

## **Appendix 1: Charge Letter, Readings, Consultation**

### **1A CHARGE LETTER:**

TO (List names from roster)

From: Craig Swan, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the Council on Liberal Education. As you know, for the 2006-07 academic year we will undertake a systematic review of liberal education requirements for the Twin Cities campus. We have not had such a review since the report of the Howe Committee in 1991.

Because this is a large group and no single calendar will work for everyone, we have set a schedule for the fall meetings of the Council.

**Meetings will be on Tuesday afternoons from 3-5 PM, on the following dates:**

**October 24 Room 300 Morrill**

**November 7 Room 300 Morrill**

**November 21, Room 510 Morrill** (note: 510 is not accessible space; let me know if this is a problem)

**December 5 Room 300 Morrill**

**December 19 Room 510 Morrill**

If you already know that you will have to miss more than two of these meetings, please let me know as soon as possible. I recognize that this will be a substantial commitment of time for committee members, but this is an important task requiring strong and clear faculty direction. We have assembled a stellar group of faculty for this task, and I am pleased to announce that Leslie Schiff from Microbiology has agreed to serve as chair.

I am asking the Council to spend much of the fall semester studying the larger framing issues related to liberal education. By the end of the fall semester/beginning of the spring semester, I expect that the Council will be in a position to compare our current structure of requirements against the framework developed in the fall. Much of the rest of the spring semester will then be used to review current practices and to develop specific recommendations, where appropriate, for change. I am also asking the Council, by the end of the spring semester, to make recommendations on developing plan to assess the outcomes of liberal education requirements.

In the context of our overall strategic positioning initiatives, it is important that we think broadly and creatively about how we hope to prepare our students for the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In “Advancing the Public Good,” the committee led by Provost Thomas Sullivan called for a five action strategies, one of which is to “recruit, nurture, challenge and educate outstanding students who are bright, curious, and highly motivated.” The report goes on to say that “we provide an education that is transformative for students and faculty, and that prepares students to make a difference in the lives of people. . . . Our graduates, whatever their course of studies, will be equipped

to lead and to promote democratic values and the search for wisdom and understanding in our multiracial, multicultural society.”

Because our students are participating in so many highly differentiated and specialized majors, our liberal education requirements are the only single place where we can address the questions of shared knowledge, experience, and values. Our liberal education requirements should ensure that all of our undergraduate students, regardless of major, are broadly educated to be thoughtful, effective, and well-informed participants in their personal, work, and civic lives. The Howe committee said that our students ought to have “a liberal education appropriate for our times and suited to their diverse educational needs.” Historically, the goals and requirements of liberal education in American universities have changed frequently and sometimes dramatically to reflect changing times, and we must ask ourselves what this goal means for tomorrow's students. We undertake a review of this critical component of our curriculum in the context of our overall effort to become one of the top three research universities, and our task is to create a framework for a distinctive and effective liberal education that will prepare our students for a future we cannot begin to predict.

We do not undertake this review in a vacuum. There is an extensive body of literature on liberal education and on liberal education reforms, and a selection of this material will be provided to the Council at the organizational meeting. Council members will be asked to suggest other materials that may be pertinent to the task. Many similar reviews undertaken by our peer institutions have also been fairly public processes, and there is substantial information on the web that documents both successful and problematic reviews/reforms at various peer institutions. These reviews reflect individual institutional cultures, but all are driven by fundamental questions about what universities want all students to know or be able to do when they graduate, and what values or experiences they are expected to share.

In addition to general discussions of liberal education and specific institutional case studies, we will also provide the Council with data about how our students experience their liberal education. The data will be derived from two sources. First, we have for the last five years conducted a survey of graduating seniors in which we ask students to tell us how much (or how little) they feel they have learned in each of the areas covered by our current liberal education requirements. Second, we have commissioned a set of focus groups to be held this fall to ask students about their experiences in liberal education courses and their overall views of liberal education requirements.

