

Western Carolina University Liberal Studies Program
Western Carolina University
Liberal Studies Program 2.0
Approved on April 13, 2020

Executive Summary

Western Carolina University's Liberal Studies Program offers students the opportunity to cultivate skills toward academic achievement, engaged citizenship, and career success.

The university's strategic plan, *Vision 2020*, emphasizes the importance of developing a student's intellectual, creative, cultural and personal outcomes so that they can meet the challenges of the 21st century. To that end, the Liberal Studies program forms the foundation around which the university builds this academic excellence and enriches the student experience.

WCU's Liberal Studies curriculum requires 42 hours and is divided into three parts: **Core** Courses (21 hours), **Perspectives** Courses (18 hours), and a **First Year Seminar** (3 hours). The Core includes writing, mathematics, oral communication, wellness, and physical and biological sciences, while the Perspectives center on social sciences, history, humanities, fine and performing arts, and world cultures. One of the Perspectives courses must be upper-level and fall outside of a student's chosen major. Finally, First Year Seminars (FYS) enable students to experience intellectual life at the university from a variety of disciplinary contexts, many of which are directly connected to the major experience.

The Liberal Studies program educates the whole person, preparing people for work, family life and civic engagement, while the curriculum also provides students with the intellectual tools for understanding contemporary issues in their local, national, and global communities.

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1. Introduction and Background

The Liberal Studies (LS) Program 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. 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.

The LS Program expects courses within its curriculum to emphasize at least one of the following student learning outcomes: **inquiry, information literacy, critical thinking, problem solving, means of expression, awareness of self, awareness of cultural diversity, and awareness of impact.** Taken together, these learning outcomes empower students to ask relevant research questions and evaluate the resources available to answer those questions. They encourage students to engage with their surroundings by devising solutions for observed problems, all while learning to think critically about each issue from a multitude of perspectives. Developing effective communication skills is another hallmark of WCU's Liberal Studies approach, and to that end, our courses enable students to develop an awareness of themselves and their belief systems, while also cultivating an awareness and empathy for other cultures. All of this learning occurs within a framework of understanding the vast potential human beings possess for creating positive impacts on the natural environment, on their local communities, on the people around them, and in national and international spheres of influence.

Assessment of Liberal Studies is performed annually facilitating a changing and evolving program. At the center of these changes is the Liberal Studies Document, which articulates the general education principles that best fit Western Carolina University as it continually improves.

2. Program Learning Goals

The specific learning objectives and outcomes for the Liberal Studies Program are:

Objective: Inquiry

- *Outcome #1:* Students will formulate focused questions and hypotheses that address appropriately the topic at hand, as well as identify and explain a method of inquiry.

Objective: Information Literacy

- *Outcome #2:* Students will identify appropriate information sources and evaluate critically the credibility of those sources for relevance, legitimacy, and bias.

Objective: Critical Thinking

- *Outcome #3:* Students will evaluate evidence, context, and multiple perspectives as a means of analyzing complex issues.

Objective: Problem Solving

- *Outcome #4:* Students will apply appropriate disciplinary methodologies to answer questions and propose solutions to problems within the human and natural worlds.

Objective: Means of Expression

- *Outcome #5:* Students will craft written and/or oral communication demonstrating organization, clarity, logic, and skill for various audiences.

Objective: Awareness of Self

- *Outcome #6:* Students will recognize behaviors and define choices that affect their lifelong well-being.

Objective: Awareness of Cultural Diversity

- *Outcome #7:* Students will critically examine various cultures through historical and contemporary contexts at the local, national, and/or global levels.

Objective: Awareness of Impact

- *Outcome #8:* Students will evaluate the impact of their own and others' actions on the human and natural worlds.

3. Program Requirements**a. Core Requirement**

WCU has five overarching learning outcomes to be achieved and demonstrated by all students: integrate information from a variety of contexts; solve complex problems; communicate effectively and responsibly; practice civic engagement; and clarify and act on purpose and values. The Liberal Studies Core provides students with a common set of curricular experiences providing both the foundational skills to support development of these outcomes and a productive life by fostering academic skills, intellectual habits, and healthy choices (supporting 2020 Vision 2.0 Goal 2.4). All students must be able to communicate clearly in written and oral forms, and to deal effectively with numerical and scientific information. All students need a foundation for productive lives through their knowledge of sound health and wellness 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 two years of college. The Core consists of 21 credit hours:

C1 -Writing (6 hours): Two sequential writing courses are 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 courses undergo constant assessment and improvement. This course sequence addresses an essential academic skill common to all disciplines, that of communicating ideas in written form effectively. English 101 and 202 particularly focus on the *Means of Expression, Awareness of Impact, and Information Literacy* Liberal Studies learning outcomes.

