Western Carolina University

Liberal Studies Program 2.0

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I. Introduction

The Liberal Studies Program (LSP) at Western Carolina University has been in place since 2001, when it was implemented after a five-year long, inclusive development process that sought to emphasize best practices and student outcomes in the context of what was then the University's Mission Statement. According to the 2001 Liberal Studies Document, "the Liberal Studies Program enhances WCU's aspirations for students to attain 'the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of an educated person, including the ability to think critically, to communicate effectively, to identify and resolve problems reflectively, and to use information and technology responsibly; an appreciation for the creative and performing arts, and a basis for continued personal development and lifelong learning'" (3).

In 2006, a concerted effort was undertaken to assess each of the Core and Perspective categories of the LSP (see LS Assessment). In 2010 this work was completed and a final report was submitted to what was then called the Liberal Studies Oversight Committee (see LS Assessment Final Report). The authors of the report focused on indicating the strengths and weaknesses of the LSP, but neglected to engage fully with understanding levels of student learning. Further, in the aftermath of the recession of 2008, issues of assessment were conjoined with concerns about funding and administrative feasibility. Additional complications included the presence of competing views within the university community about the importance and the effectiveness of general education itself. The concerns about the LSP ranged from the size of the program to its effectiveness.

To address these concerns about the LSP, in 2010 the Faculty Senate formed a General Education Task Force (see General Education Review). Sixteen members were selected representationally from across the campus, including 2 student members. Similar to the previous General Education review, this new Task Force was charged with "(a) reviewing the current Liberal Studies Program with wide faculty input; (b) reviewing the available recent literature on general education; (c) examining the general education programs of other institutions like Western; and (d) proposing changes to the current Liberal Studies Program based on the information gathered" (Final Report 4). The Task Force sought to determine how general education at WCU might function more effectively in the interests of the students, a new environment and imperative for assessment, and a new set of fiscal constraints brought about by shifting priorities in funding state institutions of higher education. Further, the Task Force desired to make sure that whatever changes recommended would align with what had become the guiding principles of the University: UNC Tomorrow (2007) and the WCU Quality Enhancement Plan: *Synthesis: A Pathway to Intentional Learning* (2007; see Intentional Learning Plan). The Task Force undertook a comprehensive look at the LSP with the intent of providing recommendations for either

adopting a new program or revising the current one. The Task Force studied the programs of peer institutions, composed a review of the literature related to general education, and worked to envision a way forward that would accommodate the competing visions of general education at WCU. After two years of negotiation and compromise, and after a concerted effort to seek the input of all stakeholders, a consensus was reached by the task force and a proposal for a new Liberal Studies Program was submitted to the Faculty Senate (see Final Report 6–17). The Faculty Senate, however, rejected the proposal in the Fall of 2012.

In June 2012, the WCU Board of Trustees unanimously approved a new strategic plan for the University, the 2020 Vision. Goal 1.2 of the 2020 Vision articulates the role of the Liberal Studies Program at WCU: "Fully integrate into the general education program and into each major and minor at both undergraduate and graduate levels an emphasis on those core abilities expected of all WCU students: to integrate information from a variety of contexts; to solve complex problems; to communicate effectively and responsibly; to practice civic engagement; and to clarify and act on purpose and values."

After a period of tragic instability in the Office of the Provost, the LSC met with newly arrived Provost Alison Morrison-Shetlar in the Fall of 2014. Empowered by the new Provost's support of the LSC, the membership began working to devise an assessment plan that would serve as the grounds for incremental changes to the LSP and to the LS Document. The changes were intended to bring both the articulation of the LSP and the LSP itself into alignment with the current guiding principles of the University, always with the primary goal of making sure that the LSP continues to serve the students of WCU in the most effective way possible.

The assessment plan was based upon the desire to answer the following questions:

1) Are we delivering what we say we do in the LSP?
2) Are students learning what we want them to in the LSP?
3) What can we do to strengthen the correlation between what we deliver and how well students learn in the LSP?

A process for assessment (see below, section and a charge for Assessment Teams (see Appendix 1), Rubrics for Assessment (see Appendix 2), and a Calendar of Assessment (see Appendix 3), were developed, written, and implemented in the Fall 2014 semester. The Assessment mainly focuses on determining how well students achieve the outcomes mandated by the Learning Goals of the LSP. The Assessment Teams are assembled to conduct the work and are charged with making recommendations for changes to the LSP and to the Liberal Studies Document so that the LSP will be more effectively articulated and functional in the context of the best interests of the students of WCU. In this manner the LSC will move forward with a plan for incrementally evolving the Program so that it is a less static institution. At the center of these changes will be the Liberal Studies Document, which will no longer exist as a kind of static constitutional instrument and instead serve as an evolving articulation of the general education principles that best fit Western Carolina University as it evolves.

