

Liberal Studies 2008-2010

Program Description

Eastern Oregon University's Liberal Studies program offers students an opportunity to devise a personalized program of study in an interdisciplinary approach relevant to their life experiences and career goals.

Within the program, students combine two or more areas of study into one interdisciplinary program. Current program options include:

- 1) Preapproved programs which have been designed by faculty and approved by the Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee:
 - a. Business and Health Promotion
 - b. Early Childhood Education
 - c. Environmental Studies- under revision
 - d. Gender Studies/Business
 - e. Organizational Psychology
 - f. Small City and Rural County Management

All preapproved programs are offered both on and off-campus with the exception of Gender Studies/Business, offered only on campus.

- 2) Two EOU minors, which in most cases are selected from separate program fields.
- 3) One EOU minor and a second minor from another accredited institution.
- 4) Individualized Program that may contain one minor and a subject field or two subject fields.

All Liberal Studies majors must be admitted to the program. Admission forms are turned into the Director of Liberal Studies Program Review. Students must complete the following for full program admission:

- A. Complete 45 credit hours (of which 24 must be graded) with a GPA of 2.0 or better. At least 12 credits are from EOU.
- B. Provide written justification for pursuing a Liberal Studies major by answering the following questions:
 - a. What is your career or educational goal?
 - b. Why have you chosen the LS major rather than a traditional major?
 - c. How do you see your two minors "blending" together to meet your goals?
- C. Submit a planned program for approval.

Each degree requires at least 60 credits incorporating at least two or more disciplines. At least 36 credits must be completed at the upper division level. Students also complete a capstone working with a faculty adviser within their main subject area. A topic is selected by the student and approved by the faculty capstone adviser and signed off by the respective college dean.

Recent Programmatic Changes (Spring 2008 – Fall 2009)

A revised Organizational Psychology preapproved program was approved during winter term 2009 and implemented that spring. It took the place of the former Business/Psychology program.

Due to no students being admitted to the Gender Studies/Business program within the past three years, discipline faculty in Gender Studies have requested that this program be eliminated before the new 2010-2012 Academic Catalog comes out. The request will be sent through the appropriate channels.

A revised statement on Liberal Studies Individualized Study Plans was written and given to advisers from the Liberal Studies Committee. The purpose was to assist students in deciding when an Individualized Program is appropriate and what should be included in the justification for such a program. This statement was approved in spring 2009 and implemented at the beginning of fall term. See attachment A.

Beginning in Fall 2009, a Liberal Studies Task Force was appointed by the Provost. A Director of Liberal Studies Program Review was appointed to continue the administration of the current program.

The purpose of the task force was to initiate a review and recommend a strategic plan for the Liberal Studies program including the development of a vision for the future of this degree program as well as exploring needed resources and a proposed timeline for the possible establishment of an academic unit for Liberal Studies.

An initiative was developed and forwarded by President's Cabinet to the Budget and Planning Committee. In addition to the existing and ongoing administration of the current LS program, the proposal included current and transitional activities, basic structure and availability of resources, program outline, program advocacy, institutional fit, and student needs. The initiative was not funded and the program will continue under the current Director.

Two new Environmental Studies concentrations (Biology and Social Science) were presented to EPCC and were approved during winter term 2010.

How Program serves the Mission of the University and regional needs

Students from throughout Oregon and other parts of the United States select one of the program options. Many of these students transfer credits from other institutions. Degree seekers include both traditional and non-traditional students. This degree serves as a stepping stone for students pursuing graduate programs, business opportunities, preparation for entering a teaching program (if appropriate), early childhood education, social services, advancement in current careers, or criminal justice opportunities. Other areas in which students use the degree as a stepping stone are in the following career fields: parks and recreation, renewable energy, human services, the ministry, drug and alcohol counseling, and health care, to name a few.

1) Program Outcomes

Through discipline-based coursework, Liberal Studies students will be expected to meet proficiency levels in University Learning Outcome areas.

University Learning Outcomes

Eastern Oregon University students prepare for their careers and lives as citizens by:

- gaining *breadth of knowledge*,
- strengthening their ability to *inquire, create, and communicate*,
- being *engaged* in the *community* and exercising *personal and social responsibility*, and
- *integrating, applying, and reflecting* on their skills and knowledge.

Recognizing the variety of disciplines available to students in the Liberal Studies program – the ULOs listed above are aligned with two or more subject disciplines chosen, as well as the General Education curriculum.

II) Four Year Assessment Cycle: Liberal Studies

The assessment cycle for the degree program is deferred to the Program Assessment Cycle for each Discipline involved in a specific Liberal Studies degree program.

ATTACHMENT A

Effective September 15, 2009

EASTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY Liberal Studies Individualized Plan

What distinguishes an Individualized Plan from other Liberal Studies Options?

Students pursuing the Individualized Plan (IP) option in the Liberal Studies Major (LS) combine study in two subject fields or one subject field and one minor. This degree path is intended for mature, self-directed students whose educational and professional goals can not currently be met through an existing EOU major or through the Liberal Studies two minor option.

Students interested in pursuing the IP option must submit a proposed degree plan and a justification essay to the Liberal Studies Committee for approval. Before a plan can be approved, the student must demonstrate to committee members that the LS major is an appropriate option for attaining his or her educational and/or professional goals.

When is an IP appropriate?

The decision to pursue an IP should be made after the student has acquired sufficient knowledge and/or experience in each proposed subject area to demonstrate that this decision is reasonable and well-informed. It should be an intellectual decision, not a path of convenience.

An IP may be appropriate under the following conditions:

1. The student's intellectual and/or professional needs differ significantly from those met by existing EOU majors and minors.

2. One or two subject fields are not available as minors or majors at EOU.
3. The student would benefit academically and/or professionally from a multidisciplinary approach, drawing from appropriate support courses rather than pursuing a traditional major, a pre-approved Liberal Studies program, or a Liberal Studies two-minor degree.
4. A student has transferred a large number of credits from other institutions, but the credits do not fit well with existing EOU majors or minors.
5. Courses required for an existing EOU major or minor are not offered in the delivery mode (on campus, online, or on site) accessible to the student.

An IP is not appropriate when a traditional EOU major, Liberal Studies pre-approved program, or Liberal Studies two minor plan is available to the student.

How are IPs approved?

IPs are reviewed each term by the Liberal Studies Committee, which is made up of the Director of Liberal Studies and faculty members from the Colleges of Education, Business, and Arts and Sciences. The Committee may approve the plan on first review, approve the plan on the condition that the student make recommended changes, require the student to resubmit a revised plan the following term with additional information or stronger justifications, or deny the student's application.

Needless to say, much thought and preparation should go into the plan prior to the Committee's review. The student may need to do significant research into his or her chosen profession and/or academic field in order to develop a strong plan and write a compelling rationale. In most cases, the student works closely with his or her academic advisor to identify appropriate courses, check degree requirements, and draft a program plan.

The Committee highly recommends that the advisor ask a faculty member in each of the proposed subject fields to review the plan prior to submission to the Liberal Studies Committee. The faculty member may choose to sign off on the plan or give approval by e-mail. In any case, prior approval by faculty members weighs heavily toward the final decision of Liberal Studies Committee members.

What should be included in an IP?

1. A **program plan**. A minimum of 60 credit hours (of which 36 must be Upper Division) must be included in this plan. There must be two main subject fields and each subject field must include at least 18 credits, including a minimum of 9 upper division credits in each subject field. