

Program Assessment and Review Committee
**Review and Recommendations Concerning
The Liberal Studies Program**
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I. Introduction

In the program review process, the Program Assessment and Review Committee (PARC) is asked to provide a University-wide perspective. In that role, the *Guidelines for Program Review* state that PARC will:

- a) review each program's self-study, external review, and responses to that review, and
- b) evaluate all recommendations and send its report to the Program Chair, Provost, Dean of Faculty, and AVP for Academic Programs.

In completing this assignment, a subcommittee was formed by PARC in Spring 2009 to reviewed the Liberal Studies Program's self-study, comments on the self-study made by the provost and dean, and the report of the external reviewers. The subcommittee drew also on its own familiarity with the Liberal Studies program in drafting comments and recommendations. These recommendations in turn were discussed and approved by the PARC Committee.

This PARC review is intended to highlight select areas mentioned in earlier report documents. Rather than supplant these documents, PARC urges the Liberal Studies program and administrators to continue to consider the many helpful comments generated during the review process.

II. Curriculum

Concerning the Liberal Studies curriculum, PARC highlights the following as reported by the External Reviewers:

1. Reviewers advised caution moving into the Accelerated Program Option (p 20 #8) and suggested (p.4) monitoring graduates in this option to see how well they are doing on CSET and in the classroom.

2. Concerns were expressed about the alignment between state standards (covered on CSET) and the Liberal Studies Major (p 4-5). For example, is there adequate coverage of the Arts, Mathematics (208/308), Health and Physical Education?
3. Reviewers expressed some concern about some GE courses used in the Liberal Studies program not reaching a statewide GE standard (p. 5).
4. Liberal Studies should improve articulation agreements with community colleges and check its curriculum against CSU Lower Division Transfer Pattern (Liberal Studies Teacher Preparation Track) (p 21).
5. PARC makes note of the following: External reviewers “would encourage further exploration of the development of a BA Special Major that exists at almost all other CSU campus. Implementing such an interdisciplinary, self-designed major would not have to go on the campus’ Academic Plan. (All other CSU were simply given blanket permission to have a BA and MA special major because there is little cost because degree plans are made up of a mixture of existing courses from many departments). These Special majors usually require someone or a committee to assist students to develop a proposal for an individualized, interdisciplinary combination of courses from two or more disciplines with the help of two or three faculty member from the appropriate departments.”

III. Resources

In looking at faculty, staff, and space resources available to the Liberal Studies, PARC notes the following:

1. The primary resource concern emphasized by the external review team was the lack of official assigned time associated with the Director's position (p 9, 20, 21). They suggest several solutions (p 9): extend this position to include a summer appointment; provide a full time appointment or a nine unit appointment; or eliminate his responsibility for advising for the Concentrated Studies Program.

Other issues were relatively minor:

2. The library should expand their physical holdings generally appropriate for Liberal Studies, and specifically those addressing education in several areas (p 11-12).

3. Space issues, including office, instructional, and informal areas where students can congregate, present challenges that will grow with the major (p 12).
4. The program is encouraged to seek external funding from state and federal sources which present particular opportunities for engagement with local school districts (p 14).

IV. Assessment

Both the self study and the external reviewers describe the accomplishments and challenges in assessment of Liberal Studies as a University-wide program. They describe the role of the Liberal Studies Program Committee, the clarity of program learning outcomes, and provide suggestions as to how Liberal Studies can systematically generating data on student learning.

1. Assessment is an area of concern both to the Liberal Studies program (p 29) and to the review committee (p 6). While both the program and the reviewers agree there is a need for a systemic program-wide assessment of the program learning outcomes, they also note the difficulty in implementing and sustaining such an effort.
2. Both the Program (p 30) and reviewers (p 6) note the need for continual redefinition of the assessment needs of the program and ways to implement appropriate program-level assessment to ensure the program fully meets its goals. Further, the program has decided on a strategy that will enhance their efforts to create and sustain such assessment efforts (p 30).
3. Both the program (p 30) and the reviewers (p 7) recommend the use of embedded course assessment. PARC notes the use of embedded course assessments are sometimes difficult to implement since Liberal Studies does not own² the courses their students take.
4. The program notes the strong success of the graduates in the Teaching and Learning option. They highlight, in particular, data that indicate CSUCI graduates are better prepared than are their peers from other CSU campuses (p 30-32). These data are augmented by findings that the program produces very successful credential candidates based on CSET exams a finding also noted by the reviewers (p 6).
5. Both the program (p 25) and the reviewers (p 6) highlight the importance of formative assessments that can track student progress through the program and beyond.