C2 - Mathematics (3 hours): The Mathematics course introduces applications of mathematics to daily experience, emphasizing the development of conceptual understanding rather than 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. No student can be considered educated without understanding the use of mathematics in these contexts. Depending on choice of mathematics course to fulfill the Liberal Studies requirement, classes will focus on *Means of Expression* and *Problem Solving*.

C3 - Oral Communication (3 hours): The Oral Communication requirement addresses the basic competencies in the contexts of interpersonal, small group, and public speaking. Students who complete the Oral Communication requirement will demonstrate competency in small group communication,

demonstrate understanding of critical and literal listening, recognize discrepancies between the speaker's verbal and non-verbal messages, demonstrate competency in public speaking, and demonstrate competency in interpersonal communication. The Communication Liberal Studies course focuses on the *Means of Expression* learning outcome.

C4 - Wellness (3 hours): The Wellness requirement provides students with a foundation for lifelong wellness. The Wellness course includes an integrated fitness activity, emphasizing the crucial role of physical fitness in lifelong wellness. Students will be challenged to make thoughtful and voluntary behavioral changes that promote their lifelong health, including work/life balance. Lifestyle factors such 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 society. The Wellness courses focuses on *Awareness of Self*, *Critical Thinking* and *Awareness of Impact* learning outcomes and supports the 2020 Vision 2.0 Goal 2.4 to create a campus environment that facilitates a healthy lifestyle for students.

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 humans as having concerns continuous with, though different from, those of other organisms in 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. Scientific study includes an appreciation of the scientific method: repeated experimental testing to confirm assertions, revision, and even rejection of hypotheses. Laboratory work will be central to experiencing 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:

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

Liberal Studies courses in the sciences focus on *Problem Solving*, *Critical Thinking*, *Awareness of Impact*, and *Information Literacy*.

b. The First Year Seminar Requirement

First-Year Seminar courses are recognized by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) as a High-Impact Practice, in terms of student retention and engagement. The FYS supports Initiative 1.3.3 in the WCU 2020 Vision 2.0 Strategic Plan. Student participation in First-Year Seminar permits students to interact with faculty, connect and collaborate with peers, and successfully integrate into the campus community (Keup and Barefoot, 2005).

The First-Year Seminar introduces students to intellectual life at the university, the development of academic rigor and intellectual disposition. 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 introduces students to the importance of Liberal Studies in a university education. It will

highlight the necessity for reasoning and communication proficiencies as foundations for life-long intellectual and professional growth. The seminar will reveal 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. In support of Initiative 1.1.1, the First-Year Seminar encourages students to discuss serious ideas and develop rigorous intellectual habits addressing one or more of the following Liberal Studies Student Learning Outcomes: *Inquiry; Information Literacy; Critical Thinking; Problem Solving; Means of Expression; Awareness of Self; Awareness of Cultural Diversity; Awareness of Impact*. First-Year Seminar courses support Initiatives 2.1.2 and 3.2.1 to promote a culture of student academic honesty, expanding educational programming around academic integrity and truth seeking.

First-Year Seminar courses will also have a significant writing component based on rigorous reading and seminar-format discussions. The ideal First-Year Seminar course will be capped at 24 students per section, unless there is a compelling reason for larger classes. The First-Year Seminar course will balance a required common learning experience for all students who take the course with 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.

Instructors of First-Year Seminar courses possess a commitment to general education, the liberal arts, and development of the student as a whole person. A student-centered educational philosophy and a desire to achieve excellence using engaging pedagogy that involves students in the learning process are hallmark characteristics of effective First-Year Seminar Instructors.

First-Year Seminar courses are 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.

Guidelines for FYS: 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.

c. Perspectives Requirement

The Perspectives component of the Liberal Studies program seeks to expose all WCU students to a variety of disciplines and viewpoints. *All LS perspectives courses must select a Liberal Studies Student Learning Outcome that will be emphasized in the class and can be assessed by the LS Program. Appropriate SLO's are suggested in the break-down of the Perspectives areas below.*

Moreover, the Perspectives—like the entire Liberal Studies program—emphasize five core abilities expected of all WCU students: to solve complex problems; to communicate effectively and responsibly; to practice civic engagement; and to clarify and act on purpose and values (2020 Vision, 2.0, Goal 1.2).

The courses that satisfy the Perspectives should be academically rigorous and provide students with the intellectual, creative, cultural and personal outcomes necessary to excel in the twenty-first century (Strategic Direction No. 1).

The Perspectives enrich the student experience and promote inclusive excellence by exposing students to the study of the social sciences, history, the humanities, the fine arts and world cultures (Strategic Direction Nos. 2 and 3).

The learning goals of the Perspectives include Inquiry, Information Literacy, Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, Means of Expression, Awareness of Self, Awareness of Cultural Diversity, and Awareness of Impact (Liberal Studies program Student Learning Outcomes).