Over the past several years, past Councils have identified some specific issues or concerns related to our current requirements, policies, and practices. A list of these issues will be shared with the Council as it moves into the second semester's implementation phase. Some of the items are more general issues relating to how large the Core should be or what the goals or particular requirements should be; others are small questions about wording of requirements.

Any recommendations on revised liberal education requirements must be accompanied by an assessment plan to allow us to determine whether our liberal education

requirements are achieving their desired goals. As part of this effort, we need to integrate the work that the Council for Enhanced Student Learning has done on student outcomes. Most of these outcomes are directly related to liberal education—how can we incorporate them in the CLE review process, and how can we evaluate/assess them?

Recommendations from the Council will be submitted to the Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP) at the end of spring semester 2007, and will be taken up by SCEP and the University Senate in the following fall. Recommendations should include the goals for liberal education, the outcomes expected from the University's liberal education plan, and specific language for each requirement. The recommendations should also include a clear process and timeline for developing an assessment plan, though the assessment plan itself does not need to be in place.

I anticipate that for the coming academic year the workload of the Council will be largely focused on the task of reviewing liberal education goals and formulating recommendations, rather than on reviewing course proposals. I have discussed with the undergraduate college associate deans the idea of a “soft” moratorium on review of new courses, and they have agreed in principle, though details are yet to be worked out. I anticipate that there would be some cases, particularly in the “new” colleges, where the Council will want to make exceptions to the moratorium. However, colleges have agreed that it is critical to allow the Council ample time for thoughtful consideration of all of the complex issues before them.

I plan to participate in the Council deliberations in an *ex officio* capacity, and I very much look forward to working with all of you on this review.

## **1B LIST OF MATERIALS PROVIDED TO THE COUNCIL**

### **Council on Liberal Education 2006-07 Review of Liberal Education Requirements Notebook of Background Materials**

#### **Contents:**

#### **Committee Charge**

#### **Tab 1: Conceptualizing Liberal Education**

[Purpose: to provide context. First, define liberal education and provide some history. Then survey main proposals being discussed right now. What is being debated? What is controversial? What is the AAUC report about?]

Excerpt from “The Baccalaureate Degree: What Does it Mean? What Should it Mean?” by Howard R. Bowen (1969?)

“Only Connect...”: The Goals of a Liberal Education,” by William Cronon (1998)

American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) Liberal Education Project:  
*AACU Statement on Liberal Education* (1998)  
*Greater Expectations: The Commitment to Quality as a Nation Goes to College*  
(Executive Overview and Chapter 3) (2002)

Responses to the AACU’s recommendations

“Liberal Education on the Ropes,” by Stanley Katz (Chronicle, April 1, 2005)

“The Liberal Arts in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, According to Change and Liberal Education,” by George Allan (2005)

“Colleges Fail to Teach Civic Literacy,” John Gravois, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Sept. 27, 2006

#### **Tab 2: Liberal Education Requirements and Reforms at Peer Institutions**

[Purpose: to provide information on both requirements and reports on decisions to change at peer institutions, large top-ranked state schools like Michigan, Wisconsin, Berkeley, as well as some other universities undertaking reform]

Comparison Chart: *General Education Requirements – Big Ten and Other Institutions*

Liberal Education (or equivalent) Requirements:

University of Michigan—Ann Arbor (LSA)

University of California--Berkeley

University of North Carolina (requirements and excerpt from 2003 report:

*Making Connections: A Proposal to Revise the General Education Curriculum* Duke University—Excerpt from 1999 report *Curriculum 2000*

*Undergraduate Degree Requirements at Selected COFHE Schools* (from the Duke *Curriculum 2000 Report, 1999*) (COFHE=Consortium on Financing Higher Education—these are all private schools)

AAC&U “Promising Models” for General Education

Michigan State

Fairleigh Dickinson University

Portland State University—with a summary of a report:

A Model for Comprehensive Reform in General Education: Portland State University” by Charles R. White *The Journal of General Education* 43 (3), 1994, 168-237.

