

# **LIBERAL STUDIES AT IUP**

REPORT OF THE  
GENERAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE

MAY 1987

*including revisions of the Senate  
Undergraduate Curriculum Committee  
and the University Senate  
and approved by  
the University Senate  
May 5, 1987*

General Education Task

## CURRICULUM REFORM AT IUP -- SOME HIGHLIGHTS

### WHY CURRICULUM REFORM NOW?

For the last several years, there has been widespread discussion throughout the United States about the quality and content of undergraduate education. Since at least the late 1970s, faculty on many campuses have expressed concern and urged reforms--in some cases with success, in others not. Within the last two years, however, three major national reports have given focus and impetus to the emerging debate: the National Institute of Education's Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education (1984); the National Endowment for the Humanities' To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education (1984), written by William J. Bennett; and the Association of American Colleges' Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community (1985). Just a few weeks ago, Ernest L. Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, released preliminary findings of another major study on college education; the full report, College: The Undergraduate Experience in America, is due to be published early in 1987. All of these reports focus on the necessity of strengthening the core of liberal studies which pertains to every

## WHAT ARE WE HOPING TO ACCOMPLISH?

Let's be certain of one thing. We are not going to create utopia; no curricular change can do that at any university. But we can make significant improvements in the quality of the undergraduate education we offer. We can promote better balanced choices; we can put more emphasis on writing and insure that it occurs in more places than the English department; we can design some non-introductory level experiences for students; we can encourage the exercise of synthetic as well as analytic skills; we can give the faculty some space and some incentive to be creative. We can make our expectations clear to students so that they are more likely to take seriously the Liberal Studies portion of the curriculum. And when we do those things, we are likely also to change some of the often negative attitudes which both faculty and students hold toward Liberal Studies courses.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE PROPOSED CHANGES?

- A curriculum outline to focus on learning skills, knowledge areas, and synthesis.
- A Writing Across the Curriculum program to spread the responsibility for promoting literacy beyond the English faculty, and to emphasize to students the seriousness with which the studies are to be pursued.

currently enrolled students, but to prospective ones. Interestingly, liberal is the word which the IUP Senate used in the 1979 statement of our philosophy which appears at the beginning of each issue of the IUP Catalog. A “liberal education,” the Senate wrote, “will allow our students to liberate themselves from narrow interests and prejudices, to broaden their intellectual horizons by increased cultural perspective, to develop the ability to think logically, critically, and creatively, and to communicate their judgments clearly and forcefully.” It would be hard to write a much better definition than that.

WHAT ARE “PHASE I” AND “PHASE II”?

## 5 -- Liberal Studies at IUP

the synthesis course. The goal is to have the first year of studies in place for the entering freshmen in the Fall of 1989, with the remainder of the program phased over the next four years.

### HOW SHOULD WE, AS A UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY, REACT TO CHANGE?

Change is not to everyone's liking, and there is something undeniably comfortable about an old pair of shoes, but a community of scholars ought to realize also that change is inescapable. The students at IUP now differ in preparation and in aspiration from the ones we taught in the mid-





## **Liberal Studies**

### **The New Curriculum**





## LIBERAL STUDIES – CURRICULUM OUTLINE

### Learning Skills

Communication	7sh
Mathematics	3 sh

### Knowledge Areas

#### Core courses in broad disciplinary areas

Humanities	9 sh
Fine Arts	3 sh
Natural Sciences	7-8 sh
Social Sciences	9 sh
Health and Wellness	3 sh

Liberal Studies Electives, for exploration and study in depth	9 sh
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Synthesis	<u>3 sh</u>
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total –	53-54 sh
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\*Students electing the 7-semester hour option must take an additional 3-semester hour non-lab natural science course which can be counted as one of the Liberal Studies Electives.

## **LIBERAL STUDIES – CONCEPT STATEMENTS & DESCRIPTION**

### **LEARNING SKILLS – Communication – 7 sh**

I. English Composition I – 4 sh

During their first semester, students will enroll in a 4 semester hour course emphasizing English composition skills.

II. Second English Composition Course – 3 sh

During a subsequent semester preferably no earlier than their third or fourth, students will enroll in a newly designed 3 sh course emphasizing advanced composition/research/report writing skills.

