1. Please list any issues or concerns about liberal education reform that you would like the University Liberal Education Committee (ULEC) and the Academic Policies Committee (APC) to address:

Text Response

I was at the noon meeting on 2/1/2011 and we were told the "framework" for LE had not been developed yet. How is it that no one wanted to talk about the framework that is posted online as having been revised on 11/11/11?

The wellness requirement.

I think integrative learning is very important. It concerns me that we would no longer require a science lab and we would no longer require a wellness credit. I believe that the requirement for immersion needs to be very broad because not all students can leave Eau Claire.

There seems to be considerable pressure coming from the campus administration to push through reform in a short amount of time, which may not be the ideal way to gain widespread support for major reform efforts. There also seems to be a schism between the faculty-determined curriculum and the Blugold Commitment process for funding new and ongoing initiatives. Could this be problematic?

I would like to see the "assigned" credits incorporated into/under the university goals. I think it sends more of the message of what we are trying to do and still can require students to get a certain number of natural sciences etc.

The proposal does not seem to have achieved a major change in our program design. It is still essentially a distribution model, albeit somewhat simplified vs. our present model. Layered on top of the distribution model is some attention to the LE outcomes, such that we can ensure (or at least hope) each student has had at least some minimal exposure to each of the LE outcomes. (By virtue of having the courses that satisfy the distribution model requirements also address the LE outcomes.) This is a far cry from having a system designed around the LE outcomes themselves. It also divorces the remaining 78 credits from attention to or recognition of attention to the LE outcomes. Here is an alternative proposal: Have the distribution model as proposed. (Math comp, Engl comp, Comm, Ethics, Arts/Hum, Soc Sci, Nat Schi, etc.) There is no specific credit requirement, just be able to check off that each of these bases have been covered as part of getting a well-rounded college education. Separately, we should require each student to have a certain degree of exposure to each of the LE outcomes. These exposures could be scattered across the entire 120 credits. The requirement does not need to be so high that graduating within 120 credits to degree is challenged. Some of the exposure naturally would come from the courses taken as part of the distribution model requirements. But some would come from courses in the major, or elsewhere. This model unifies the entire campus toward the LE goals, rather than making it primarily the responsibility of a 42 credit subset of the students program. My primary concern here is the implication of the current proposal: Our attention to campus learning goals is contained within 42 credits. The LE goals are broader than that, can be and should be recognized as infused throughout all the majors in this university.

Combining university and GE requirements into a single LE core is a great idea! Reducing it by 10-ish
credits is a step in the right direction. Leaving 18 open electives is a good idea, too. I hope they remain pretty much unallocated so students can put unusable transfer credit, courses from prior majors/minors, etc. That will let them still graduate in 120 credits even if they changed their major or otherwise accumulated credit that isn't directly applicable to the program in which they finally graduate. Maintaining service-learning is a good idea. We ought to remove the prohibitions on religious service and remunerated service and add quality constraints so we don't have accusations that meaningless activity can qualify as service. Requiring an immersion experience is good--as long as it can be part of the major (e.g., an internship). Having a global learning requirement is good--as long as it really is global. Having a regular on-campus course defined as global won't serve the purpose. Preserving a breadth requirement is good--but see my comments next about how it's still inadequate because "breadth" still apparently equals A&S. The proposed framework apparently continues the A&S stranglehold on general-cum-liberal education at UW-Eau Claire. This is bad for at least two reasons: 1) it maintains the same old turf and resource allocation and hence kills any real innovation in its crib. 2) Students will continue to get the same point of view in their liberal education which, though certainly one valid viewpoint, is not the only one. Instead, for example, UW-Eau Claire biology students should take at least some of their liberal education courses from the college of business or nursing or education. If integrative Learning is primarily a way UW-Eau Claire instructors are to approach their curriculum development and teaching, then it's not a learning goal. If it's something we expect students to learn--i.e., if we expect UW-Eau Claire graduates to be able to engage on their own throughout their lives in integrative learning, then it is a learning goal (that would need to be assessed). The discussion I've heard so far has indicated to me that there's been much more thinking about integrating learning as a pedagogical approach than as a learning goal; thus I think it's presently premature to make it a UW-Eau Claire learning goal. It needs to be clearly defined as such to be adopted as such. A rubric for each learning goal is necessary for assessment, but they look to me like they could easily become a mechanism for ending academic freedom: "Anything not approved by a rubric has no place in UWEC courses!" Scary. I very sincerely hope this will be explicitly laid to rest before these (or any other campus-wide) rubrics are officially adopted. The homegrown rubrics (race/class/gender and global learning) need to be validated at a regional/national level before being adopted. After all, a major use of them will be for HLC accreditation.

