

ACC TRANSMITTAL FORM

ACC #: 32

DATE: 2-28-06

PROPOSAL SPONSOR(S)/
ORIGINATING AREA(S): Liberal Arts & Sciences Council

DEPARTMENTAL CURRICULUM COMMITTEE (If applicable):

RECOMMENDED: _____ NOT RECOMMENDED: _____ DATE OF ACTION: _____

VOTE: IN FAVOR _____ OPPOSED _____ ABSTAINED _____

COMMENTS: _____

SPONSOR SIGNATURE: [Signature] Beard (Chair)
Liberal Arts & Sciences Council

DEPARTMENT CHAIR SIGNATURE (if applicable): _____
(Note: All curricular proposals require approval of Departmental Curriculum Committee and Department Chair)

ACC SUB-COMMITTEE (Check box)

CC APC SA TEC STR PLAN AD HOC

ACTION TAKEN: Recommended ✓ Not Recommended _____ Tabled _____

Other _____ (Specify) Date 5/4/06

VOTE: IN FAVOR 11 OPPOSED 0 ABSTAINED 3

NO REVISION LA&S DESIGNATION: YES NO N/A

REVISION (Summarize and attach proposal):
SOME FRIENDLY AMENDMENTS

SIGNATURE: [Signature]
Sub-committee Chairperson

ALL COLLEGE COMMITTEE

ACTION TAKEN: Recommended ✓ Not Recommended _____ Tabled _____

Other _____ (Specify)

VOTE: IN FAVOR 10 OPPOSED 0 ABSTAINED 0

DATE OF ACTION: 5/9/06

NO REVISION LA&S DESIGNATION: YES NO N/A

REVISION (Summarize and attach proposal):
SEVERAL REVISIONS
FINAL FORM IS ATTACHED FIRST
ORIGINAL FORM IS ALSO ATTACHED

SIGNATURE: [Signature]
All College Committee Chairperson

PRESIDENT

CC: VICE PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

APPROVED: [Signature] NOT APPROVED: _____ OTHER: (Specify) _____

SIGNATURE: [Signature] DATE: 9/20/06

Proposed Liberal Arts and Sciences Curriculum (As approved on May 9, 2006 by the ACC.)

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

A) Rationale

1. The existing liberal arts and sciences curriculum, at 60 credits, is among the most extensive of institutions of higher learning. It limits (and in some cases precludes) students' ability to explore areas beyond their major.
2. The requirements within the current 60 credit core are complex, numerous and generally cumbersome. Students and faculty advisors, alike, have difficulty navigating through the program. Graduation for more than a few students has been delayed as a result.
3. Over time, the meaning of the requirements has become muddled, leading to a "watering down" of the intended requirements.
4. It is the intent of this new proposal that students have more freedom to explore areas of interest or need, thus facilitating their attaining academic and professional objectives.
5. After reviewing curricula from many other institutions it is clear that a core liberal arts and sciences program must be regularly revisited and reviewed. We set out this curriculum as the beginning of an ongoing process. It is recommended that a major review and possible revision occur at least every three years.

The purpose of the proposed curriculum is to address these concerns and to insure that students do attain a set of skills and objectives deemed essential for a liberal arts education.

B) Objectives

These objectives lay out what we believe are the abilities all well educated individuals should have in this time and place. They are written in language describing actions rather than general concepts in order to make them more clearly assessable.

Problem Solving and Synthesizing:

Students will think critically and synthesize ideas within and across disciplines. They will fuse experience, training and research into considered judgment, then working individually or with others, form problem solving strategies and evaluate their effectiveness. *Among these strategies, students will analyze and interpret data as a means to evaluate arguments and make informed choices. (Friendly amendment at ACC.)*

Communication

Students will speak, read, write and listen to create and understand meanings using a variety of media. They will recognize how to participate in or lead groups to accomplish goals.

Citizenship

Students will articulate the relationships among local, national and global concerns, interests and needs. They will recognize possibilities and opportunities to enact positive change on an individual or group level.