V. Student services

Concerning service to undergraduate students majoring in Liberal Studies, PARC highlights the following:

1. Advising:

Strength:

Academic advising for liberal studies majors is strong (p 17) and coordinated. Academic advising occupies 50% of the work assignment of the liberal studies director (p 37) indicating the priority that is given to it. Students advised to complete two minors (p 11)

Considerations:

The director needs more release time for advisement or more advising support. The transfer advisement form should be improved and attention given to transfer advisement (p 64)

External reviewers mention that the campus should work on a systematic recruitment of liberal studies students.

Could the time to degree, reported as over five years, be decreased with advisement. (p 35)

2. Classes

Strengths:

Class sizes are relatively small (p 7).

The field work component to many liberal studies classes is a positive (p 7)

Considerations:

With the campus commitment to undergraduate research, there should be more involvement of liberal studies students in faculty research.

The student mix between male and female can be improved by the recruitment of more male students (p 40).

3. Library

The Broome Library is well equipped and has good media support.

4. Student input and participation

Considerations:

External reviewers mention that there should be more input from students for purpose of program evaluation. An annual survey and alumni would provide additional input.

The program should consider fostering a club or activity exclusively for Liberal science majors to increase a sense of identity among students.

The program can encourage student involvement in advisory boards and committees.

External reviewers asked whether there were scholarships and extra funding available exclusively for Liberal studies majors.

VI. Structure of the Liberal Studies Unit

The external reviewers' report of the Liberals Studies Program is largely a one-sided report, in as much as it focuses, mostly, on the Teaching and Learning Option.. This approach reflects a common practice within the CSU of separating the administration of the Liberal studies Option that prepares prospective multiple subject teachers from those majors who seek amore traditional Liberal Arts baccalaureate degree. The review of the Concentrated Studies Option is cursory, at best.

The primary recommendation from the reviewers regarding structure is that CSUCI should consider separating the two Liberal Studies Options under separate administrative structures. Such separation would permit a more focused preparation of prospective teachers; the report recommended placing the traditional Liberal Arts option within the Center for Integrated Studies. Dividing the majors in this way would also cause the programs at Channel Islands to more closely resemble programs on other CSU campuses.

Issues Raised by the External Reviewers:

- The existing structure may be responsible for the rapid turn over in the leadership of Liberal studies; it may also be linked to level of budget support and authority.
- Structure of the curriculum is in part determined by the lack of support for a summer school operation.
- The current structure provides no opportunity to build a strong esprit de corps within either the T&L or the Concentrated Studies majors – there are no faculty champions for these students
- Other elements that are impacted by structure:
 - Assessment
 - Recruitment
 - Articulation with feeder colleges
 - Retention within LS – separating the advising function for T&L works against building esprit de corps and pride in the T&L program
- External reviewers seem to think that at least one of the professional Academic Advising staff members might be assigned to Liberal studies.
- As the T&L option in liberal studies grows, so will the demand for advising.
- Recommended that CSUCI continue to consider moving the Concentrated studies option to the Center for Integrative Studies and operate the Concentrated studies option as a “Special Major’s Degree program.

Response and recommendations:

- Structure is less an issue than adequate reassigned time for the LS Director to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of the position. This could, in part, be resolved by making the Director appointment a fiscal year appointment as suggested by the reviewers. But the real issue is not structure, it is a “budget Issue.”
- The notion of having the Liberal Studies Concentrated Studies Option as the advising responsibility of the LS Director as well as the Teaching and Learning Option is a foreign notion to the external reviewers, both of whom serve on CSU campuses where there are two separate administrative units for liberal studies:
 - One unit that has the undergraduate preparation for prospective elementary teachers.
 - One unit that has responsibility for what might be called the “General Studies” or more traditional Liberal Arts baccalaureate degree.
 Separating the two advising functions will only increase the cost of program administration, since there will need to be some duplication of effort.
- Short term, with the State budget situation as it is, and the inability to start new majors, there will increased pressure on the LS Director to advise more Concentrated Studies Option students:

The implementation of the Nursing Major has created a whole new cadre of prospective LS majors who come to CSUCI for the Nursing program but are not admitted and must find a health related baccalaureate degree program.

The relative dearth of academic structure, and a lack of clarity in terms of relationships, authority and governance among the academic (disciplinary) units, the academic service units (GE) and the mission based centers of the University all contribute to the structural challenges at CSUCI. The nascent status of our campus and its relative smallness provide few economies of scale, and in many cases lead to *apparent* inefficiencies in operation. However, if we are to be successful and grow to become the regional university to which we aspire, then, it will require that we invest in both the management and leadership dimensions of our academic programs. To support one and not the other will likely not produce the kind of university that we all envision.

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