

## Liberal Education Committee Annual Report 2016-2017

### **Composition**

Domain Representatives for the 2016-2017 academic year were:

American Experience: Llana Barber (American Studies - U)  
Basic Communication: Jacqueline Emery (English - U)  
Creativity & Arts: Patricia Harris (Visual Arts - U)  
Diversity: Sarah Smith (Public Health - U)  
Foreign Languages: Angel Lara (Modern Languages - U)  
Humanities: Nicholas Powers (English - T)  
Math: David Ralston (Math - U)  
Major Cultures: Edislav Manetovic (PEL - U)  
Natural Science: Patrick Cadet (Biology - T)  
Social Sciences: Dana Prewitt (Sociology - U) Note: appointed by Faculty Senate Chair after Ashlee Lien stepped down  
Western Tradition: Juan Galvis (History and Philosophy - U)

While the new faculty bylaws only include the domain representatives as voting members of the faculty, other regular LEC meeting participants included Yumi Nicholson, the Administrative Coordinator of General Education, and Rachel Littenberg, the Registrar's Office Transfer Articulation Manager.

The LEC met seven times over the course of the 2016-2017, four times each semester, except for one canceled meeting in the spring due to snow. Meeting dates were 9/16/16, 10/21/16, 11/11/16, 12/9/16, 3/10/17, 4/21/17, and 5/19/17. Llana Barber served as chair.

### **Curriculum**

The LEC approved the following courses for inclusion within the Liberal Education Curriculum, or for a second domain within the curriculum. With the exception of Diversity courses (a local requirement), these courses were then sent to SUNY for system approval as General Education courses.

- HI4308 "History of the Modern Middle East and North Africa" for Major Cultures and Humanities
- HI2810 "Geography: Earth and People" for Social Science and Major Cultures
- AS2750 "Food" for Social Science and Humanities.
- ML4540 "Culture and Literature of Latin America" for Major Cultures (it is already designated as Humanities).
- ED 4000 "Foundations of Special Education" for Diversity, and the SOE subsequently lowered the course to the 3000 level.
- ML 3310 "Topics in Chicana/o Cultural Studies" for Diversity (it is already Foreign Languages)
- HI3200 "Contemporary Religious Experience" for Humanities.

The LEC considered ED 5930 “Fieldwork Experience: Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners” for Diversity, but after a brief discussion, the SOE decided to remove the course from consideration because students would already receive Diversity credit for ED 4000 which is a prerequisite for ED 5930.

The committee also revised the course proposal form in the beginning of the year to improve clarity, and domain representatives worked with the LEC chair and R. Littenberg in the Registrar’s office throughout the year to give students domain credit for qualifying transfer courses.

The Provost approved a third round of funding for Liberal Education Curriculum Development Stipends, as a means of encouraging full-time faculty to develop new, innovative, dual-designated LE courses. The LEC solicited proposals from the faculty in Spring 2017, but unfortunately no full-time faculty submitted proposals by the May 1st deadline.

### **Assessment**

The LEC assesses the LE curriculum through the ongoing process of domain review on a five-year cycle. In addition, domain representatives work with the Director of Academic Assessment to conduct student-learning assessment.

In domain review, the domain representative collects syllabi for all sections of all courses offered in the domain in a given semester, and analyzes the syllabi to get a sense of the course offerings in the domain (see appendix). This year, domain review was conducted in the Major Cultures and Humanities domains (by E. Manetovic and N. Powers respectively). The LEC approved the Major Cultures domain review report in our April meeting and it was subsequently submitted to chairs of the relevant department and the Director of Academic Assessment. The Humanities report is in progress.

The LEC also discussed a draft of the report on the critical thinking assessment conducted in Spring 2016. The Director of Academic Assessment, Hedva Lewittes, presented the report, noting the role of last year’s domain representatives in conducting and supporting the assessment. In addition, the LEC discussed a draft of the report on the Basic Communication student learning assessment conducted in Spring 2016 by J. Emery. This academic year, student learning was assessed in the Math and Foreign Languages domains. The Foreign Languages domain representative, A. Lara, worked with the Director of Academic Assessment to facilitate the assessment process, but Math assessment was supported by the Coordinator of the Math Redesign program.

### **Campus Initiatives**

The LEC consistently weighs in on campus initiatives related to the curriculum, and domain representatives serve as liaisons between the committee and the departments in their domains, helping to ensure broad faculty knowledge about the LE curriculum. This is particularly important given the recent changes in the LE curriculum precipitated by SUNY’s Seamless Transfer initiative.

Y. Nicholson reviewed with the committee how to advise students within the new curriculum, so that domain representatives could best serve as a resource for the faculty in this regard. R. Littenberg reviewed with the committee the domain credit policies for AP exams across various Old Westbury departments and how the issue is addressed at Farmingdale and Stony Brook.

The LEC discussed the rising need to assess the Institutional Learning Outcomes that were approved by the faculty last year. L. Barber attended a SUNY workshop on assessing ILO's (along with other members of OW's faculty and administration) and reported back to the LEC that SUNY and Middle States expect a mature assessment system at the departmental and college levels. Mature assessment implies that assessment will lead to instructional improvement (assessment spiral). Assessment should also be a tool in allocating resources (data-driven planning/resource allocation). Assessing the LE curriculum is a key part college-level assessment, and thus the LEC's work of student-learning assessment and domain review are important in this regard.

The LEC discussed the sudden increase in class-size limits in Spring 2017, and formally expressed our support for the return to previous limits, noting in our memo to the Provost:

Courses in the Liberal Education Curriculum often run at capacity, and as instructors who regularly teach these classes, we know from experience that increasing the amount of students too much, inevitably decreases the time and attention each student receives. Our students often cite the personal focus of Old Westbury professors as an empowering quality and needed experience. If we pack the classes, we may gain easier scheduling but lose the Old Westbury character that we prize.

We concluded, "The LEC appreciates the return to the 30-student cap, and requests the opportunity to formally weigh in if this issue arises in the future."

The LEC discussed the Writing Across the Curriculum program with Margaret Torrell, and the incentives for and logistics of developing a college-wide WAC requirement. While there was concern about potentially generating obstacles to graduation for students, many members of the LEC recognized the value of writing-intensive classes, and members expressed hope that if these classes become a graduation requirement, there will be substantial and sustained administrative support for the program to ensure that students can meet the WAC requirement without taking any additional courses.

The LEC discussed the Strategic Plan draft that had been circulated and formally expressed our support for it, noting in our memo to the Strategic Plan Task Force:

We appreciate how the current plan maintains and foregrounds our college's existing mission; OW's social justice commitment is truly what makes it distinct. The goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan reflect well the priorities of the LEC, and as you revise the strategies, we hope you will emphasize support for faculty teaching within the Liberal Education Curriculum. This support might include increased full-time lines for departments that substantially contribute to LE curriculum course-offerings each

semester, as well as increased remuneration for adjuncts, who still teach the bulk of our LE curriculum courses.

Finally, the LEC discussed Applied Learning (AL). Members of the committee, including D. Prewitt and L. Barber, attended conversations organized by the AL Campus Team, as the committee recognized that if implemented as a college-wide requirement, AL would fall within LEC's purview. While the LEC did not formally weigh in on whether or not AL should become a college-wide requirement, committee discussions often emphasized a need to ensure a distinct AL model, in line with OW's social justice mission and with its commitment to providing students with a broad liberal education, and not simply "job training."

Circulated in May 2017 and approved by the LEC on September 15, 2017