Ethical Reasoning

Students will recognize the ethical issues involved in human actions and be able to formulate a set of principles and virtues which can be brought to bear in personal and public decision making.

The Arts

Students will examine various forms of artistic and literary works, understand the contexts from which they emerge, and be able to articulate and defend their meanings and values.

C) Procedure

The implementation of these LA&S changes will occur in the fall of 2007 *for all freshman and transfer students. Students enrolled at the college prior to 2007 will have the option to select this new curriculum. Once a student has selected the new curriculum, s/he may not return to the original LA&S program. (Friendly amendment at the ACC.)* To gain approval for the clusters below, departments in the next year are urged to submit their *former LA&S (Friendly amendment at ACC to remove the word professional)* courses in a bulk proposal to the ACC. It is suspected that most courses will be self-evident: most of the science, math and computer science courses will fit under cluster 1; most of the history, sociology, and psychology courses will fit under Citizenship and the World; the literature, art, and music courses will fit under The Arts. Such majors as philosophy may need to designate which clusters are sought: *Logic and Philosophy of Science* may fit into 1, *Philosophy of Human Nature and Political and Social Philosophy* may fit into 2, while *Aesthetics* may fit under 3.

Only approved LA&S (Friendly amendment at ACC) courses may count in these 48 credit LA&S requirements.

PART TWO: CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

A) Curricular Clusters

A minimum of 36 credits will be taken within three broad areas or "clusters" of course work. These clusters were designed in order to respond to the objectives established as the underlying logic of the curriculum.

1) **Science, Math, and Technology: 4 courses (Minimum 12 credits)**

- 1 math course
- 1 lab science course
- 1 health/fitness-related course (including Health and Fitness but allowing for other possibilities.)
- 1 elective

These courses should work towards the following objectives:

- Problem Solving and Synthesizing
- Possibly Communication
- Possibly Citizenship

II) **Citizenship and the World: 3 courses (Minimum 9 credits).** One of these courses must have an International Perspective.

- 1 history course
- 1 human behavior course
- 1 elective

These courses should work towards the following objectives:

- Communication
- Citizenship
- Ethical Reasoning
- Possibly Problem Solving and Synthesizing
- Possibly the Arts

III) **The Arts: 5 courses (including Writing I and II) (Minimum 15 credits).** One of these courses must have an International Perspective.

- 1 art or music course
- 1 literature course
- Writing I and II
- 1 elective

These courses should work towards the following objectives:

Communication
The Arts
Possibly Citizenship
Possibly Ethical Reasoning

B) Other courses:

It is up to departments to meet the BHE mandated computer science requirement as well as Speaking and Listening requirements.

C) Additional Requirements

In addition to the 36 credit core, students must select from three *LA&S* credit options *taken outside the student's first major. (Friendly amendment at Curriculum Committee)* The intention of this requirement is to insure that students use the increased flexibility of this curriculum in a productive, academic fashion.

- a. **Option A:** 6 credits in a foreign language *and* 6 credits Advanced LA&S on the 2000 level or above. *(Friendly amendment at Curriculum Committee.)*
- b. **Option B:** 12 credits (with a minimum of 6 credits on the 2000 level or above) in a discipline outside the student's *first (Friendly amendment at the ACC)major*—this would be almost a minor in another field and may encourage students to complete a minor as they would need only two more classes in most cases.
- c. **Option C:** Designed curriculum submitted by the completion of 60 credits. The student, working with an advisor, develops a unique curriculum based on his or her interests, needs and/or goals. *The curriculum, with a statement of its rationale, must be approved by the advisor, the department chair, and the appropriate dean, and then filed with the registrar. (Friendly amendment at the ACC)* This curriculum must include a minimum of 12 credits, and may be taken from any department and use any courses that are otherwise available to the student. The curriculum, with a statement of its rationale, should be filed with the registrar. No more than one course within this option may be completed before the option form and rationale are filed with the registrar.