As the assessment proceeds according to the Calendar, recommendations for revising this document will be made to the Liberal Studies Committee, which will discuss, approve, and then forward them to the Faculty Senate for a further round of discussion and final approval.

Because this revision-by-assessment model uses as its starting point the current Liberal Studies Document, all categories and policies in effect under the auspices of the current Liberal Studies Document remain in place until revised and included in this Liberal Studies 2.0 document, which now serves as the official document of the LSP.

II. Rationale for the Liberal Studies Program, 2.0

At Western Carolina University, all bachelor's degree programs include courses in Liberal Studies designed to provide each student with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of an educated person. These include the ability to think critically, to communicate effectively, to identify and solve problems reflectively, to use information and technology responsibly, to appreciate the creative and performing arts, and to seek personal development and lifelong learning. These ways of knowing the world fully encompass the integrative principle established in Goal 1.2 of the strategic 2020 Vision of the university: "Fully integrate into the general education program and into each major and minor at both undergraduate and graduate levels an emphasis on those core abilities expected of all WCU students: to integrate information from a variety of contexts; to solve complex problems; to communicate effectively and responsibly; to practice civic engagement; and to clarify and act on purpose and values."

Through a First-Year Seminar in Liberal Studies, first-year students begin to experience intellectual life at the university level from a variety of disciplinary contexts, many of which are directly connected to the major experience. The core provides students with the academic skills and intellectual habits needed throughout the undergraduate experience in whatever major they may choose to pursue. Because of their foundational status, the core courses should be completed as soon as possible. The Perspectives component of the Liberal Studies program extends the general education experience beyond the first two years and further integrates with the major and minor experiences as it exposes students to important modes of inquiry, discovery, and interpretation through study of the concepts and principles of multiple fields. Because all disciplines at the university can offer courses in the Liberal Studies program, the Perspectives provide an especially broadened opportunity for students to shape their education so that it serves to expand their worldview and knowledge base and offers them opportunities to take courses outside areas of familiarity that can have a major impact on the major experience. Students also take at least one Upper-Level Perspective (ULP), a three hour course at the upper level (300 or 400 level) in a Perspectives area outside their major. The ULP provides students with an opportunity to view their own discipline from the integrative perspective of another, less familiar discipline, a skill that serves to distinguish a university education from a strictly vocational training.

III. Learning Goals of the Program

The learning goals of the Liberal Studies Program are consistent with the mandates of the 2020 Vision to provide WCU students with a high-quality university education, and in particular to emphasize "those core abilities expected of all WCU students." The objectives for the Liberal Studies Program are for students to:

- Demonstrate the ability to locate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information;
- Demonstrate the ability to interpret and use numerical, written, oral and visual data;
- Demonstrate the ability to read with comprehension, and to write and speak clearly, coherently, and effectively as well as to adapt modes of communication appropriate to an audience;
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze arguments critically;
- Demonstrate the ability to recognize behaviors and define choices that affect lifelong well-being;
- Demonstrate an understanding of
  - ⇒ Past human experiences and ability to relate them to the present;
  - ⇒ Different contemporary cultures and their interrelationships;
  - ⇒ Issues involving social institutions, interpersonal and group dynamics, human development and behavior, and cultural diversity;
  - ⇒ Scientific concepts and methods as well as contemporary issues in science and technology;
  - ⇒ Cultural heritage through its expressions of wisdom, literature and art and their roles in the process of self and social understanding.
- Demonstrate an excitement for and love of learning.

IV. Characteristics of the Program

All students must complete 42 hours of Liberal Studies (39 if the First-Year Seminar is waived). The 42 hours consists of a three-hour First-Year Seminar, 21 hours in the first-year Core, and 18 hours of Perspectives. At least three credit hours of the 18 hours of coursework in the Perspectives categories must be a course designated as a ULP (see above, p. 3).

Perspectives Courses and the Major

Departments are encouraged to create courses that best represent their discipline in the Liberal Studies Program, including courses that introduce the major. This provision allows departments to make the decision whether their own introductory courses provide the most appropriate exposure for students in Liberal Studies, or whether their discipline and department best serve the Liberal Studies Program with a course separate from major requirements. The opportunity to take courses that introduce the major will aid students in making informed decisions in selecting majors. It is the intention of the Liberal Studies program that courses within the majors do not

excessively overlap with Liberal Studies courses, particularly those in the Perspectives categories. The Liberal Studies Committee will be a part of the curriculum review process for all program proposals that involve Liberal Studies courses, and overlap beyond 6 hours will require substantial justification. It is the responsibility of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies and the Liberal Studies Committee to monitor the operation of this provision to see that it works well and fairly, and that advisors implement the spirit of the provision through careful advisement.

