UWEC Liberal Education Principles

REPORT FOR THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

University Committee: University Liberal Education Committee

Brief History of Issue - why the issue is being considered:

The structure and content of Liberal Education (aka General Education, GE) and University graduation requirements have been subjected to intense scrutiny by faculty, students, and UWEC committees over the past five years. Pilot projects aimed at testing new methods of delivery for General Education have begun; examples include several groups of ‘bundled courses’ addressing broad questions, domestic and international intercultural immersions, faculty-led study and research abroad, living-learning Communities. Committees and workgroups made up of faculty, students, and staff have engaged in study to learn about General Education best practices and reform. Consultants from the American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) as well as other campuses engaged in GE reform efforts have shared their expertise, and numerous UWEC faculty and staff have attended national conferences addressing the challenges of keeping GE relevant and effective. Numerous reports have been issued by the various UWEC work groups and committees tasked with exploring how we might best enhance our strengths and correct our weaknesses so as to provide the best possible educational experience for our students.

Points Discussed by Committee:

An important step forward in the process has been achieved. The Academic Policies Committee (APC) and University Senate voted this past fall to revise the name and function of the University General Education Committee so as to provide for a coordinating body to ensure faculty governance over GE reform. Working with the recommendations of the various workgroups and committees mentioned above, in the fall of 2010 the University Liberal Education Committee forwarded a proposal to the APC which asked for elimination of GE subcategory requirements for categories 2, 3 and 4 of the current GE structure. The APC’s response, after soliciting email comments from faculty, was to ask ULEC for an all-encompassing proposal for revision of GE and university graduation requirements. The rationale was that a comprehensive proposal for overhaul is more desirable than smaller scale incremental changes. After careful consideration of the APC’s response and thorough review of reports from the numerous groups working toward GE reform since 2006, ULEC approved a motion to seek agreement on basic principles and values for Liberal Education via APC and University Senate prior to developing a proposal for full-scale revision. The following statement of Principles and Values for Liberal Education is based on these reports, all of which are accessible on the UWEC website: UWEC Strategic Plan, Strategic Planning Workgroup 2 Report, BluGold Commitment Statement, GE Workgroup Report (2009), Chancellor’s Report to UW Board of Regents on GE Reform.

Committee Recommendation:

That the UWEC Liberal Education Principles be approved.
MOTION FOR THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

The University Committee: University Liberal Education Committee by a vote of 9 (nine) for to 0 (zero) against on February 3, 2011

Recommends that: The following UWEC Liberal Education Principles be approved.

UWEC LIBERAL EDUCATION PRINCIPLES

- The content and structure of liberal education serves to guide students in attainment of knowledge about humanity and the natural world, and skills to make connections among academic fields, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, engage issues of individual and social responsibility, and respect diversity.

- The sole purpose of university graduation and L.E. requirements is to guide student learning and intellectual development.

- University graduation requirements and L. E. should be flexible enough to encourage students’ taking responsibility for becoming intentional learners, with enough structure to encourage breadth and depth of exploration.

- L.E. methods of delivery should be relevant, effective, and include a variety of approaches. Among these are immersion and integrated learning experiences (e.g. study abroad, service-learning, faculty mentored scholarship, internships, thematic exploration of major questions across several courses, ‘stand alone’ interdisciplinary courses, topical minor concentrations).

- Revision efforts should be structured so as to maintain UWECs ‘marks of excellence’ for students, including opportunities for study abroad, service-learning, and faculty-mentored collaborative research and scholarship.

- Graduation requirements and L.E. should incorporate course work and experiential learning that prepares students for life in the increasingly globalized, multicultural, racially diverse, technological societies.

- Graduation and L.E. requirements should be intentionally designed to integrate as smoothly as possible with requirements for all majors, and to minimize conflict with those majors that carry numerous requirements driven by external accreditation.

Implementation Date: upon approval

Signed: Chair of the Committee