CCAS Series on Interdisciplinarity
Session #2 – Liberal Studies/General Studies/Multidisciplinary Degree Programs

Organized by
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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

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<tr>
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<th>LIB Studies Majors</th>
<th>GVSU Undergrads</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGE: 25-70 years</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time Status</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Generation</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minority or Multi-Ethnic</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender- Female</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>58%</td>
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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
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 a 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 a 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.
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
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.
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
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, students 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.
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