 needs modification. The rubric could be changed to differentiate between exemplary and achieving to reflect critical thinking, to more accurately reflect the realities of a semester course. What is the difference between refined and just a basic ability? Documentation of research or quality of student reflection could supplant the language of long-term commitment to behavior change. Currently, exemplary goes beyond the modes of the assignment as it suggests a longer term outcome than a semester course could assess. Perhaps the rubric could be revised to have Exemplary demonstrate a higher order of critical thinking and use of supporting evidence and research to undergird student's self-reflection or findings.

The LSC concurs with this recommendation and will work with members of the team and the relevant program coordinators to revise the rubrics accordingly.

- How can we improve Liberal Studies Assessment Process, in general?**

The recommendations made in this section are based on in-depth assessment committee discussions about balancing objectivity (non-biased assessment) and providing thorough evaluations.

- The student numbers need to be provided the faculty at the onset of the third week of classes, after formal drop/add period is ended. At that time, there also need to be at least 2 alternative 92 numbers provided to faculty to guide their collection of artifacts to compensate for late withdrawals.
- Faculty should be informed prior to the semester of collection and asked to designate an assignment at the beginning of the semester with their selected Learning Outcome. This will allow for additional artifacts to be assigned if a certain Learning Outcome does not have a significant number of participants.
- Syllabi should be collected at the beginning of the semester as well to avoid the assessment team not having necessary syllabi during the report writing process.
- In our case, the composite assessment of the data by the Office of Institutional Planning did not correlate with our data. The data used in this report were compiled by our team and double checked by each individual in the assessment team.

The LSC concurs with these recommendations for the assessment process.

Action item: *The LSC will solicit form the director of assessment his response and actions for addressing these recommendations.*

Motion was made by Jim Deconinck to approve the Liberal Studies Committee responses to the C4 Assessment Report pending changes as discussed. The motion was seconded by Julie Johnson-Busbin. No further discussion. All were in favor and motion was carried.

Time of meeting adjournment: 4:46pm