

The Liberal Studies Program at Cal State East Bay
Annual Report Winter 2009

Part I - Brief Self-Study

Summary: Over the past year, the Liberal Studies program has maintained its progress toward the goals stated in our most-recent five year review (submitted to CAPR in December 2006). Working toward these goals was briefly complicated by our office relocation in February 2009, a task which took considerable effort, but we continue to move forward, solidifying our vision for the future of the program. Our achievements and objectives are briefly described below.

Curriculum and Student Learning:

Academic year 2008-2009 is the first for which the revised version of the Liberal Studies Major approved by the Academic Senate in Spring 2007 became official. All students entering the major must now choose between two tracks – one designed for prospective teachers and one designed for a more interdisciplinary major with a liberal arts emphasis. Thus far, the revision of the major has proved successful and students have expressed their satisfaction with the changes.

Student Advising and Retention:

As a result of the program revision, we developed new advising tools to assist our majors in working toward degree completion. Our two SSPIIs meet daily on the phone and in person with students who have questions about their progress in the Liberal Studies major and also provide advice to students interested in making Liberal Studies their major. This personal advising is one of the most important tools we have in improving student retention.

Resources:

Traditionally, Liberal Studies has not been a program that has demanded much in the way of resources. This continues to be the case. Currently, Liberal Studies draws a small budget for office materials, and resources for our office staff of two SSPIIs and one ASAIL.

Plan:

Over the course of the next year, Liberal Studies needs to continue our efforts at increasing recruitment. Our communications with our primary “feeder” community college campuses must be affirmed and enhanced in order to encourage a greater number of transfer students to select Liberal Studies as their major. In addition, over the next year Liberal Studies will further develop its advising tools to give students a better sense of progress through the major. Most importantly, Liberal Studies needs to continue its efforts at gaining CCTC approval for its program. We were last in contact with Lisa Winstead and Terrence Janicki, officials from CCTC, in February 2009 and are currently waiting for further instruction from the state. Finally, as a result of recent changes in the Teachers Credential program administered by CEAS, Liberal Studies will need to make some minor revisions to coursework listed in the Liberal Studies catalog description.

Part II – Summary of Assessment Results

The Liberal Studies Program still needs to work on developing a strong assessment plan. Because of the dispersed nature of our curriculum and the fact that, as a program, we do not offer our own courses, it is difficult to directly assess student performance. Our students are successfully graduating, but except for this very broad metric, there are very few other data points available for capture.

For those students in our Blended/Fast-track program (about 10% of the major), this task is easier. Ninety percent of these students pass the CSET in the summer after their junior year and go on to student teaching. For this small sample, at least, we can declare that the major has prepared students to complete one of the major hurdles toward achieving their career objectives.

For those students who are not in the Blended/Fast-track program capturing this information is much more difficult as they do not typically take the CSET until after graduation and reporting scores to different sources requires a fee which many students choose not to pay. We can capture scores from students who apply to CSUEB's teacher Credential program, but have no method for acquiring scores from students who apply elsewhere. Furthermore, those students who are not on the Liberal Studies Teacher Preparation pathway do not take the CSET at all and without the ability to create a capstone course of some sort (because we are a program, not a department) we are left with few options for assessing their performance objectively. In short, an improved assessment process remains a major goal for the Liberal Studies program.

Part III – Enrollment Statistics

According to the most recent data from Institutional Research, Liberal Studies lost 47 majors between Fall 2007 and Fall 2008. This downward trend continues to follow patterns seen in Liberal Studies programs across the CSU, but is significantly less than the 112 majors lost between Fall 2006 and Fall 2007. After 3 academic years since Fall 2005, our rate of loss of majors has finally begun to slow and hopefully has reached a point of reversal.