

Liberal Arts Session Notes

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Introductions and descriptions of Liberal Arts/Liberal Studies programs and organizational structures at the colleges represented. Exercise highlighted the significant diversity in purpose and organizational placement of these programs and academic background and transfer experience of MassTransfer Pathways representatives.

Discussion of why there are so many liberal arts/liberal studies options at many of the community colleges. Response (1) common core (2) use of concentrations (3) palatable to external communities – especially parents.

Central question for this discussion: MassTransfer Block – how well does the block work for the MassTransfer Pathway area in liberal arts? Is there a question related to the ordering of the courses?

1. MassTransfer Block works well to fulfill general education requirements – discussion about how expanding beyond this block will impact student transfer and baccalaureate degree program options and design – can we define options
2. Should a civics-learning course be considered?
3. Concern about community college faculty being limited to only lower level courses when they have an interest in teaching something at a higher level for their more advanced students. Linked concern about students being overwhelmed with the number of 300 and 400 level courses they will need to take together after transfer. This may diminish community college course choices for excited or motivated students.
  - a. Case made that students should be limited to 300 and 400 level at the junior and senior year when they are prepared for them
  - b. Case made that this also allows students to really focus on their major once they transfer
4. Basic MassTransfer block seems to be working, but students are often not getting junior status once they transfer
5. Problem with MassTransfer Block – no recognition of world language requirements at the baccalaureate degree level

Exercise – at each of the 4 tables – 2 top concerns with MassTransfer Block

1. How can we guarantee that CC students can transfer as a junior?
2. Should we require an Introduction to Liberal Arts course? Look at an issue from the perspective of the various liberal arts areas. Examples include courses at Quinsigamond and UMass Dartmouth. How many credits?
  - a. Related issues – would an Intro to Liberal Arts Course only transfer as an elective? Who would be willing and able to teach this course? Is it helpful to students selecting an area of interest? Is there a possible link to Freshmen Orientation courses/Life Map programs?
3. Differences between liberal arts programs at community colleges (exploratory) versus baccalaureate level programs
4. Lack of clarity about what we mean by Liberal Arts/Studies/Interdisciplinary programs
5. Include a critical thinking course that teaches skills and techniques as a foundational course – “the ultimate transferable skill”
6. More commonalities than differences between programs across the state – so easy to advise student regarding general foundational courses that would transfer to all liberal arts/studies programs. Also lots of common Liberal Arts concentrations across the system, so we should advise students to select a baccalaureate degree concentration that they want to transfer to and to elect community college courses that will transfer to that concentration. Spring convening should work off baccalaureate degree major curriculum maps.
7. What does an “undeclared” major student do during the first two years at the state universities and UMass campuses – should this be the model that we focus on instead of liberal arts/studies?

8. How should the world language requirement be addressed?

This afternoon: What are the objectives of the Liberal studies degree at the community college level, at the state university level and the UMass system? What do our students look like within each segment of higher education in Massachusetts?

What is the liberal arts/liberal studies student profile? What is the difference?

Community College

Liberal Arts – know they want to transfer, but not necessarily which major or college

Liberal Studies – (1) wanders – not sure about transfer or academic area (2) degree finishers

State University – Liberal Arts (1) Degree finishers; (2) Unclear about desired area (3) Desire to create a customized program

**Four Potential Populations for this Group to Focus on:**

1. Interdisciplinary to Interdisciplinary (may not be many)
2. LA/LS to Humanities
3. LA/LS to Social Sciences
4. LA/LS to undecided but want a degree later