Academic Learning Communities

Although they are not a required part of the Liberal Studies Program, Academic Learning Communities remain a priority at WCU, and they are often established in the context of sets of Liberal Studies courses. The goal of participation in an Academic Learning Community is to encourage the student to discover and appreciate relationships of disciplines and knowledge and to provide a sense of place within the university community. Academic Learning Communities enhance both the sense of place and the ability to integrate knowledge. Academic Learning Communities consist of cohorts of students and instructors in a selection of grouped courses. Participation in an Academic Learning Community is an option for both instructors and students.

Academic Learning Communities will be organized in a variety of formats reflecting faculty and student interests, scheduling constraints, and resources. The accepted formats of academic learning communities will evolve as the university gains more experience with learning communities, and the campus culture reveals the most suitable formats for meeting the needs of our student population. Examples of course groupings might include: a First-Year Seminar, a transition course, and a writing course; or, a First-Year Seminar, a writing course, and a Perspectives course; or, a writing course, another core course, and a Perspectives course. Students in majors that begin in the freshman year (e.g., Art, Music) can be accommodated by including entry-level major courses in the Academic Learning Community course grouping.

Providing the option of participation in Academic Learning Communities is based on considerable evidence in the literature that student learning, sense of community, and retention are improved by providing students with an academic structure that facilitates and fosters interaction among students, faculty, and courses. Identification with a set of peers will provide social support while revealing the essentially social nature of intellectual endeavors. Experience with several faculty and staff members who are coordinating course activities will encourage the student to discover and appreciate the relationship of disciplines, knowledge, and extracurricular life.

Upper-level Perspectives Courses

Students must have at least three hours from an upper-level (300- or 400- level) course in any Perspectives area. The Upper-Level Perspective course cannot be from the student's discipline, and cannot satisfy major requirements. Selected existing upper-level courses in departments may be approved as Perspectives courses in Liberal Studies, and these courses will satisfy this requirement. The development of new upper-level Liberal Studies courses that involve broad, even interdisciplinary,

experiences and do not require prerequisite disciplinary courses will be encouraged. Alternatively, a student may propose a contract with the instructor of any upper level course and with the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies to have the course satisfy this upper level requirement, provided that the student satisfies class standing and any other course prerequisites. In this case, specific course requirements, primarily in writing and information use, will be clearly identified or developed to satisfy the Liberal Studies goals and areas of emphasis. Instructors are not bound to accept a contract proposal if they feel the course is not suitable, or if the contract will place an unreasonable burden on the instructor or on the class as a whole. When a student uses a contract to take an upper-level perspective course, the student must have the contract completed before the semester begins.

The ULP reflects faculty commitment to the program and affords students the opportunity to make choices about the broadening Liberal Studies component of their education based on the more sophisticated perspective they hold in their junior and senior years of college. Students are strongly encouraged to take their ULP after they have completed English 202.

V. The First-Year Seminar

The primary goal of the First-Year Seminar is to introduce students to intellectual life at the university level. The First-Year Seminar component addresses the Student Sense of Place, Liberal Arts and Sciences Emphasis, Fundamental Skills, Integration of Knowledge, Moral Reflection, and Faculty Commitment components of the Fundamental Principles. The First-Year Seminar will introduce students to the importance of Liberal Studies in a university education. It will help students to see the necessity for reasoning and communication proficiencies as foundations for life-long intellectual and professional growth. The type of exploration of ideas characteristic of a seminar will help students begin to see that important cultural, social, economic and political issues of a global society are not limited to the traditional boundaries of the academic disciplines or the specializations of the professions. The First-Year Seminar should encourage students to discuss serious ideas and develop rigorous intellectual habits.

First-Year Seminar courses will be in a stand-alone category and will not fulfill a Perspectives category requirement. The First-Year Seminar must be taken by all new freshmen in their first year. A First-Year Seminar may be a special course motivated by faculty interest, can be proposed in any discipline, and need not be from traditional Liberal Studies disciplines.