I attended the presentation at the College meeting on Tuesday. I believe the elements of the framework are well structured, except the "Additional Requirements," which include immersion and service-learning. This aspect of the structure is not really unified with the other items -- naming it "additional requirements" suggests it does not really have a place. But its place would be obvious if the service-learning requirement were just subsumed under immersion. Then this whole category could be called "immersion." But I am not just talking about the naming of requirements. Someone suggested that some service-learning projects might not live up to an "immersion" ideal -- implying a certain grandness to the immersion experience. However, we are not in a financial position to make the immersion experience so grand. If all students need to complete such an experience, it makes sense to start with modest or more-short lived experiences -- for example, service-learning -- that still constitute immersion. Moreover, the established guidelines for what constitutes service-learning would be a reasonable starting point for defining what kind of assessable activity constitutes immersion more generally.

I graduated from a school that emphasized liberal education, so I have taken 21 credits of philosophy and theology, 6 credits of math, 6 credits of English, 6 credits of European history, 6 credits of math, 12 credits of economics, etc. At our ULEC meeting, we suffered through one presentation last week during which we were told, "there is no framework". Within five minutes of returning to my desk after the meeting, I printed the non-existent framework from UWEC's website. ULEC has seriously damaged its
credibility. In addition, ULEC reps said UWEC needed to get away from a distribution model based on solid research and then proceeded to present a NEW distribution model that incorporates only A&S classes. Seems to me ULEC's contribution is to include English and Math competences into LE. Can you imagine the nightmare this will be for our transfer students--just under 10% of our student body? What about the UW-College student with 2-year degree? Do they meet LE? How is the transfer student with 60 credits supposed to meet 18 credits of integrative experiences and complete the required courses in a major? I thought one of our objectives was to facilitate transfers, not hinder. No one addressed this issue. The questions as to how the professional schools could contribute was not addressed adequately.

I didn't see any reference to foreign language education. I assume there will be a foreign language competency component to this plan. Global learning is basically empty without this component; it is like saying "study abroad in English speaking countries only, please."

How will LE reform impact interdisciplinary program requirements and elective offerings? What changes may need to be made to the current LE reform proposal to assure that the limitations to the number of credits under a certain prefix does not limit the indisciplinary offerings under prefixes like AIS, LAS, WMNS, and IDIS?

Clarify the relationship between integrative learning as a general principle of liberal education in the reform proposal under consideration versus integrative learning as one of six specific liberal education learning goals. Clarify the relative weight we plan to give to each of the six liberal education learning goals and associated outcomes. Clarify why we will maintain the kind of compromise between an outcomes-based model of liberal education and a distribution-based model that we are currently considering. Clarify how this change from the current general education system will be implemented, in what stages and phases, and involving what delegation of authority and responsibility to whom. Clarify how emphasis on teaching that results in engaging in processes as well as teaching that results in producing products will be effectively assessed. Clarify as well how knowledges and skills which are sites of conflict and struggle, of difference and contestation, will be effectively assessed. Clarify what will happen to existing general education courses once the new model for liberal education is passed.