The Perspectives seek:

- To emphasize academic excellence by delivering high-quality courses that are designed to fulfill the educational needs of the state and region (Strategic Direction No. 1 and Goal 1.1);
- To enrich the student experience by offering courses that promote active citizenship and inclusion (Goal 2.1)
- To provide students with an atmosphere that is committed to respecting diverse viewpoints and experiences, and that reflects the University's core values (Strategic Direction No. 3); and
- To prepare students for the diverse world in which they live (Strategic Direction No.3).

Depth and Breadth

Courses will be 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 the teaching and learning styles offered in Perspectives courses. Breadth is understood to include an introduction to a discipline's primary concepts, principles, theories, applications, and relationships with other disciplines. Depth is concerned with the intensive exploration, analysis and evaluation of selected concepts, principles, theories, and modes of inquiry. The breadth and depth aspects of a course should be closely linked and mutually supportive. 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 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 Perspective's 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. Taken as a whole, the Perspective support the development of the core abilities identified by WCU (Goal 1.2) and promote the Student Learning Outcomes developed by the Liberal Studies program (Liberal Studies program Student Learning Outcomes).

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 will also be expected to document the ways in which learning outcomes in selected areas of emphasis will be assessed.

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

Courses in Social Sciences provide systematic study of observational and analytical 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. The study of the Social Sciences should provide students with opportunities for experiential and applied learning (Goals 1.3, 1.4), and should reflect the diversity of individuals and groups within and across human societies (Goal 3.2.1). *Relevant Student Learning Outcomes for these courses could include Inquiry; Information Literacy; SLO Critical Thinking; Problem Solving; Awareness of Cultural Diversity, and Awareness of Impact.*

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 model events. The study of history should engage students in the experience of interpreting the record of the past and drawing their own conclusions. Courses in this category should strive to promote cross-curricular learning, global awareness, and exploration of local histories and cultures (Goals 1.4 and 2.2.2). *Relevant Student Learning Outcomes for these courses could include Inquiry; Information Literacy; Critical Thinking; Means of Expression, and Awareness of Cultural Diversity.*

P4: Humanities (3 hours)

The humanities confront students with landmark texts that embody the 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, including the values of civil discourse, diversity and inclusiveness (Goal 3.2.1). *Relevant Student Learning Outcomes for these courses could include Critical Thinking; Means of Expression; and Awareness of Cultural Diversity.*

P5: Fine and Performing Arts

The Fine and Performing Arts courses will emphasize studying, interpreting and critically analyzing the creative arts, including works, events and performances (Initiative 1.1.2.1). Students will be introduced to traditional and contemporary concepts within the various modes of expression, along with theories about the nature of self-expression and how to interpret the creative arts within their socio-cultural contexts. Courses may emphasize the cultural heritage of this region as well as fine and performing arts in the global realm (Initiative 1.3.1 and 1.4). An important course component will be out-of-the-classroom experiences such as visits to gallery and museum exhibits, attendance at theater and musical productions and performances, and attending the lectures, readings, and presentations of visiting artists, performers and writers. Courses may also have an applied component to provide experiences with personal artistic expression. *Relevant Student Learning Outcomes for these courses may include Critical Thinking; Means of Expression; and Awareness of Cultural Diversity.*

P6: World Cultures (3 hours)

World Cultures courses will involve the study of significant contemporary issues in a global and multidisciplinary 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, foster awareness of diversity and issues of equity and inclusion across national and cultural divides (Initiatives 2.1.1 and 3.2.1). The study of world cultures should actively engage students in developing core abilities—synthesizing information from a variety of disciplines (which might include the natural and social sciences, history, the humanities and the arts) and communicating effectively (Goal 1.2). *Relevant Student Learning Outcomes for these courses could include Inquiry; Information Literacy; Critical Thinking; Problem Solving; Awareness of Cultural Diversity; and Awareness of Impact.*

Upper-level Perspective

Upper-level Perspective courses (ULP's) are intended to broaden and deepen students' LS education by allowing them to explore any LS Perspective as juniors or seniors, when they have matured in their thinking and aptitudes. Students take three hours from any upper-level (300 or 400) course in any Perspectives area, although in the interests of breadth, it cannot be from the student's discipline and cannot satisfy major requirements. Selected existing upper-level course in departments may be approved as Perspectives courses in Liberal Studies, and these courses will satisfy this requirement. The LS program also encourages the development of new upper-level LS courses that involve broad, even interdisciplinary, experiences and do not require prerequisite courses. ULP courses should align with WCU's strategic emphasis on academic excellence, particularly in terms of addressing core abilities: synthesizing information from a variety of sources; solving complex problems; communicating effectively and responsibly; practicing civic engagement; and clarifying and acting on purpose and values (Vision 2020 2.0, Goal 1.2)