### **LEARNING SKILLS – Mathematics – 3 sh**

Students will complete a mathematics course from a list of courses approved for Liberal Studies credit. It is recommended that this occur early in the students' careers, preferably in the freshman year. Since many majors build on certain mathematical skills, it is appropriate for major departments to specify which course or courses from the Liberal Studies list would provide the best preparation for their students.

**KNOWLEDGE AREA – Humanities – 9 sh**

### **KNOWLEDGE AREA – Natural Sciences – 7-8 sh**

Students will complete either Option I or Option II, depending on the requirements of their degree program or their interest.

Option I – A two-semester natural science sequence, with a laboratory course each semester (8 sh)

Option II – A one-semester course with laboratory (4 sh) followed by a one-semester, non-laboratory course (3 sh). The sequel may be a course in the same science which builds upon and enhances what was learned in the laboratory course, or it may be a course primarily in the same science though broadened somewhat to include related sciences, or it may be a still broader course addressing ideas and issues which cut across the natural sciences. Students electing this option must take an additional 3 sh natural science non-lab course which can be counted as one of the Liberal Studies Electives.

### **KNOWLEDGE AREA – Social Sciences – 9 sh**

Students will complete nine semester hours from a list of courses in the following social sciences, with no two courses chosen from the same discipline: anthropology, criminology, economics, geography, political science, psychology, sociology.

Courses in this area should introduce students to the ways which one or more of these disciplines works to understand social institutions and processes. Students should learn the major ideas of whichever discipline is being studied, and they should understand the strengths and limitations of that discipline's methods of collecting and interpreting data.

### **KNOWLEDGE AREA – Health and Wellness – 3 sh**

The course or courses to be created in this area will emphasize the positive-preventive aspects of health, the benefits of healthful behavior and stress management, and the use of health resources. The focus will be on the components of a healthy lifestyle. Physical activities or laboratory experiences will be included within the three semester hours so that students see the immediate and future benefits received by the inclusion of physical activity in a personal lifestyle. The correlation between the classroom work and the activity will encourage students to develop a lifestyle that includes an understanding of and concern for physical fitness and health.

[One year of ROTC/Military Science will continue to be an alternative method of fulfilling this requirement.]

**KNOWLEDGE AREA – Liberal Studies Electives – 9 sh**

Each department in the University may designate, with the consent of the Liberal Studies Committee, a number of courses, either newly created or currently offered, which will make up a pool of appropriate courses from which students may elect. The purpose of this part of the Liberal Studies curriculum is to allow students to explore and to deepen their knowledge. Courses listed here should be consistent with the established goals of Liberal Studies and not primarily intended for the professional training of majors.

Students must complete 9 semester hours of Liberal Studies electives. They may not fulfill this requirement with any course which has the same course prefix as their major, nor may they choose more than one course in any one department, except in the case of foreign language study where six semester hours may be chosen. At least one of the courses chosen must be beyond the introductory level.

Unless such a course is completed elsewhere in a student's curriculum, three semester

**SYNTHESIS – 3 sh**

**RECOMMENDATION: WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

We recommend that IUP establish a program designed to integrate and, therefore, reinforce writing skills in courses beyond the customary composition requirement. Such a "Writing Across the Curriculum" Program, would have several objectives. It would extend the responsibility for promoting literacy throughout the university by increasing the level and amount of writing in all courses in the University, as appropriate. It would extend the responsibility for promoting literacy throughout the university by increasing the level and amount of writing in all courses in the University, as appropriate. It would emphasize to students the seriousness with which the university regards, and the importance which educated people place upon, the quality of written prose. This will be the case especially if the dedication to writing noticeably extends to courses in the major. Such a program would also help students to write better, to learn better by using writing as a learning tool, and to prepare for writing tasks in their careers.

The university should designate with a "W" those courses in the curriculum which either teach writing or which are writing-intensive. A "writing-intensive" course is not primarily a course in "how-to-write." It is expected that some writing instruction will occur there and that close attention will be paid to the quality of written prose, but the course can be a content-oriented course in any discipline, so long as the required writing is ample and serves as an integral part of the learning process. Specific criteria for writing-intensive courses will be developed in Phase II of the Liberal Studies reform. Normally English Departments play a central role in helping to define and administer such a program, and we expect that to be the case at IUP. We also expect workshops to be organized to help faculty to encourage and to evaluate good prose writing.