Seminars must have a significant writing component based on rigorous reading and seminar-format discussions. The First-Year Seminar course will perform a balancing act between a required common learning experience for all students who take the course and the freedom for individual faculty to pursue disciplinary interests. The First-Year Seminar course may incorporate common themes, such as examining general modes of inquiry as distinct from discipline-specific studies. The First-Year Seminar could be a home for a common theme for the academic year and the use of a common reading,

including participation by the text's author in campus-wide intellectual activities. However, such themes would be in addition to the instructor's disciplinary interests.

The First-Year Seminar requirement is based on a desire to set a high standard for the academic habits and intellectual dispositions of entering freshmen. It will introduce students immediately and dramatically to the intellectual environment that comprises a university. First-Year Seminar courses that attempt to incorporate non-academic transition issues tend to flounder because faculty feel uncomfortable teaching non-academic issues and thus faculty commitment to such courses is difficult to build and maintain. This program leaves transition issues to those better trained to deal with them (e.g. Student Affairs staff and trained, interested faculty), and instead limits the First-Year Seminar's focus to the development of academic rigor and intellectual dispositions. The use of a common text or theme will provide students an opportunity to see faculty modeling intellectual learning habits by considering a topic that might be outside of their area of specialization.

The guidelines are: a. Students with 0 - 15 credit hours are required to take this course; b. Students with 15.1 – 29.9 credit hours are eligible to take a First-Year Seminar, but it is not required; c. Students with 30 or more credit hours are not eligible to take First-Year Seminar; d. When a student is not required to take the First-Year Seminar, it is considered waived, and the Liberal Studies hour requirement will be reduced from 42 to 39 (total hours for the degree are not reduced). The First-Year Seminar cannot be repeated and, therefore, it is not possible to replace a grade received in this course. Grading for all First Year Seminars shall be A, B, C, I ("incomplete"), or U ("unsatisfactory"). Those students receiving a "U" grade must take three credits of liberal studies electives to make up for the unearned credits from the First-Year seminar.

VI. The Core

The Core provides students with a common set of intellectual experiences devoted to providing the foundational academic skills and intellectual habits needed throughout the undergraduate experience. All students must be able to communicate clearly in written and oral forms, and to deal with numerical and scientific information effectively. All students need a foundation for productive lives through their knowledge of sound health, wellness, and activity practices. These proficiencies are useful in every aspect of life: in independent and collaborative learning, in the workplace, and at leisure. All students are encouraged to complete the Core during their first year of college. The Core consists of 21 credit hours:

C1, Writing (6 hours): Two sequential writing courses to be completed before the commencement of the Junior year of study. These courses are taught in the Department of English's Writing, Rhetoric, and Critical Studies Program (WRCS). English 101 (Writing and Rhetoric) and English 202 (Writing and Critical Inquiry) introduce students to college-level writing via the best practices of composition instruction available. To maintain this quality, these practices undergo constant assessment and

improvement. This course sequence addresses immediately an essential academic skill common to all disciplines, that of communicating ideas in written form effectively.

C2, Mathematics (3 hours): The Mathematics course will serve as an introduction to applications of mathematics to daily experience. Emphasis will be on the development of conceptual understanding rather than on computational drill. An assignment in which students display an application of mathematics and/or analytical problem solving will be required. A student may satisfy the requirement by passing MATH 321 or any 100-level MATH course except for MATH 190-199. Every student must take a college mathematics course or receive college level transfer credit in mathematics. Computational tools are the necessary foundations built in secondary education Mathematics courses, but applications of mathematics at the university level go beyond basic skills into higher-order reasoning and analysis, and no student should be considered educated without exposure to the use of mathematics in these contexts.

C3, Oral Communication (3 hours): The Oral Communication requirement will address the basic competencies in the contexts of interpersonal, small group, and public speaking. The oral communication requirement in the General Education program is a recent innovation that was developed in response to faculty demand and the requirement is continued in the Liberal Studies Program. Students who complete the Oral Communication requirement will have met the following criteria:

a. Demonstrate competency in small group communication.
b. Demonstrate understanding of critical and literal listening.
c. Recognize discrepancies between the speaker's verbal and non-verbal messages.
d. Demonstrate competency in public speaking.
e. Demonstrate competency in interpersonal communication.

C4, Wellness (3 hours): The Wellness requirement will provide students with a foundation for lifelong wellness by informing and valuing health and wellness beliefs. The Wellness course includes an integrated fitness activity which will emphasize the crucial role of physical fitness in lifelong wellness. Students will be challenged to make thoughtful and voluntary behavioral changes that will promote lifelong health. The important contribution of leisure activity to the overall balance of life will be explored. The roles of such lifestyle factors as stress and stress management, recognition of obsessive or addictive behaviors, and the development of healthy interpersonal relationships will be examined. Health and wellness decisions are lifelong considerations for any human being, and healthy people have the best chance of contributing fully to the society in which they function.