To: LE Reformers  Re: Initial Impressions  2/15/12  Hello, I have taken a few moments to respond to the LE reform proposals with some of my initial thoughts. I included some quotations which can be ignored or heeded accordingly. First, I would like to state I support rethinking Liberal Education. I sincerely hope that the motivations for these changes will remain focused on students’ ability to synthesize knowledge and on pedagogical concerns and not on increased four-year graduation rates and increased assessment ease. I hope that we do not begin to create educational products for consumption. Revisions to General Education are not going to keep students from being indecisive and changing majors nor will it make the difficulty of assessing the creative arts’ contributions to society cleaner or less recalcitrant. “...not simply because it can be reduced to a statistical fact, but also because it has been reduced to a commodity. In such a system there is no space for experience...Nor is there space for the social function of subjectivity. All subjectivity is treated as private, and the only (false) form of it which is socially allowed is that of the individual consumer’s dream.” Another Way of Telling, John Berger  A few concerns I have with the current six credit requirement in the arts is that I would like to distinguish between two types of Humanities. These categories might be defined in several ways, but I think descriptions such as Theory and Practice, Reflection and Generation, or Theory and Process might serve as beginning points. Such categories would separate requirements between courses where creative action is primary, such as writing a poem, making a painting, or performing or interpreting a song or composition as opposed to courses where critical reflection is primary. Obviously these approaches overlap. We do not make a poem without thinking critically, and we do not write about philosophy without some creativity. But the primary origin of brain activity emphasized in these
activities is different, especially in the visual arts or music where language is obscured and communication is complicated. I also acknowledge that such terms as reflection or creativity are loaded terms already assimilated into the Liberal Education reform proposals. Perhaps a recommendation might take the form of nine credits required with at least one of these involving a generative action as a primary outcome rather than reflection as the primary outcome. I think that this might be applied in the sciences much like the lab requirement, but that is outside my immediate sphere. I also understand that perhaps the 6 credits in each area was a necessary compromise, and so then it could be one and one. I would suggest departments and instructors would define their courses as being primarily reflective or generative. If this is viewed to be impossible, I would then argue for distinguishing Arts from Humanities, though in my mind, any distinctions made in this way would be less effective and honest to what actually separates student activity in courses than the proposal above. “On the part of the consumer, the enjoyment of beauty is a kind of contemplation, but on the part of the producer, art is action.” The Arts of the Beautiful, Etienne Gilson “It is a queer thing that so few reviewers seem to realize that one writes poetry because one must... It is quite possible to have a feeling about the world which creates a need that nothing satisfies except poetry and this has nothing to do with other poets or with anything else.” Wallace Stevens Next, I'm curious about the pyramid structure of 60, 42, 18. Sciences, Arts and other areas are being reduced from 15 credits to 6. Yet, the pyramid shows a net reduction of only 3 GEs with the 42 in place. I can only assume these other credits will be absorbed by new GE requirements, but without knowledge of what those courses entail, who teaches them and what form they take it is difficult to exert enthusiasm or skepticism. Finally, I would suggest that the definition of immersion be broadly interpreted to incorporate more courses than is currently practiced. Immersion, for the arts, might involve a workshop with a writer, musician or artist—a studio visit or a reading/interview. It might include a “behind the scenes” view of a non-profit arts organization, publisher or radio station. It might involve going to a music festival or a writing conference. In the past, immersion has implicitly been defined to me as having an ethical or moral dimension which I think is encouraging. However, I think the arts are a perfect place for immersion and have been overlooked in the past. I do not think this should be confused with Service Learning which has always had a specific goal of involving the student in a social relationship within the Eau Claire community, whereas the immersion experience does not imply or necessitate the Eau Claire community at all, perhaps the contrary. Service Learning has always been about building up and supporting the community of which you are currently a part. Furthermore, I may be alone in this, but I do not think students should receive credit for Service Learning. Though I am aware that requiring service at all dilutes the concept of volunteerism or service, offering credit for such experiences will obfuscate this to point where I could not explain it or justify how it is different than an immersion or integrative learning experience to a student. Immersion, in my understanding, exists to remove the student from their normal social and geographical comfort and immerse them in new social and cultural situations, as well as engaging them in new ideas and concepts. I also think this should not be confused with integrative learning, which might involve collaboration with community organizations on projects conceived within the structure of a course. In conclusion, we must be careful that clear definitions are in place if we are to require these expectations for students across the disciplines. “…We can count on it/when we're sure of nothing/and curious about everything…” from A Few Words on the Soul by the late great, Wislawa Szymborska, Translated from the Polish by, Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh “To suppress the freedom of the artist is not only to cut off knowledge of the actual movements of human feeling but also, and more disastrously, contact with the realities of life.” Joyce Carey, from Art and Reality

