



Liberal Arts Program Review

Northern Essex Community College

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Historical Overview

- Last Liberal Arts Program Review was performed in 2005-2006
- Changes/Other Factors resulted in Program Review being postponed
- In 2012, Professor Steve Russell facilitated research regarding General Studies and Liberal Arts
- The two program reviews would be performed simultaneously informed by Prof. Russell's findings
- Non-traditional committee format

Pressing Issues

- Is General Studies really “stealing away” the Liberal Arts students?
- What does the Liberal Arts degree contribute to employability?
- How do we promote the value of the Liberal Arts degree?
- What is the future of the Liberal Arts Degree at NECC?
- Is it a degree program, a transfer program, or both?

Revised Mission Statement

The Associate Degree in Liberal Arts prepares students for future matriculation at the Bachelor Degree level or for career pathways at the Associate Degree level. It provides students with an education whereby they are informed, knowledgeable, and responsible members of society who can develop the ability to think critically and actively participate in an ever-changing world. Taking a multi-disciplinary approach, students learn to become effective communicators who can analyze information from a broad array of subjects in the liberal arts, humanities, science, history, math, languages, literature, philosophy, political science, geography, economics, psychology, and sociology. Students in the Liberal Arts Associates Degree program have the opportunity to become well-rounded, civic minded, socially responsible, and service oriented graduates.

Program Completion/Student Transfer

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	AY 2009- 2010	AY 2010- 2011	AY 2011- 2012	3 Year Average
Program Graduates	35	45	53	44
Students who transfer prior to graduation from program (multiple years out)	171	NA	NA	NA

Enrollment

- Averages 502 students per year
- It has decreased from 533 to 500 to 472 each year
- Possible reasons include: General Studies more flexible, need for employment ready degrees, financial aid regulations, worker retraining programs, specific majors that we do not offer at NECC
- Program Review showed need for General Studies as it serves a valuable purpose to the students of NECC

Demographics

- Almost $\frac{1}{3}$ of students are minorities
- More female than male students ($\frac{3}{5}$ female, $\frac{2}{5}$ male)
- Only one change of note – of the total male student population, white male students increased from approximately 64% in 2009-10 to 75% in 2011-2012. Perhaps this is driven by economic conditions.
- Need for more data if interest in further investigation

Program Strengths

- The Liberal Arts Program provides students with a broad array of skills and educational opportunities
- Magnitude of the program – one of the largest at NECC
- Students have the opportunity to pursue further education in various disciplines at the Bachelor Degree level (note: UML Bachelor of Liberal Arts articulation agreement)
- Students have the opportunity to pursue a variety of career opportunities requiring an Associates Degree

Program Strengths continued

- Each division/department has content expertise faculty members available to provide support to the Liberal Arts Program
- Current NECC overall policies and procedures provide the necessary supports to the Liberal Arts degree
- The Liberal Arts Curriculum has
 - Transfer ability to four year institutions
 - Flexibility through electives
 - Natural Alignment to the six institutional learning outcomes

Challenges/Areas for Improvement

- The Liberal Arts Mission forces the program to better celebrate the value of a Liberal Arts degree by providing students with CLEAR PATHWAYS to
 - Employment
 - Bachelor Degree
- Through the program review process, it has become glaringly evident that a sense of collegiality, connectedness, and belonging needs to be developed for all Liberal Arts students.
 - Note: General Studies students need to be brought into the fold, too
 - General Studies needs a home, an owner, and a budget

Challenges/Areas for Improvement

continued

- Need to build upon the magnitude of the Liberal Arts Degree Program
- How to successfully manage the plan for Liberal Arts Learning Outcomes and Assessment
 - Knowledge concerning the broad aspects and interconnectedness of the Liberal Arts attained through a multi-disciplinary approach.
 - Written Communication Skills, Oral Communication Skills, Information Literacy, Quantitative Reasoning, Global Awareness, Science and Technology
- How to make the Liberal Arts Program Review a “LIVE DOCUMENT” working in concert with each year’s Liberal Arts Program Goals and Objectives

Answers to Program Review's Pressing Issues

- Is General Studies really “stealing away” the Liberal Arts students? **No!**
- What does the Liberal Arts degree contribute to employability? **Quite a bit in terms of soft skills!**
- How do we promote the value of the Liberal Arts degree? **Promote greater collegiality among all parts of the NECC community – students, faculty, programs, Greater Merrimack Valley workforce/employment, four year institutions, etc...**
- What is the future of the Liberal Arts Degree at NECC? **It is looking sunny! But, it needs to be approached from a mission driven, very focused, and vibrant perspective!**
- Is it a degree program, a transfer program, or both? **Both!**



Thank You to Everyone
who has supported and
contributed to the Liberal Arts
Program Review!