C5, Physical and Biological Sciences (6 hours, all courses must include a laboratory or applied component; courses must be taken in two disciplines): In the biological sciences, students learn to view the human being as having concerns continuous with, though different from, those of other organisms of nature. In the physical sciences, students are directed toward the definition and solution of problems involving the character of matter, energy, motion, or mechanical/dynamic systems. Study in these

courses concern scientific methods. Scientific study includes an appreciation of the tentative character of scientific conclusions: repeated experimental testing is needed in order to confirm assertions, and revision and even rejection of hypotheses is allowed. Laboratory work will be central to theoretical discussions as an experience in the character of scientific work, and will provide an opportunity to experience the environment in which scientific study is conducted.

Science courses at the 100- and 200-level can be used to meet the Physical and Biological Sciences requirement, even if they are not approved Liberal Studies courses, provided that they have a laboratory or applied component. The science requirement can be satisfied in any of the following ways:

a. Students may take two Liberal Studies science courses in different disciplines.

b. Students may take a Liberal Studies science course plus one non-Liberal Studies science course with a laboratory or applied component in a different discipline.

c. Students may take two non-Liberal Studies science courses with laboratory or applied components in two different disciplines.

VII. The Perspectives

The Perspectives component of Liberal Studies recognizes the centrality of the liberal arts and sciences to a university education and to preparation for social and professional responsibilities. Understanding history, culture, and language, the fine and performing arts, science and technology, and ethical concerns is important for developing a broad world perspective and knowledge base. In the Perspectives, students will be exposed to important modes of inquiry, discovery, and interpretation through study of the concepts, principles, and theories of the Liberal Arts and Sciences. The Perspectives implement the Liberal Arts and Sciences Emphasis, Faculty Commitment, Fundamental Skills, Moral Reflection, and Integration of Knowledge components of the Fundamental Principles.

The primary goals of the Perspectives are:

To promote love of learning and to cultivate an active interest in Liberal Studies;

To build on the Core's foundation through practice and refinement of areas of academic emphasis;

To provide students with a broadened world view and knowledge base;

To provide experiences in the arts, humanities, and social sciences from which connections between disciplines can be revealed;

To provide an introduction to the challenges of living in a global society;

To create opportunities for reflection on values, and for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerant manner;

To afford opportunities to make career or disciplinary choices.

Faculty commitment, based on a mutual love of learning, will be built into the Liberal Studies Program through trust accorded to faculty to engage undergraduates with the best that disciplines have to offer. Specifically, each department or discipline will offer the best Liberal Studies courses possible. Each course will be taught by instructors who are both qualified and excited about their topics, and each instructor will vigorously engage students in expanding their interest in that subject.

Depth and Breadth

Courses will be specifically designed to offer the student "depth" as well as "breadth." Breadth should not be interpreted to mean that all Liberal Studies courses will be surveys. Breadth will come from the variety of disciplines and teaching styles offered in Perspectives courses. Breadth is understood to include an introduction to a discipline's primary concepts, principles and theories. Depth is concerned with the intensive exploration and application of selected concepts, principles, theories and modes of inquiry.

Each department will choose the category or categories of the Perspectives to which to commit its resources. To ensure that students take courses in a variety of disciplines, departments may offer courses in no more than two of the perspectives categories unless they have the approval of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies and the Liberal Studies Committee. Departments must commit to scheduling Perspectives courses in ways that facilitate development of reasonable student course schedules. Departments are encouraged to offer upper-level courses that fit within the Perspectives categories and that incorporate one or more of the Perspectives areas of emphasis. These upper-level courses will provide considerable depth, and might not be offered every semester or in multiple sections.

Areas of Emphasis (Proficiencies, Dispositions, and Experiences)

Academic proficiencies, dispositions, and experiences are grounded in the Program Core and are practiced and expanded in Perspectives courses. These areas of emphasis are integral to the Perspectives curriculum and reflect Faculty consensus on the most important needs of students. They are essential to active learning and serve as the bases of academic rigor, good intellectual habits, and life-long learning.

Every Liberal Studies course will emphasize writing, and its companion proficiency, information use. The Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies will monitor Perspectives 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 program. 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

Cultural diversity

Any other creative but defensible area of intellectual development that a discipline wants to focus on, and that the program chooses to adopt.

