

California State University, Fullerton

Department of Liberal Studies

External Review

Fall 2011

Submitted by

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CSUF
Department of Liberal Studies External Review
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I. Description of the Review Process

The external review was conducted by Dr. Jochen Burgtorf, Chair of the Department of History at California State University, Fullerton, Dr. Michael Neubauer, Director of the Liberal Studies Program at California State University, Northridge, and Dr. Daniel J. O'Connor, Chair of the Department of Liberal Studies at California State University, Long Beach.

The reviewers visited the CSUF campus on November 30, 2011, and met with the following individuals:

- Dr. Angela Della Volpe, Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Dr. Claire Palmerino, Associate Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Liberal Studies Faculty
 - Dr. James Hofmann, Chair
 - Dr. Emily Bonney
 - Dr. April Bullock
 - Dr. Mark Fischer
 - Dr. Margaret Garber
 - Dr. Kevin Lambert
 - Dr. Craig McConnell
 - Dr. Andrea Patterson
 - Dr. Angeles Sancho-Velázquez
 - Dr. Saul Tobias
- Liberal Studies Students
- Liberal Studies and HSS Staff

II. Goals of the Review and Evaluation

The CSUF *Program Performance Review Guidelines and Procedures* stipulate that the review team should evaluate and assess the alignment of the unit's mission and goals with the University's Mission and Goals. In addition, the review team should assess the results and outcomes achieved and make recommendations for quality improvement.

III. Evaluation of Mission and Goals

The review team finds that the mission and goals of the Liberal Studies department are well aligned with the University's Mission and Goals. The department of Liberal Studies is to be commended for its outstanding academic programs and the commitment of its faculty to providing students with a rigorous interdisciplinary education in the arts, sciences, and humanities. Students pride themselves on their intellectual accomplishments and speak extremely highly of the faculty.

The reviewers were very impressed with the accessibility of the faculty to students. The “Commons” area where students congregate near faculty offices serves to provide an intellectually stimulating and collegial environment for students. The department is to be commended for its excellent student associations, such as the Liberal Studies Student Association and the Liberal Studies Honors Society. These are both outstanding features of the departmental culture.

IV. Recommendations for Quality Improvement

1. Curriculum

- a. The reviewers find the curriculum of the EEP and ITP programs to be very strong. The faculty has designed a program that provides students a broad historical understanding of the liberal arts and social sciences. The students we interviewed appeared to be very intellectually stimulated and engaged with the content in the LBST Core courses.
- b. It is recommended that LBST faculty make a greater effort to incorporate the California Subject Matter Standards for K-8 into the content of the courses. For example, an excellent co-taught lecture attended by the reviewers on the arts and humanities during the Renaissance could easily tie in the History - Social Science and Visual and Performing Arts content standards to connect the content of the course with the subject matter that the great majority of students in the class may one day be expected to teach.

One step the department could take would be to purchase copies of the CA K-8 Subject Matter Standards and make them available in the Commons area. In addition, posters or a link on the department web page could direct students to the standards, which are available for free download on the web.

2. Outreach & Collaboration

- a. Collaboration with other departments (especially with regards to the proposed MA program). As the department pursues its Master’s program, it is encouraged to consult with other departments, such as History, Political Science, etc., for courses that are offered in those departments that may serve Liberal Studies students, and to advertise Liberal Studies MA-level courses that may be of interest to students in other programs.
- b. Collaboration with other colleges, especially with the College of Education to facilitate transition between the BA program in Liberal Studies and the credential program. As currently structured, it is up to the students to link their undergraduate studies in LBST with their credential work in the College of Education. The department could do more to make that transition smoother by facilitating open collaboration between the colleges.
- c. Collaboration with community colleges that feed the programs is essential for the future enrollment in the major. It is strongly recommended that the department take greater initiative to reach out to feeder community colleges to explain the two programs. It is unlikely that community college students will have heard about the ITP option in LBST prior to having

arrived on the CSUF campus and, by that time, it is likely that they will have chosen another major. More needs to be done to sell the excellent programs offered to students. Of the six students interviewed, none had heard of the ITP prior to arrival at CSUF.

3. Advising

- a. The department is encouraged to explore means by which students in the first two years at the university can be connected to the department and to the education profession. One suggestion would be to actively recruit lower-division students to participate in the Liberal Studies Student Association in order to include them in the culture of the department.
- b. It is recommended that the department increase its efforts to collaborate with the local community colleges as a means of advertising the EEP and ITP programs for prospective students.
- c. One idea is to have LSSA students hold information tables and/or workshops at the dorms, common areas, and local community college information nights to share their stories with students about, "Why I chose to major in LBST at CSUF..." This peer program has the potential to increase interest and enrollment in the major. Perhaps the department or the student associations (especially the LBST Honor Society) could add a "service to department" requirement for all student members that they contribute 10 hours to being spokespersons for the major at the events mentioned above.

4. Assessment

- a. The department is to be commended for its new assessment plan. It shows a commitment to doing assessment on a consistent basis. That said, the current assessment process as described in the PPR document does not seem to be closing-the-loop. Undoubtedly positive changes, such as study group in LBST 302A and LBST 302B, have been made. It is not clear that the effects of these changes are subject to further assessment.
- b. The data exhibits in the appendix of the PPR show some interesting trends that were not addressed in the PPR report. While the 6-year graduation rates for FTF have gone up significantly from 57.9% for the 1998 cohort to 63.4% for the 2005 cohort, graduation rates for transfer students have gone down over that same period with only some 40% of transfer students graduation in the major within 4 years (Table 3-A and Table 3-B). Transfers still graduate from CSUF at a very high rate of 73% but seem to be transferring within CSUF to majors different from Liberal Studies. There are myriads of possible explanations for this, many of them quite possibly outside of the control of the department.
- c. We encourage the department to pay particular attention to the closing-the-loop part of assessment as it proceeds with its new assessment plan including the recognition that the effects of changes need to be assessed. Our second recommendation in this area concerns the use of data. It would be worthwhile for the department to gather and analyze data in a more sophisticated manner to gain a better understanding of trends and possible causes.

5. Resources

- a. The external reviewers are particularly concerned about the lack of Administrative Services personnel in the department. The ASC for the department retired in 2008 and has never been replaced. This places an excessive (and expensive) burden on the department chair whose energies would be better directed towards activities of greater benefit to the department.

6. Faculty and Personnel Issues

- a. Succession: The committee is concerned about the succession of the department chair. As described by students, the role and accessibility of the chair as an advisor, leader of orientation workshops, and general problem-solver is such that the departure of the current chair may result in a tremendous void. In addition, awareness of the demands of the position may result in reluctance on the part of other faculty members assume responsibility for the position.
- b. Scholarship: The faculty members in the department are to be commended for their active research and publication agendas. However, the committee is somewhat concerned that, due to the extensive service responsibilities taken on by members of the department (in addition to their teaching duties), these agendas might be increasingly difficult to maintain. The committee encourages the department, as well as the leadership in the college, to explore ways in which the faculty in the department can be provided with means (for example in the forms of funds, assigned time, or grant-writing assistance) to engage in creative and scholarly activities that lead to publications.