We recommend that students be required to enroll in 2 or 3 "W" courses, in addition to English Composition I and the newly designed second English Composition course (the exact number pending a decision on the specific design of the program in Phases II). Further we recommend that one of these writing-intensive courses be taken between the two composition courses. At least one of the writing-intensive courses must be taken in the major discipline.

A similar concept should be explored for a component of Oral Communication across the curriculum. The General Education Task Force should accomplish this during Phase II and report to the Curriculum Committee.



**RECOMMENDATION: COMPUTER LITERACY**

We recognize that computer literacy is an important goal for university-educated people and that there is wide spread interest within the university to consider some sort of requirement to assure that our students are computer literate. Although there has been considerable effort on the part of some departments to ensure that their students are computer literate (about 70% of IUP students now receive formal coursework in computers) and the recent plan to distribute the bond issue monies required departments to come up with a plan to use computer hardware and software in their programs to help with computer literacy, there is still no requirement for a significant number of our students and there is no required plan for ensuring that these students are computer literate. However, we do not recommend assigning the responsibility for computer



4. To make any other recommendations, either to the Senate Undergraduate Curriculum Committee or to other university bodies, which it believes will improve the Liberal Studies program at IUP.
5. To encourage the steady growth of library skills; to encourage the meeting of competency skills through examination rather than through credits alone; and to encourage the investigation of values in our society.

Note on Procedural Relationships—

The Liberal Studies Committee will not supercede, but will supplement and assist, the university governing bodies which are now established. All curricular proposals presented to the Liberal Studies Committee will be submitted to the Senate Undergraduate Curriculum Committee with the Liberal Studies Committee recommendation for appropriate action by the University Senate. For instance, a proposal for a new course to the Liberal Studies program will go from the Department through the College to the Liberal Studies Committee, which will look to see if it meets the established criteria for a Liberal Studies course. If it does, then the Committee will send the proposal on to the Senate Undergraduate Curriculum Committee which will, in turn, put it before the Senate for action. If the course is not intended for Liberal Studies credit, then the Liberal Studies Committee will not be involved, and the procedure will continue to be as it is now.

**JOB DESCRIPTION: DIRECTOR OF LIBERAL STUDIES**

1. To chair the Liberal Studies Committee; to provide to the Committee the leadership,

ATTACHMENT: TENTATIVE TIME TABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

January 1987                      Phase I document is completed and submitted to President Welty, who transmits it to the Senate and to other members of the university community.

February-March 1987              Phase I document is discussed by the Senate

March 1987                        Senate action on Phase I

[The rest of the time table assumes that the Senate approves Phase I in March.]

April 1987                        Phase II Committees set up to develop specific criteria for each section of the Liberal Studies program, including Writing Across the Curriculum.

July 1, 1987                        Director of Liberal Studies is appointed

October 1, 1987                    Phase II Committees present criteria to General Education Task Force

November 1987                    Phase II criteria are submitted to the Senate

December 1987                    Phase II criteria are approved by the Senate, and the General EducatJuly 3 1 T28.4401.80no t6Q q 2135 37.921 re W n BT /275.40c

June 1989	Students for Fall 1989 are admitted under the new program  [Transfer students will be required to complete the old or new curriculum depending on their placement at IUP.]
January 1989	Second Seminar for faculty teaching sections of the Synthesis course
January 1990	Liberal Studies Committee begins review of proposals for sections of Synthesis course
September 1990	First sections of Synthesis course are offered
September 1992	Implementation completed

**ATTACHMENT: SAMPLE SECTIONS OF SYNTHESIS COURSE**

These descriptions are meant only to be suggestive. They represent some possibilities

contributions of psychology and sociology to the study of women's role. Each student would choose one woman musician for a detailed study.

**THE WORLD OF ANCIENT GREECE.** Taught perhaps by a professor from Fine Arts or the Humanities. This synthesis section would try to understand how various parts of culture function together as a complex whole. Students, depending on their own majors, would take responsibility for researching one aspect of the culture—art, drama, philosophy, religion, economy, medicine, science, politics, education, or whatever. The students would then share these perspectives in written and oral presentations and in class discussions. [A similar format would seem to work for other times and places, too—"India After Independence" or "Mexico Today" or "Victorian England."]