I'm a degree auditor, so my primary concerns are: 1) How will we explain this to students? Many of our current requirements are not clearly understood by students or some advisors. Anything you come up with needs to be clearly understood and practical. This means, of course, that our students will
continue to view these requirements as a checklist to be crossed off -- but I don't see any way around that. 2) How will we track this? At the moment checking service learning (which can be met several ways) requires an office with 20 hours a week of clerical help, a part-time director, and student workers. Will we need a similar level of effort to track integrative learning? Immersion experience? Anything that is not easily coded as a course attribute will be a challenge. 3) PLEASE consider modifying the "maximum two courses from any one prefix" requirement. This is extremely difficult to code and takes a huge amount of processing time. Many students will look only toward checking off the requirements and will not think until too late about the max two courses from any one prefix. It seems to me that by excluding major courses from the 42 credits you are creating diversity. An added complication with the PeopleSoft degree audit program (that we hope to bring up next year) is that when there is a limit like this, the system only sees and only prints the first two courses taken chronologically in a given prefix. It might be in a student's interest to use course #2 and #3, but I don't know how we'll do that. 4) There are some requirements that I don't see addressed here at all. We have residency and senior residency requirements, major/minor concentration and overlap requirements, and requirements for a minimum number of upper-division credits. Some of these may no longer be necessary as part of the new philosophy. If not, state explicitly that they are going away. 5) Implementation is not a trivial exercise. Students are held to the requirements outlined in the catalog during their first UW-Eau Claire term unless they request a change to a more recent catalog. If the student body perceives the new requirements as better (or easier) there is going to be a mass shift to the newer catalog and a high demand for courses to meet the new requirements. DON'T change the requirements until a means of meeting them is in place. Other comments: 6) We have one University-wide set of requirements now. Each college has tweaked the University requirements for reasons that have to do with that College's mission. Teacher education majors will still have to take the courses required by DPI (economics, conservation of natural resources, Wisconsin history) as well as the teacher education courses as well as their major courses. Social Workers, Communication Disorders majors and Nurses will need to take the courses outside the major required for certification. No matter what philosophy you start with, majors that are preparing students for a given career will have requirements beyond the liberal education requirements. 7) It has not been 30 years since GE was looked at. The redefinition of the baccalaureate degree in the 1980s was a huge undertaking. Becky Drout

Here are some of my major concerns: 1. Departments/disciplines remaining "territorial" about LE courses, rather than focusing on students' needs for meaningful learning and the university's obligation to advance an educated citizenry. 2. Ensuring that any new LE program can be meaningfully assessed in terms of learner outcomes. 3. Developing a coherent, integrated system that works for the university as a whole and that remains true to major national standards for LE frameworks, philosophy, and goals/objectives. 4. Establishing student learning outcomes with sufficient academic rigor and advanced cognitive development to ensure that UWEC graduates demonstrate the distinctiveness envisioned in our university vision/mission statements. 5. The challenge of providing student and faculty supports to deliver the kinds of high-level teaching/learning envisioned in our centennial plan. 6. Developing and sustaining a shared university culture of commitment to effective liberal education learning outcomes.

The concept of liberal education seems to be a good one. My concern is how to measure outcomes (achievement). I don't agree with vague statements that don't measure it. I would like to see colleges across campus working together more. Why can't we team up and develop clinical experiences for nursing students with our colleagues?

