

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2018-2019

CHAIR'S RESPONSE TO DEAN'S EVALUATION AND SUMMARY

APRIL 24, 2019

I thank the Dean for her complimentary words on the achievements of the Liberal Studies program. Regarding her suggestions for improvements, I would like to offer the following thoughts.

To reduce the number of freshmen and sophomores who leave the major, the department held luncheons in Spring 2018, Fall 2018, and Spring 2019. Although we invited all concerned students, first by mailing printed invitations and subsequently by emailing, only small numbers attended; this semester, none showed up. Hence, we need to rethink our outreach. In this regard, the suggestions of the Dean's Fellow for Student Success to connect with our freshmen and sophomores through advising holds, peer-mentoring programs, and other community-building activities are valuable, and the department needs to make a greater effort to discuss and potentially implement them.

The fact that the department loses as much as 25 percent of its majors to the department of Child and Adolescent Studies comes as a new piece of data to me. The number is higher than I would have guessed. The main reason for this loss seems to be the students' twin perception that Child and Adolescent Studies is easier than Liberal Studies and that it is more suitable to individuals motivated by a desire to work with children. Since this perception has considerable grounding in reality, it is difficult to prevent certain students from leaving Liberal Studies. Nonetheless, we probably could do a better job explaining that Liberal Studies offers a superior preparation for teaching multiple subjects. Regarding the CSET waiver pathway, Child and Adolescent Studies is also seeking approval for such a waiver (in fact we are cooperating with them in this matter); hence, I fear that our getting the waiver will not reduce this loss. The Integrated Teacher Education Program, which the College of Education will hopefully agree to in the foreseeable, might be a better strategy in this regard.

Regarding diversity, I recently had a meeting with Kim Norman, chair of the Department of Elementary and Bilingual Education, which runs the multiple-subject credential program that most of our students take after receiving their BA. Dr. Norman sought to engage Liberal Studies in creating a pathway towards the credential program that stresses diversity as well as social justice. I believe that most of the Liberal Studies faculty members would be open to such an effort. The Dean's suggestion to adjust our Elementary Education Emphasis to highlight diverse perspectives on traditional topics or to create a third emphasis designed for teaching in programs dedicated to diversity is thus likely to generate a positive, forward-looking discussion when put on the agendas of the fall department meetings. In addition to being valuable in itself, such an adjustment might indeed be a selling point for the program, both to attract more majors and to prevent their loss to Child and Adolescent Studies.

I agree that it would be beneficial for the program if full-time faculty taught more Liberal Studies courses and fewer courses in other programs, especially the Honors Program. Given the consensual way in which Liberal Studies determines its teaching schedule, effecting such a change would require broad agreement, however. It might be added in defense of this practice that most of our part-time faculty are quite well qualified to teach the more basic courses LBST 300 Introduction to Liberal Studies and LBST 301 Inquiry and Composition in Liberal Studies. Furthermore, the department is short by at least one full-time position in the area of arts and humanities. Nonetheless, the point is well-taken, and an effort to realize it through discussion at the fall department meetings should be made.

The idea of offering LBST 100 Introduction to Liberal Studies and LBST 101 Introduction to the Humanities online came from the external review team. Its impetus is not the CourseMatch program but the dire need to generate more FTES in order to make target. Prior to double counting, these courses were well attended, and there's a practical need to build them up again. Of course, such an endeavor should be undertaken by means of best practices. Hence, the department needs to ensure that the faculty entrusted with teaching online courses are well versed in this regard.