University of California--Los Angeles

University of Southern California

**Tab 3: Harvard Core Curriculum: A Case Study**

[purpose: an in-depth look at the very public core curriculum revision process undertaken by the country’s most visible institution]

“Introduction to the Core Curriculum.” A discussion of the requirements in the current Harvard core, put in place after a 1978 review.

Excerpt from the April, 2004 “Report on the Harvard College Curricular Review.” This was an extensive review of many pieces of the curriculum; the section on General Education is included here.

Commentary (response to the 2004 report)

“What’s Wrong With Harvard?” by Thomas Bartlett, in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2004)

Selected essays from Harvard faculty in response to the 2004 report:

Peter Bol, “Another Generation of General Education”

Julie Buckler, “Toward a New Model of General Education at Harvard”

Peter Galison, “If Wishes Were Horses: A Thoroughly Impractical Proposal or Two”

Stanley Hoffman, “Reflections on General Education at Harvard”

Richard Thomas, “General Education and the Fostering of Free Citizens”

Helen Vendler, “On a Harvard Education for the Future”

George Whitesides, “Undergraduate Education at Harvard”

E.O. Wilson, “On General Education at Harvard”

Excerpt from the “Report of the Committee on General Education,” (November, 2005), which built on the work of the 2004 report.

Commentary (response to 2005 report)

“Blue About the Crimson Plan for General Education,” by Tom Ehrlich, Carnegie Foundation (2006)

News article:

“New Plan to Overhaul the Harvard Curriculum Singles out Religion and History for Study,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 5, 2006.

Excerpt from the “Preliminary Report, Task Force on General Education,” October , 2006.

**Tab 4: Assessment of General Education**

[Purpose: how to assess liberal education learning—recommendations and examples. Probably too many samples from other universities right now, could include fewer in more depth?]

“The Legitimacy of Assessment, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Sept. 22, 2006 (opinion piece)

*Liberal Education Outcomes: A Preliminary Report on Student Achievement in College* AACU (2005)

*Assessment Toolkit* (Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College)

*Assessing Student Learning Outcomes in Integrative Studies*, Michigan State University

California State University, Los Angeles, *Assessment Plan for General Education* (2001)

Portland State University, “Assessment at University Studies” (sample learning rubric attached)

Minnesota State University at Mankato, “Introduction to GE Assessment”

*The Art and Science of Assessing General Education Outcomes*, AACU Publication, on order

**Tab 5: University of Minnesota**

Current UMN-Twin Cities Liberal Education Requirements

*A Liberal Education Agenda for the 1990s and Beyond* (Report of the Twin Cities Campus Task Force on Liberal Education, 1991)

Senior Survey data—by campus and by college (to be added later)

## 1C WORKPLAN FOR FIRST SEMESTER

### Council on Liberal Education Fall, 2006 meetings and tasks

Meetings are 3-5 PM on Tuesdays

#### October 24

Introductions

Review of task and process

- (1) Fall--the big picture
- (2) Spring--the specifics of our requirements

Introduction to materials

Derek Bok, *Our Underachieving Colleges*

Resource Notebook

Gathering input from others—plans and suggestions

Liberal Education at Minnesota—a brief history and overview

Discussion:

Terminology: “liberal education” vs. “general education”

Components of an undergraduate degree: general education, the major, free electives

*Small group brainstorming:* Why do we have a liberal education or general education requirement?

Liberal education and values: what values does the University of Minnesota hold in common as an academic community, irrespective of disciplinary base?

#### ***Before next meeting, please read:***

Bok, Introduction and Chapters 1-3

Materials in Tab 1 of notebook

The readings present an overview of the various historical views of liberal or general education, and current national thinking on this subject. As you read, please think about the goals YOU espouse for liberal education at the University of Minnesota. Be prepared to talk about your views at the next meeting.

#### November 7

Discussion of the readings; how do we develop a vision for liberal education at Minnesota?

Context of strategic positioning

Strengths of the University

Needs of the state

The national context: AAC&U and “Greater Expectations”

Student outcomes from CESL and Student Affairs

What ideas and themes begin to emerge?

#### ***Before next meeting please read:***

Materials in tabs 2 and 3 of notebook

The readings look at what other institutions are doing—what their requirements are and how they are thinking about the issues of liberal and general education.

1. What are the most interesting and/or the most problematic approaches to liberal education in these materials?
2. What can we learn from the Harvard process, which is documented in some detail?

### **November 21**

What do others do? Discussion of our peer institutions' requirements and the Harvard case study

What can we learn from others? What should we emulate? What should we avoid? How can we assure a successful process?

#### ***Before next meeting please review:***

Summary of senior survey results (handout at meeting to insert in notebook)

Bok, chapters 4 and 5

Before the next meeting, please talk to at least five undergraduate students or recent university graduates (as a group or individually) about their experience with liberal education. In general, what worked? What didn't? (not looking for comments on specific courses; just general observations). What do they think the liberal education requirement was intended to accomplish? Was it successful?

### **December 5**

The student perspective: Results of senior surveys and focus groups

What do we know about:

--what students think about liberal education?

--how successful we are in achieving our expected outcomes?

#### ***Before next meeting please read:***

Bok, Chapters 6, 7, and 8

Before the next meeting, please talk with your colleagues about their experience in teaching courses that meet the LE requirements. What do your colleagues think should be the outcomes of a liberal education component of the curriculum?

### **December 19**

The faculty and staff perspective: reviewing the comments and input solicited from faculty, deans, advisers, and former members of the Howe Committee

Emerging thoughts/themes; summary before a 4-week break

Discussion of calendars and agendas for next semester

#### ***Before the first meeting in January, please read:***

Bok, Chapters 9, 10, 11, and 12

Over the semester break, please write a single page (double spaced) framing your vision of the future of liberal education at the University of Minnesota. These should be

considered drafts and confidential but be prepared to share them with your fellow committee members.

**Overview of spring semester meetings:**

**Meeting 1:** Review, summary, considering where we are and where we need to go. Review of current CLE requirements in the light of fall's discussions. Process for writing the first section (vision/mission) of our report

**Meeting 2:** Developing a vision, goals, outcomes for Minnesota liberal education

**Meeting 3:** Making the vision concrete: revisiting the core/theme structure and considering the strengths and weaknesses of our current structure

**Meeting 4:** Developing consensus around the future directions for liberal education at Minnesota; create working subgroups to develop specific expectations and criteria for review of courses

**Meeting 5:** replaced by subgroup meetings

**Meeting 6:** Reports from subgroups and group review and discussion. For next meeting: read materials in Tab 4 of notebook

**Meeting 7:** How can we create a plan for assessment of liberal education outcomes?

**Meeting 8:** Review of draft report and conclusion

**Submission of "Preliminary recommendations" for comments and review.**

**1D LETTER SEEKING INPUT (SAMPLE):**

Sent to Deans, Council of Undergraduate Deans members, Directors of Undergraduate Studies, Assistant Deans or Directors of Student Services

FROM: Leslie Schiff, Professor, Microbiology and Chair, Council on Liberal Education

SUBJECT: Liberal Education Review

I am writing to invite you to assist the Council on Liberal Education in its deliberations about future liberal education requirements for the University of Minnesota's Twin Cities campus. We are asking key University academic leaders to share with us in writing your best thoughts about how we should approach liberal education for students who will arrive at the University in the year 2010 and beyond.

The Council is spending fall semester in a high-level discussion of the history and purposes of liberal education, the values underpinning liberal education at the University, the practices of peer institutions, and the opinions of thoughtful individuals around the world and here at the University. In the spring, the council will create a framework for envisioning the future of liberal education at the University, and will discuss and propose specific requirements and criteria for liberal education courses.