No Perspectives course will be expected to address all areas of emphasis, and each instructor will be free to determine the best means by which these emphases are taught. Instructors also will be expected to document the ways in which learning outcomes in selected areas of emphasis will be assessed.

Categories

All disciplines are invited to propose Perspectives courses. Every student will take at least one, three-hour Liberal Studies course as an upper-level elective in any Perspectives category the student chooses outside her or his major.

P1, Social Sciences (6 hours, courses must be taken in two disciplines):

Courses in Social Sciences provide systematic study of observational and analytic methods and findings of those disciplines that focus on the interpersonal functioning and institutional creations of human beings. Courses in this category may focus on the scientific study of the mental and behavioral characteristics of individuals or groups or may focus on the description and explanation of political, economic, or legal institutions. Included will be inquiry into basic social scientific concepts such as mind, behavior, class, society, culture, freedom, government, property, equality, and rights.

P2, Physical and Biological Sciences (moved to C5)

During the development of the original Liberal Studies program, the task force decided to move a perspective course in the physical and biological sciences into the Core (C5) and to make that category requirement 6 instead of 3 hours.

P3, History (3 hours):

The study of history introduces students to a distinctive body of knowledge and to the tools of historical inquiry that shape and define it. History locates people and events in space and time, explaining change and continuity, and the diversity of forces shaping events, institutions, and value systems. The subject of study should be of sufficient breadth to convey an understanding of development over time and of sufficient depth to illustrate the complexity of forces that mold events. The study of history should engage students in the experience of interpreting the record of the past and drawing their own conclusions.

P4, Humanities (3 hours):

The role of this requirement is to confront students with landmark texts that embody the Western heritage of humanity's attempts to understand itself. These might be in the form of fiction, poetry, dialogue, essay and other appropriate written forms that embody our literary heritage. The texts chosen for study might be thematic in nature or drawn from a specific ethnic or national tradition. They must be of sufficient breadth and depth to probe fundamental issues regarding the human condition. This study

might include narrative form, critical textual analysis, or the study of a language, but the first priority must be to engage students in the exploration of the significance of human modes of being, thought, and values in their lives.

P5, Fine and Performing Arts (3 hours):

Learning in the Fine and Performing Arts courses will be concerned with appreciating, interpreting, and critically analyzing creative works and events, as well as understanding the artistic intentions of the creator. Introduction to traditional and contemporary concepts within the various modes of expression will be achieved through an analysis of individual or collaborative works that includes the study of the nature of self-expression and the critical evaluation of works or events as interpreted through their socio-cultural contexts. An important course component will be out-of-the-classroom experiences such as visits to gallery and museum exhibitions, attendance at theater and musical productions and performances, visiting artists, performers and writers and attending their lectures, readings and presentations. Courses may have an applied component to provide experience with personal artistic expression in order to help the student understand a creative concept or an artist's intention.

P6, World Cultures (3 hours):

World Cultures courses will involve the study of significant contemporary issues in a global and multi-disciplinary setting. Specifically identified issues of study--which might include the consideration of ethnicity, gender, religion, or race--should illustrate the nature of cultural diversity and global interdependence and the challenges of solving problems and reaching understanding across national and cultural divides. The study of world cultures should actively engage students in the experience of synthesis of information from a variety of disciplines which might include the natural and social sciences, history, the humanities, and the arts. It should also emphasize the responsibility of educated people to be informed about current public issues.

VIII. The Administrative Component

Functions of the Administrative Component

Functions of the administrative component will be based on an ongoing effort to raise the status of Liberal Studies at WCU, and will include:

Reviewing department and faculty proposals for Liberal Studies courses with the authority to approve, recommend revision, or reject such proposals, and, thereafter, based on sound assessment practices, to review ongoing Liberal Studies courses and faculty;

Ensuring an appropriate schedule of Liberal Studies courses that allow development of suitable student schedules, including examination of the feasibility of scheduling students for their entire first year;

Recruiting appropriate faculty to participate in Liberal Studies course delivery, including First-Year Seminars;

Creating and implementing an ongoing program of development for faculty committed to excellent teaching in Liberal Studies;

Developing, implementing, and revising an assessment program for Liberal Studies, including recommended timely adjustments as needed to insure the integrity and coherence of the program;

Developing, implementing, and revising a reward system specifically for Liberal Studies faculty, based on sound assessment practices;

Developing a procedure to interview and inform prospective new faculty concerning expectations for participation in Liberal Studies;

Publishing and maintaining a current, public website that contains current information about the program and its assessment for faculty, students, and other interested parties. This site can be found at <http://www.wcu.edu/about-wcu/leadership/office-of-the-provost/ugstudies/liberal-studies-program/>.

Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies

The academic attitudes and intellectual habits molded in Liberal Studies will set the patterns for success in subsequent major courses. The retention of quality students will be improved with a more challenging, coherent Liberal Studies Program. Thus, the Liberal Studies Program deserves greater visibility on campus, a direct voice where resource allocations are being decided, and a clearly defined advocate. Therefore, the direction of the Liberal Studies Program will be the responsibility of an Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies.

The Liberal Studies Committee (LSC)

The 15-member committee will include elected representatives from each of the Colleges and Schools of the university and the Library as well as three *ex officio* non-voting members including the Director of Undergraduate Advising, the Chair of the Academic Policy and Review Council, and the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies. Each College will conduct the election(s) for its representatives to the LSC in the spring semester and report the results of these elections to CONEC and the Secretary of the Faculty. Elected membership will be proportional from each College and School. Representation shall be determined by calculating the average of the number of junior/senior majors, undergraduate degrees awarded, undergraduate student credit hours generated, FTE for students, and FTE for faculty from the preceding year of the election. Each Spring CONEC will determine the distribution of the LSC membership based on these criteria and will inform each College of the number of elections for vacant seats they are to hold that semester. No College or School shall have more than three members on the LSC and the total number of elected members from all Colleges and Schools shall be eleven. Each College, School, and the Library shall have at least one member on the LSC. Elections will be staggered and terms will be three years. A quorum will be met when a simple majority of voting members is present. The chair shall be elected from the membership at the first meeting each year, can serve a subsequent term, and is eligible to vote on all matters.

The role of the Liberal Studies Committee will be to advise the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies and to consider and approve courses for inclusion in the Liberal Studies Program. The Liberal Studies Committee will also oversee the assessment of the Program, and will discuss and recommend policy changes as they are recommended. The Committee will oversee implementation of any new program changes as approved.

Course Proposals must respond to the following prompts:

Describe how this course meets the educational intent of the Perspectives category. Refer to the category descriptions in the Liberal Studies Program document.

Describe how this course will develop and assess student accomplishment in Writing and Information Use and one or more of the following: Critical analysis of arguments, Oral communication, Service learning, Moral reflection, and Cultural diversity.

Describe the student workload, including the types and quantities of reading assignments, writing assignments, examinations, projects, presentations, etc.

Indicate how this course will offer an intensive exploration and application of selected concepts, principles, theories, and modes of inquiry.

Indicate how this course will offer an introduction to the discipline's primary concepts, principles, and theories.

Describe the pedagogical reasons for the best class size for sections of this course.

If this course is to be offered at the upper level or is required for your major, describe how the course will be designed to accommodate students from a variety of disciplines.

If this course is to be offered at the upper level or is required for your major, describe the department's commitment to teaching upper level students whose primary interest/major is outside the discipline of the department.

Provide additional information that shows how this course particularly addresses the overall objectives of the Liberal Studies Program.

All Liberal Studies courses are open to students of any major.

All Liberal Studies Upper Level Perspective courses are open to all students of any major with junior and senior standing. There are no prerequisites for ULP courses.

Course proposals for Liberal Studies courses are submitted through Curriculog and proceed according to the following steps. After Liberal Studies course proposals are approved by the department, they move to the appropriate College Curriculum Committee, and finally to the Liberal Studies Committee for consideration. The Liberal Studies Committee has the right to approve the course proposal, or to reject the proposal. Originators of rejected proposals will receive written feedback form the Liberal Studies Committee.

For both new course proposals and course change proposals made in Curriculog, originators must select the set of Liberal Studies Outcomes (see above, p. 6) that will be delivered in the course. Further, an exemplar syllabus must be attached to the proposal that includes the following information:

> An explicit indication of which Liberal Studies Category the course satisfies.
>
> The universal learning outcomes for the Liberal Studies Program.
>
> The set of the Liberal Studies outcomes emphasized in the course.
>
> A calendar that indicates the schedule of activities for the course and clearly reflects ways that those activities meet the set of Liberal Studies Learning Outcomes to be delivered in the course.

The Assessment of the Program

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools-Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) outlines the requirements for general education at accredited institutions:

> In each undergraduate degree program, the institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. (Standard 2.7.3, *Principles of Accreditation* [2012] 19)

On the issue of assessment, SACSCOC is clear and brief

> The institution identifies college-level general education competencies and the extent to which students have attained them. (Standard 3.5.1, *Principles of Accreditation* [2012] 29)

In the context of these SACSCOC standards, the goal of the Liberal Studies assessment will be to determine how well the goals of the Liberal Studies Program are being delivered by the faculty and learned by the students. The SACSCOC expectation for assessment is indeed to determine how well students achieve the outcomes mandated by the program.

