

CCAS Series on Interdisciplinarity

Session #2 – Liberal Studies/ General Studies/Multidisciplinary Degree Programs

Organized by
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GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY®

BROOKS COLLEGE OF
INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

ANNE L. HISKES

DEAN OF THE BROOKS COLLEGE OF
INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY
ALLENDALE, MI

LIBERAL STUDIES AT GRAND VALLEY

1979: Birth of the Liberal Studies major

- Bachelor's of Arts (requires 3rd semester proficiency in a foreign language)**
- Bachelor's of Science (requires STAT 215 & any 300-level course with STAT 215 as a prerequisite)**

2005: Obtained department status and became the first academic department in the new College of Interdisciplinary Studies



LIBERAL STUDIES AT GRAND VALLEY

Fall 2014:

- 290 majors
- 12 tenure-track/tenured faculty in the department; 5 fulltime, non-tenure-track faculty
- 3 joint appointments with the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- 30+ part-time, non-tenure-track faculty

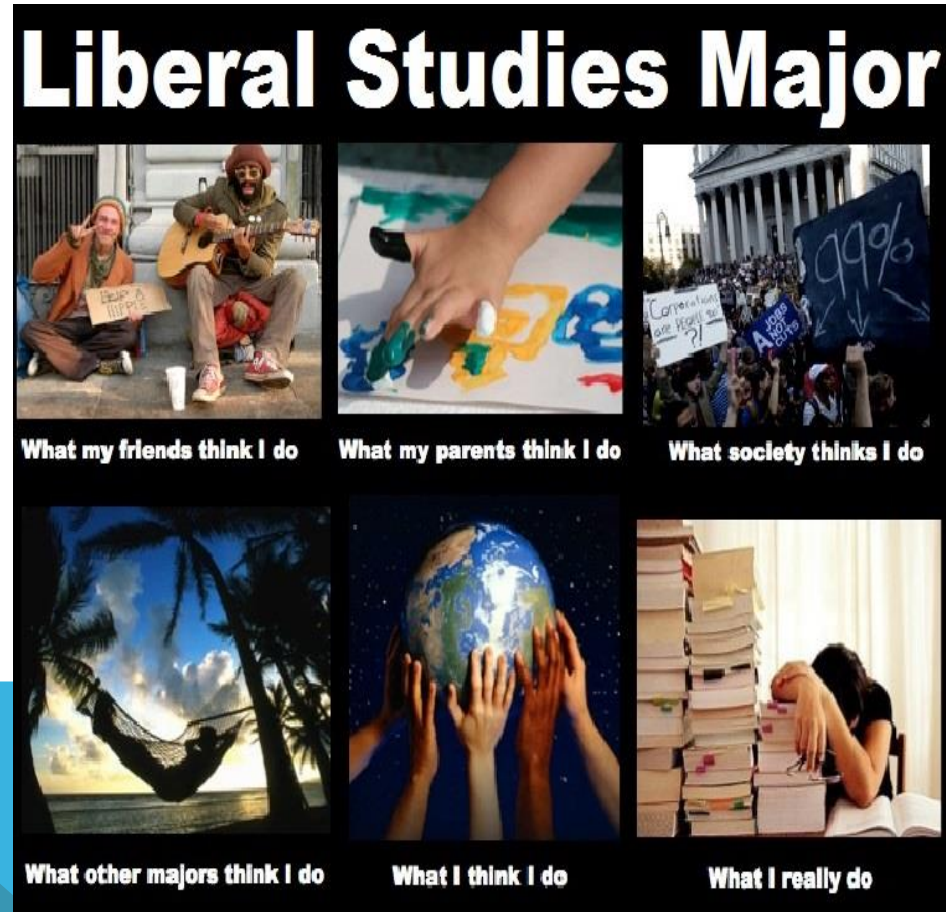
Curriculum Structure:

- 18 credits of required core courses (6 courses)
- 18 credits of individualized area of focus
- 9 credits of electives recommended in an area of career preparation
- 2 or more credits of an Internship or Practicum
- 3 credits of Senior Seminar

DEMOGRAPHICS OF GVSU LIB MAJORS 2015

	LIB Studies Majors	GVSU Undergrads
AGE: 25-70 years	51%	9%
Part-time Status	55%	14%
First Generation	57%	41%
Minority or Multi-Ethnic	21%	15%
Gender- Female	68%	58%

CHALLENGES – COMMUNICATING THE VALUE OF A LIBERAL STUDIES MAJOR



CHALLENGES FOR STUDENTS

Knowing self and finding a passion

Creating a coherent plan of study and integrating the pieces

Articulating the value of Liberal Studies to self and others



TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS

Using Appreciative Advising techniques and dialogue

Requiring integrative statements in 2 required courses

Creating a student portfolio of all work (GVSU uses an e-portfolio)

Establishing a co-curricular “Professional Skills Program” with faculty, students, alumni, career services, and community professionals.