The Council will seek input from University faculty, staff and students in a variety of formats and forums. At this point, we are asking key University leaders to share with us their thoughts and insights about liberal education. We invite comments on any or all of the following questions, or on any other related topic:

- What are the key concepts, values, or philosophies that should underpin liberal education at the University of Minnesota after the year 2010? What skills or knowledge should come primarily from the liberal education component of the degree? How can we best prepare all of our students to thrive in a future we cannot predict?
- What works well in the current liberal education requirements? What doesn't work well? What would you keep and what would you jettison? What does your ideal liberal education/general education component look like?
- What essential issues do you think the Council should consider? What essential resources should they consult?
- How can we assure that the liberal education component of the baccalaureate degree does not get squeezed out by ever-expanding majors?

The Council would like to have your comments by **December 6** for discussion at its December 19 meeting. We ask that you send your comments via e-mail to Margot Iverson at [iver0200@umn.edu](mailto:iver0200@umn.edu); Margot will assemble a single document for Council review. We will include the names of all respondents unless you request anonymity.

I recognize that all of you are very busy, but there is no other single topic that is more important for how we conduct undergraduate education at the University. This is our once-in-a-generation opportunity to think creatively and constructively about how we can use our liberal education requirements to articulate our expectations for everyone who graduates with a baccalaureate degree from the University of Minnesota. Your thoughtful input will be crucial to that process.

## **IE. FEEDBACK ON PRELIMINARY REPORT AND SUMMARY OF SUBSEQUENT CHANGES**

A preliminary draft of this report was presented to the University community on October 17, 2007. The report was posted to a portal website that allowed feedback and comments via the web. The website was available for comments from mid-October to mid-November. An e-mail notification was sent to Council of Undergraduate Deans [UMTC only], Council of Deans, Academic Advising Network, Directors of Undergraduate Studies, Department Chairs, the Minnesota Student Association, and collegiate student boards (via Council of College Boards), and two ads were placed in the Daily with information about the web site and the Open Forums.

Four Open Forums were held in early November, two on the East Bank and one each on the West Bank and St. Paul. The Council chair, Leslie Schiff, and at least two other Council members attended each forum. In addition, Professor Schiff made presentations to SCEP, FCC, and the Twin Cities Campus Assembly.

Feedback from all of these sources was compiled and was reviewed by the committee at meetings in late November and early December. Final recommendations were then made by the committee; the redrafted document was reviewed by the committee in late January and early February.

Hundreds of minor changes were made in the preliminary document; here is a list of the major changes:

- In response to numerous questions about how the committee arrived at its recommendations, nine pages of material formerly in Appendix 2 was revised and included in the body of the report (pages 4-13)
- There is a more extensive explanation of why and how the seven Cores were chosen (pages 16-18)
- There is more explanation about writing, WI, and the relationship of WI to the new Writing-Enriched Curriculum (pages 7, 14, 35)
- There is stronger linkage between the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and the CLE requirements (see especially pages 6-7, 18, 29)
- The bullets in the guidelines for the Arts and Humanities Core were extensively reworked with the assistance of faculty from those areas (19-20)
- Specific criteria for labs in both Physical and Biological Sciences were added to those guidelines
- The “Diversity in the United States” Theme was revised to become “Diversity and Social Justice in the United States,” and the guidelines were strengthened to clarify the intent of that theme.
- Additional suggestions and thoughts about implementation were added to the implementation section (pages 36-39). In particular, in response to strong suggestions at two of the four Open Forums, the proposal for a pilot project allowing students to propose individualized liberal education was added.

- Language was added to express the Council’s willingness to review innovative and creative interdisciplinary proposals for Core and Theme courses that might not otherwise meet the stated criteria.
- In response to concern about the size of the Core, the Council has added a “sunset” policy for Core courses that are not offered in a three-year window (p. 36).