Answering the following three questions will serve as the guiding principles for the assessment:

1) Are we delivering what we say we do?
2) Are students learning what we want them to?
3) What can we do to strengthen the correlation between what we deliver and how well students learn?

Overall, the assessment will focus on the LSP from three different perspectives:

1) Student Learning, i.e. performance in demonstrating proficiency of the outcomes of the LSP
2) Faculty/Departmental, i.e. what content is being taught and how it meets the outcomes of the LSP
3) University, i.e. the big picture—how well the LS program outcomes function within the university's goals for student achievement.

The assessment of the Liberal Studies Program is an ongoing process that proceeds according to the following sequence. Each semester a number of categories will be assessed in a two semester cycle. In the first semester, samples of student work will be collected. In the second semester 4-person faculty teams will be assembled who will score this student work according to the Liberal Studies Program rubrics. The teams will also review related information, such as institutional assessments, course syllabuses, and other data relevant to the category. The main task will be to write a report of assessment to be submitted to the Liberal Studies Committee no later than early in the semester following their assembly. This report will include recommendations by the team to make changes to the category under review and to the Liberal Studies Document.

The assessment team reports and the Liberal Studies Committee response to the teams' recommendations will be published on the Liberal Studies Assessment page of the Liberal Studies Program website. The Liberal Studies Committee will respond to these recommendations, and should it decide that changes to the Liberal Studies Document are warranted, it will make revisions and submit these revisions to the Faculty Senate for final approval.

When the assessment teams are assembled they will be supplied with a Team Charge document that delineates the tasks they are to complete. The charge document also includes the rubrics with which team members score samples of student work and the most current calendar for the ongoing assessment of the Liberal Studies Program. The team charge is published online at the Liberal Studies Program Website.

The assessment teams will consist of 1 faculty member representing the Liberal Studies Committee, 1 faculty member with teaching experience but not administrative responsibility (e.g. program directors) in the category to be assessed, and 2 faculty members who do not teach in the category being assessed. For more information on the assessment protocol, see the assessment team charge.

Transfer Students and Non-Fall Semester Freshmen

Transfer students who enter WCU having completed an Associate of Arts or an Associate of Science degree from a member of the North Carolina Community College System will have satisfied Western Carolina University's Liberal Studies requirements, per the articulation agreement with the North Carolina Community College System. Transcripts of students who have received an Associate of Applied Science or an

Associate of Fine Arts degree will be evaluated on a course-by-course basis in determining Liberal Studies requirements that have been met.

A transfer student who has completed the General Education or Liberal Studies requirements of another of the 16 campuses in the University of North Carolina system, verified by the Registrar, will have satisfied Western Carolina University's Liberal Studies requirements.

When a transfer student has completed the General Education or Liberal Studies requirements of a public or private institution outside of the University of North Carolina system, the Registrar will determine whether that institution's general education program is sufficiently similar to Western Carolina University's Liberal Studies program to warrant a blanket waiver of the Liberal Studies requirements. If the general education program of the institution is not deemed to be comparable to Western Carolina University's Liberal Studies program, or if a student transfers only part of the general education program from another institution, then the student's transcript will be evaluated by the Registrar's Office on a course-by-course basis, with assistance from the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies and the Liberal Studies Committee, as needed. The Registrar's Office will inform the student which Liberal Studies requirements have been met and which requirements still need to be fulfilled.

Students who transfer only a part of the General Education program from the North Carolina Community College System, or part of any other institution's General Education or Liberal Studies Program, will have their transcript evaluated by the Registrar's Office, with the assistance of the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies and the Liberal Studies Committee, as needed. The Registrar's Office will inform the student which Liberal Studies requirements have been met and which still need to be fulfilled.

Procedure for Program Modification

Any participant in the Liberal Studies Program, or other University entity, has the right to propose modifications to the Liberal Studies Program. Such modifications will be presented in writing to the Liberal Studies Committee for consideration. The Committee may approve such proposals, reject them, or return them to the originating unit or person with suggestions for revision. Other modifications to the Liberal Studies Program will be made in the context of the ongoing assessment. All proposed changes in the Liberal Studies Program will be manifested in revisions to the Liberal Studies Document. Upon approval by the Liberal Studies Committee, proposed revisions to the Liberal Studies Document will be submitted to the Faculty Senate for final approval.