MEETING THE NEEDS OF ADULT LEARNERS

Fall 2014 - launched the first accelerated 19-month degree completion program at the downtown Grand Rapids, MI campus

- Hybrid format and cohort-based
- Take one 5-week course at a time
- Leadership Emphasis
- Project-based, community-engaged

Winter 2015 – launched the first cohort at the Holland, MI campus



COMMUNICATING VALUE TO THE UNIVERSITY AND THE COMMUNITY

*Create and publicize assessable student learning
outcomes*

Perspective-taking and integration of knowledge

Interdisciplinary understanding of a complex problem or
intellectual question

Advanced critical thinking skills

Application of classroom knowledge to real-world problems

Social responsibility with an examination of how local action
connects to global conditions

Intercultural competency in terms of multiple world views,
experiences, and power structures

COMMUNICATING VALUE TO THE UNIVERSITY AND THE COMMUNITY

*Cultivate an excellent, award-winning faculty with expertise
in distinctive areas that advance the University's strategic
priorities*

On-line and hybrid teaching for accessibility and inclusion

Expertise in diversity and intercultural communication for GenEd
courses and global citizenship

Project-based, community engaged teaching for high impact learning
practices

Professional development in emerging areas for curricular and
program innovation

COMMUNICATING VALUE TO THE UNIVERSITY AND THE COMMUNITY

*Create an innovative and relevant curriculum
around empowerment and social change*

Visionary Thinkers

Life Journeys

The Idea of Nature

Creativity

Wicked Problems of Sustainability

Design Thinking for Real-World Problems

LIB 100 – a first year experience course on the meaning of a liberal education and
the role of education in social justice

INSTITUTIONAL VALUE OF LIBERAL STUDIES

Degree-completion program because of flexible curriculum

Provides a place for creative students with multiple interests

Provides a place for students who may not be admitted into a secondary-admissions program to combine interests

Enables many students to find their passion and blossom

Incubator for innovative courses and programs

Attracts excellent, creative faculty



CHALLENGES FOR CHAIRS AND DEANS

Creating a departmental and program identity – Liberal Studies is not a “catch all”

Creating a community of faculty – faculty from diverse Ph.D. backgrounds and different employment status

The chair must be a translator and interpreter across faculty’s disciplines

Services and staffing across multiple West Michigan locations

(Liberal Studies is the only BA/BS degree offered at all GVSU centers.)

Communicating the nature of Liberal Studies to other advising centers across campus

Communicating the value of Liberal Studies to employers

Fundraising and Friend-raising for Liberal Studies Programs

CHALLENGES FOR CHAIRS AND DEANS

GVSU's Liberal Studies Department is privileged

- Belonging to an Interdisciplinary College with only other interdisciplinary programs
- Having its own tenure track/tenured faculty
- Having a Provost and President who are committed to interdisciplinary teaching and innovation



The Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies

EMILY SALLEE
DEAN, COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND
SCIENCES

PARK UNIVERSITY
PARKVILLE, MISSOURI

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES (BSIS)

Created in 2011 as a flexible degree for the University's large transfer and military student populations.

Students design a major by combining two minors (of between 18-21 hours) from different disciplines.

One minor must be listed in the catalog; the other may be listed in the catalog or created by the student out of set of courses that represent a body of knowledge (as approved by the BSIS Program Coordinator).

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES (BSIS)

Three required “interdisciplinary and integrative learning” courses are required of all students the program to provide concepts and tools for reflection, synthesis, application and integration of knowledge from the two minors.

Total credit hours required for the degree = 120 (with minimum of 37 upper-division hours); offered face-to-face, in 16-week and 8-week courses, and fully online.

Program Coordinator of the BSIS is a full-time faculty member in philosophy with release time for administrative duties; no other full-time faculty members are designated for the program.

INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS

Founded in 1875, Park University is private, independent liberal arts institution

Flagship campus of approximately 1,800 (primarily) full-time students is located in a suburb of Kansas City, Missouri

An additional 17,000 students served outside of the Kansas City area across 40 campus centers

University relies on a cadre of 131 full-time faculty and approximately 1,300 adjunct faculty

Open admissions model outside of the flagship campus

park university campus centers nationwide



INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS - STUDENTS

33 years old – average age

41% from ethnic, cultural or socio-economic backgrounds historically underrepresented in higher education

61% active duty military

87% part-time

50 states and 65 countries represented

63 undergraduate and graduate programs offered



BSIS STUDENTS

126 – current number of students enrolled in the BSIS

75% – 25-70 years old

.07% – first generation (self-reported)

60% – part-time status

30% – minority or multi-ethnic

63% – female

Popular minors used in the BSIS

Body of Knowledge	History	English
Psychology	Military Studies	Social Psychology
Social Work	Accounting	Management
Criminal Justice	Graphic Design	Leadership

PROGRAM UNDERPINNINGS

The student will develop proficiency in *interdisciplinary and integrative thinking* by:

- Asking meaningful questions about complex problems
- Collaborating effectively with others to define and pursue complex problems
- Considering problems from different disciplinary perspectives and using diverse forms of inquiry to forge new knowledge
- Developing and testing his/her holistic understanding of issues
Making connections across coursework and applying that knowledge into his/her academic, professional, and civic life

CURRICULUM AND ADVISING

Gateway: LE 100, First-Year Liberal Education Seminar or LE 299, Liberal Education and the Park Advantage

Midpoint: LE 300, Seminar in Integrative and Interdisciplinary Learning (*special topics-based; also used in the general education program*)

- Example courses:
 - Genocide
 - Media and Elections
 - Globalization
 - Ethics and Psychology of Humor
 - Ethnobiology
 - Serial Killers
 - Urbanization

Capstone: LE 400, Senior Project or LE 399, The Nature of Interdisciplinarity

On the flagship campus, BSIS students are assigned a full-time faculty in the first minor chosen; online and at campus centers, students are advised by professional success advisors.

STRENGTHS

Reflects many of the values of the institution's liberal arts foundation

Creates a flexible path, especially for transfer students who have amassed significant college credit they wish to apply to a major

Creates a “plan B” for students to stay on track in terms of time-to-degree when personal or academic challenges arise



STRENGTHS

Allows the institution to more easily articulate to associate of applied science degrees

Attracts high performing students who may have chosen to double major in different economic times

Possesses more structure and accountability than earlier models of “personal degrees” at the institution by utilizing faculty created/catalog minors

Incentivizes departments to place their minors online

WEAKNESSES AND THREATS

No dedicated interdisciplinary studies faculty lines or community for faculty or students

“Sold” by many constituents in ways that generate conflicting views the program’s purpose, rigor, and outcomes

Attracts some students whose primary interest in rapid time-to-degree might interfere with their appreciation of writing and critical thinking-intensive interdisciplinary and integrative learning courses



WEAKNESSES AND THREATS

Attracts some students who could not maintain satisfactory academic progress in their first attempted major – this could signal lack of readiness for college-level study

Diversity of student audience poses challenges for online course development

Multiple advising models risks misinformation

“Openness” of program challenges program assessment

OPPORTUNITIES: WHAT'S AHEAD

Invest in faculty development for interdisciplinary studies – disrupt disciplinary silos; adopt relevant institutional definitions and understandings

Petition for more support for team-developed and team-taught courses

Emphasize problem-based learning; institutionalize the senior project as a requirement



OPPORTUNITIES: WHAT'S AHEAD

Create an appropriately prescribed advising protocol to ensure that the right messages are conveyed about the strengths and limitations of the program to prepare students for graduate study and employment

Turn to AAC&U and other professional organizations for guidance on program assessment for interdisciplinary programs

Consider organizational changes to promote the stature and visibility of interdisciplinary studies, leading to approval of dedicated faculty lines

***College of Social Sciences & Interdisciplinary
Studies
Sacramento State***



**SACRAMENTO
STATE**

ORN B. BODVARSSON
DEAN

THE LIBERAL STUDIES MAJOR IN THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY (CSU) SYSTEM:

Focused on serving the market for K-8 education in the state

Outcome of the Ryan Act (1970) by the California Legislature, which mandates that persons who seek to become K-8 teachers must earn a baccalaureate degree in an academic major first, then secure a teaching credential

Liberal Studies programs in the CSU must be approved by the California Commission on Teaching Credentials (CCTC), which oversees the implementation of state laws with respect to teacher preparation

All aspiring K-8 teachers must pass the *California Subject Examination for Teachers*; The Liberal Studies major prepares them for this test.

Liberal Studies degree is offered at 22 of the 23 CSUs

PATHWAYS TO BECOMING A MULTIPLE SUBJECT (K-8) TEACHER IN CALIFORNIA:

Pathway A:

Get a degree in some single subject area (as you would even if you had no plans to be a teacher), then obtain your teaching credential

Pathway B:

Get a degree in a major especially designed to prepare you for a K-8 teaching credential (“multiple subject” major)

Roughly 50% of aspiring K-8 teachers in California choose Pathway B, which creates a natural market for Liberal Studies degrees in California

MULTIPLE SUBJECT MAJORS AT SACRAMENTO STATE

At Sacramento State, there are two multiple subject majors:

- (i) BA in Child Development (College of Education)
- (ii) BA in Liberal Studies (College of Social Sciences & Interdisciplinary Studies)

The selling point for our Liberal Studies major is that, in contrast to the Child Development major A, it provides more flexibility in course selection and greater opportunities for the breadth of training needed, while at the same time putting the student immediately on the trajectory for successful completion of the *California Subject Examination for Teachers*

Program is popular with transfer students; relatively robust articulation agreements with 2-year schools in the region

All majors are waived out of General Education requirements

FACTS ABOUT LIBERAL STUDIES BA AT SACRAMENTO STATE

Start date: 1974

Had its home in former School of Arts & Sciences until 1996, when university reorganized and placed the program in the new College of Social Sciences & Interdisciplinary Studies

Two programs within the major:

1. Traditional – the “pre-prep” program for students wishing to teach K-8
2. Non-Traditional – for students interested in a multidisciplinary major, but who do not necessarily plan to become teachers

FACTS ABOUT LIBERAL STUDIES BA AT SACRAMENTO STATE

Students must complete 120 credits and satisfy the University's foreign language requirement

Approximately 500 majors (75% choose the traditional program)

No dedicated faculty lines in the program; only staffing is a Director (75% release time), a full time staff advisor, one staff support person, and three faculty advisors from three different Colleges

Governed by a *Liberal Studies Faculty Council*, comprising faculty from the various areas of the curriculum within the major

THE “TRADITIONAL” PROGRAM

Comprises the first 8 semesters of a 9-semester “Blended Elementary Teacher Education Program (BETEP),” which is offered jointly by the Liberal Studies program and the College of Education; 9th semester culminates in students taking the *California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET)* to obtain the teaching credential

Students encouraged to plan for taking the BETEP “package”

Approximately 75% of “traditional” program majors go on to credential programs, although not necessarily at Sacramento State


Very proactive and “intrusive” advising structure in place

Major requires completion of 100 credits

- 88 in Core
- 12 in a concentration

THE CORE

Comprises coursework in the following areas:

- Reading, Language and Literature
 - Mathematics
 - Natural Science
 - Social Science and Humanities
 - Visual and Performing Arts
 - Physical Education
 - Health Science
 - Human Development
 - Integrative Study (summative)
 - Field Experience (summative)
- 

THE CORE

Students take courses in 19 different departments

The summative components include:

(Integrative Study) – A course in “American Space and Identity” or “Elementary Mathematics and the Learning Process”

(Field Experience) – A course in “Human Development and Elementary Field Experience” and a course in “Cooperative Education Experience” or one of four courses in tutoring children.

THE CONCENTRATIONS

- Students may choose a concentration in one of these areas:

- Linguistics
- Composition
- Foreign Language
- Literature
- Mathematics
- Natural Science
- World History
- US History
- American Studies
- California Studies
- Multicultural Studies

Art

Theater

Music

- Physical Education
- Human Development

THE NON-TRADITIONAL MAJOR

Core requirements are the same as the traditional major

Instead of choosing a concentration, student must choose a minor, which can be from any program

The non-traditional major resembles the “elective studies” type of degree product that we see nationwide, whereas the traditional major is unique to California in that it is a legislatively-driven product offered to students interested in someday becoming K-8 teachers

Some non-traditional majors do become traditional majors

STRENGTHS

Strengths:

- Unless legislation in California changes, the Ryan Act ensures a strong, long term market for the major;
- Because of demographics, there will always be a baseline level of demand for K-8 teachers in the state;

Growing national appeal for interdisciplinary programs in general will help

THREATS

Demand depends greatly on the regional market for K-8 teachers, as well as available slots in teacher credential programs at Sacramento State and other competing institutions

As a result of the budget crisis, which hit public schools hard in California, the number of Liberal Studies majors at Sacramento State has fallen from 818 in Fall, 2007 to 503 in Fall, 2014; Market is starting to turn up again

These kinds of programs, where there are no dedicated faculty lines, tend to operate on “bare bones” budgets, hence renewed growth is hampered by lack of resources

When most, if not all, courses in the program come from other departments, curricular issues can be very difficult to manage

Q&A

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