Not only may departments submit existing and new ULP course proposals to the Liberal Studies Committee, but a student may propose a contract with the instructor of any upper-level course to have the course satisfy the ULP requirement, provided that the student satisfies class standing. In this case, specific source requirements, primarily in the areas of core abilities [see above], will be clearly identified or developed to satisfy the LS goals and areas of emphasis. Instructors are not bound to accept a contract proposal, which must be submitted before the semester begins. *All ULP courses must select a Liberal Studies Student Learning Outcome that will be emphasized in the class and can be assessed by the LS program.*

4. Program Assessment

WCU's Liberal Studies Program engages in an on-going assessment of student learning within its curriculum, which consists of approximately 215 courses. The scope and size of its curriculum means that Liberal Studies touches almost every student experience and almost every department at the university. For that reason, it is important evaluate the extent to which the Program achieves its objectives.

Moreover, the accreditation process requires program assessment, as SACS-COC comprehensive standard 8.2.b states that for general education competencies, the university must “identify expected outcomes, assess the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provide evidence of seeking improvement.” (SACS-COC, Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation, 2018, p. 70).

At WCU, the general education assessment process is managed by the Liberal Studies Assessment Director, a position newly created in AY 2018-2019. The LS Program utilizes an “artifact,” or student assignment-based, approach for its general education assessment. This approach centers on authentic

student work created within the Liberal Studies curriculum, and it is also more easily adapted to the wide variety of outcomes within the program, when compared with the most common standardized assessment instruments. Finally, the artifact-based approach does not significantly increase faculty workload because it measures assignments already utilized as an integral part of existing coursework.

To that end, the annual outcomes assessment process will address three primary questions:

1. **To what extent are WCU students demonstrating the university's Liberal Studies learning outcomes?**
2. **What are the strengths and weaknesses of the assessment process itself?**
3. **What recommendations do the data suggest for strengthening the Liberal Studies Program?**

For much more detailed information on the program's assessment process, please refer to the current [Liberal Studies Assessment Plan](#) and the associated [university webpage](#).

5. Program Administration

Functions of the administrative component will be based on an ongoing effort to raise awareness 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 proposals;
- Reviewing ongoing Liberal Studies courses and faculty based on sound assessment practices;
- Ensuring an appropriate schedule of Liberal Studies courses;
- Identifying appropriate faculty to participate in Liberal Studies course delivery, including First-Year Seminars;
- Providing professional development materials for faculty committed to excellent teaching in Liberal Studies;
- Overseeing assessment for the Liberal Studies Program;
- Participating in new faculty orientation and providing an overview of and expectations for the Liberal Studies Program;
- Publishing and maintaining a website that contains current information about the program and its assessment for faculty, students, and other interested parties.

Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

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 the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

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 Vice Provost for Academic Affairs. 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 Vice Provost for Academic Affairs 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 Proposal Information

The Liberal Studies Committee requests that all faculty submitting new course proposals keep the following guidance in mind:

- All Liberal Studies courses are open to students of any major.
- All Liberal Studies Upper Level Perspective courses are open to all students above the first-year level (30 credits or more).

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 from 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 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.

Additionally, any new course proposal 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.
- Identify at least one assignment within the course to be submitted for assessment of your selected Liberal Studies student learning outcomes. Describe how that particular assignment provides evidence of its related outcome.
- Indicate how this course will offer an intensive exploration and application of selected concepts, principles, theories, and modes of inquiry.
- 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.

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.

Policy on 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

Proposals for modifications to the Liberal Studies Program 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.

6. References

From WCU 2020 Vision 2.0 Strategic Plan: Sharpening our Focus on the Future

Initiative 1.1.1 Undertake a rigorous and inclusive process to prioritize all academic programs in alignment with the university mission based on the following criteria: Program History and Development,

and Expectations of the Program; External Demand for the program; Quality of Program Inputs and Processes; Quality of Program Outcomes; Equipment, Facilities, and other Resources; Size, Scope, and Productivity of the Program; Revenue and other Resources Generated by the Program; Costs and Other Expenses Associated with the Program; and Impact, Justification, and Overall Essentiality of the Program.

Initiative 1.3.3 Increase participation in high impact practices such as student research, project-based learning in upper-level courses, and on and off-campus internships.

Initiative 2.1.1 Create opportunities through DegreePlus for students to explore points of view on different issues and to understand the perspectives of others through civil and informed discourse and debate

Initiative 2.1.2 Promote a culture of student academic honesty, expanding educational programming, around academic integrity and truth seeking.

Initiative 2.3.1 Actively recruit and prepare faculty and appropriate staff to successfully facilitate student participation in DegreePlus.

Initiative 3.2.1 Ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion are foundational aspects of educational offerings.

From Southern Accreditation of Colleges and Schools – Commission on Colleges

Standard 8.2.b. The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results for student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs.