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Approved by CLASS
Undergraduate Studies Committee


Dr. David Phillips

2.24.12

Date

To: CLASS Undergraduate Studies Committee
From: Thomas Behr, Director, Liberal Studies, Comparative Cultural Studies
Re: Raising GPA Requirement for Declaring a Liberal Studies Major
Comparative Cultural Studies
Date: 2/23/2012

Withdrawn
4/6/2012

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Item: Liberal Studies currently has a 2.0 cumulative GPA requirement to declare the major, and proposes to raise that to 2.25.

Rationale: Liberal Studies as a new program, launched in Fall 2010, has grown rapidly and continues to grow, adding 50 majors in the last semester such that we are now over 250 majors (declared and intended, and probation). The Academic Advisor in Liberal Studies is responsible not only for our program's majors, but also for minors in Religious Studies (circa 93), minors in the new Global and International Studies program that launches in Fall 2012 (already 4 intended), and the Pre-Nursing Dual Degree program that launches in Fall 2012 (already 9 intended).

There are two distinct rationales for proposing raising our GPA requirement for declaring Liberal Studies to 2.25. The first is that we have worked very hard to maintain the "brand" of Liberal Studies as an excellent degree program—not just for struggling students (although it does help them) but also for the best and most dynamic students. We have dozens of students that are doing either double majors (i.e. a traditional major plus our three minors) or a double degree (e.g. a B.S. in Biology and the B.A. in Liberal Studies). We have introduced two successful study abroad programs, Winter Session in France, and Summer in Rome. Our capstone course (ILAS 4350) is a great books course for seniors, and introductory course (ILAS 2350) is a learning-how-to-learn course that is particularly demanding on reading and writing. I place a high priority on excellent Academic Advising, and on Faculty Mentoring. I meet with all of our majors at least once. The last thing that we want is for Liberal Studies to become the default lot for students unable to get into their major of first choice and with the only intent of working on improving their GPA so they can switch.

Secondly, students of concern for Liberal Studies whom we list as "declared, not intended" are those students who do not want to actually complete the Liberal Studies program but are hoping to improve their GPA and move into the program of their choice. That number is currently 27, but we have easily discouraged another two or three dozen students who were looking to do that this past year. Our Academic Advisor, Tamara Cobb, and I have developed a

screening process for new majors that includes preliminary email to students before their orientation, personal interview, and an interview with me, as necessary. We have worked closely with Academic Affairs to review Admissions advising procedures to make sure that when a student puts "Liberal Studies" as their second choice, that it really is their second choice, and not a temporary place to work on improving their GPA for their desired program.

We expect the number of our LS majors to continue to grow substantially, as we also expect the GIS and Nursing numbers to grow once those programs are on the books next Fall.