Comments on Options A,B, and C:

- Each department would decide whether to require their students *in each of their various programs (Friendly amendment at the ACC)* to study a foreign language (Option A). This would phase in making language a more common option among our students, possibly leading

to a language requirement in the future. It also would be more manageable logistically, in light of our limitations in this area.

- These options should come up for review in 3 years. At that time, it should be decided whether some foreign language study should be a requirement for all students. It might further be determined that six credits in a language is not enough, and that instead we should move to requiring 2 full years or the equivalent in language skill.
- Double *counting (friendly amendment at ACC)* will only be allowed in terms of the International Perspective (IP) courses, which can count as IP as well as its cluster. Thus all students will take a minimum of 48 credits as the core, a reduction of 12 credits from the existing core.
- The interdisciplinary and multicultural requirements are removed, as the clusters, the learning communities, and the International Perspective requirements *will (friendly amendment at ACC)* achieve these objectives. *Further, these values should be addressed by individual departments and faculty in their courses. (Friendly amendment, ACC)*

PART FOUR: LEARNING COMMUNITIES

In lieu of the Freshman Foundation Year, Fitchburg State should instead revise the Freshman Year curriculum through the creation of Learning Communities, involving the linkage of two or three courses and addressing a common theme; the development of team-taught inter-disciplinary seminars; or the formulation of freshmen seminars that would also address special themes.

A Learning Community can be defined as an attempt to link courses, during a given semester, around an interdisciplinary theme, and to enroll a common cohort of students. Learning Communities can serve a number of purposes, and can offer significant benefits to the students, faculty, and college community. For example, they can:

- Help students integrate material across the disciplines.
- Promote active, participatory learning.
- Enhance the students' sense of being part of a community.
- Facilitate discussion between the faculty and the students.
- Enable students to discover the connections across the disciplines.
- Assist in retention efforts.

Recommendations:

For Learning Communities to succeed there needs to be an institutional commitment campus-wide to the program. Therefore, we strongly recommend:

- Faculty will need to commit to developing learning communities with their colleagues, and coordinating their teaching so that the Community is successful.
- Writing Courses will be part of many of these communities, so the English Department will need to make a special commitment to the project.
- The Administration will need to support the effort completely. Several things will be required of the Administration:
 - a. The Learning Communities need to be allowed to run even if their enrollment is not as high as in other courses. Academic Affairs and the Liberal Arts and Sciences Council will need to mutually agree on a minimum enrollment for the Learning Communities to run. (As this will become the standard curriculum for incoming students, sufficient enrollment should not be an issue.)
 - b. Prior to each semester, a special session should be held for the faculty members who are linking their courses. This session should be coordinated by the Liberal Arts & Sciences Council and the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning. Participants in these sessions should receive a special stipend for their extra efforts in linking their courses.
 - c. Faculty should be given a course reduction for their time and effort in developing and teaching Learning Community courses.

- d. Enrollment Services, Academic Affairs, the Division of Students Affairs, and members of the Liberal Arts and Sciences Council should meet regularly to coordinate the process of publicizing the program, and registering students for the Learning Communities.
- To facilitate interdisciplinary teaching, faculty should be encouraged to develop team-taught courses for first-year students. Each faculty member should have the course count towards their course load, as is done for the Leadership Academy faculty.

PART FIVE: CONCLUSION

It is the belief of the Liberal Arts and Sciences Council that this proposed curriculum will not only respond to the concerns raised about the existing curriculum but will move the college forward in the manner in which we prepare our students for life beyond the college. It is also our belief that this curriculum should facilitate the process of assessing the quality of the education we provide at Fitchburg State College. Finally, it is essential that this document be understood as a step in a process of curricular review and revision and not a final end product. We strongly recommend that the Liberal Arts and Sciences Council continue regularly to work with issues related to the core curriculum and that a substantial review and revision be conducted every three years.

Respectfully submitted,

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George Bohrer (Interim Associate Dean of Graduate and Continuing Education)

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