My primary concern revolves around what the phrase "liberal education requirements common to all degrees" means. The draft of the proposal I saw said that colleges and majors could add requirements
but they wouldn't be considered part of the liberal education requirements. I think we need to be very clear about this. Students don't care what is part of the "liberal ed core"—they just care about what courses they need to take. So let me ask specific questions: 1) Will the B.A. be "allowed" to require a foreign language? Will A&S be "allowed" to require more humanities in the B.A. 2) Will Nursing students be "allowed" to count their science courses and their Psychology 230 as part of liberal education? If G.E. courses are grandfathered as L.E. for a while, then these would count as L.E. I assume. I could go on, but you get the idea. If these are allowed, then the phrase "common to all degrees" means exactly what it means now and time to degree will not be helped. We have common G.E. requirements, but no one follows them. I understand the reasoning behind the different requirements, I just don't want people to think that we are really streamlining requirements if we aren't. We will advise students exactly as we do now—if you are Nursing you take these G.E. courses (now L.E.) and if you are Education or Business, etc. you take these. Secondly, I am concerned about the lack of any developmental component to this plan. I really liked the original L.E. plan with Gateway and milestone courses. I think it is crucial to have something at the freshman level that transitions a student from the way they are taught in high school to the way they need to think at UW-Eau Claire. I would prefer to have another one at the sophomore level, because I think you can introduce more at that level. But I really would like to see a capstone L.E. course. If we don't do something like that, this model will be no less like a "check-box, pick twofers and threefers" than the current model is. Some specific comments: 1) I have concerns about reducing the global culture to one course—which is not at all in keeping with our mission statement. 2) We can't sustain two courses in "race, class and gender equity" without dramatic changes in our staffing or diluting the requirement. I also hope that we don't go with the multi-cultural rubric that is currently under consideration. It biases the curriculum in ways that I don't think are in keeping with helping our students to think critically. 3) The ethical reasoning requirements seems like a "throw-in." Since we need to look at the learning outcomes anyway, broadening that one would be helpful. "Individual and social responsibility" is about much more than "ethical reasoning"—as the AAC&U outcomes indicate. Moreover, I thought that one of the ideas of our redefining our liberal education was to get away from "one course equals one outcome" and looking at the entire baccalaureate experience. 4) I think we need to broaden the math requirement to be more about quantitative literacy, as the AAC&U has it. And I think "information literacy" is even more important. A technical issue—we can say that courses in the major can't be used for L.E., although even that gets very tricky with multi-disciplinary majors. The no more than 2 courses in any departmental or program prefix gets much more complicated. We can't do departments, since they change and the degree audit wouldn't know. If you do prefixes, you could just have the proliferation of prefixes—and "home departments" of cross-listed courses become even more crucial. While I applaud the work of ULEC, I want to make sure that everyone understands that this is no less complicated than our current model—it is in some ways more complicated. Good luck. Thanks for your work and thanks for the opportunity to have input. Debbie Gough

Students may potentially have less GE requirements that they can take while studying abroad. For academic disciplines where students easily can study abroad in their major/minor, this change may have a limited impact. However, for others with more rigid curricular requirements and sequencing, it could make it more difficult to study abroad. Under the proposed framework, students will have 42 credits of "Common Liberal Education Core", which encompass university requirements such as math requirement, writing, communication, and some of the former GE categories: Arts and Humanities, Social Science, and Natural Science. Students will also need to take 18 credits in integrative learning, these are cross disciplinary courses that help student integrate learning across academic disciplines. As I understand it, students would only need to take 6 credits in each of these former, remaining GE categories, meaning they most likely will have fulfilled many of these requirements by the time they are
eligible to study abroad. First-year students will still be fulfilling them during much of their first year since they often don’t have a declared major or minor and can’t necessarily access major/minor course work due to the priority registration system. Also I see in advising students that many of them fulfill GE requirements through AP and test credits, which further reduces what they need to take at UWEC and consequently can take on study abroad. At this point, it is not clear to me whether students would be able to take the integrative learning credits abroad. The impression that I received is that it could be difficult to fulfill the integrative learning requirement abroad unless the student can demonstrate that the course is purposefully making connections across disciplines. I would hope that study abroad would be considered when defining what qualifies as integrative learning at UWEC and how transfer credit would be evaluated for integrative learning. I also think further discussion on how study abroad students could fulfill integrative learning while abroad would be useful.

The only concern I have is the efficiency in which students that have a declared major and minor at UWEC will be able to graduate. For example, as nursing professor we have a number of undergraduate students that are also Spanish minors. The students work hard and have a demanding schedule that requires them to work their additional Spanish classes around their core nursing courses. If we limit them to choose no more than 2 classes from one of the listed headings (i.e., Arts & Humanities) can be used to graduate, meaning they need courses from other areas within this heading, will this impact the timeliness of their graduation or their choice to choose a minor?

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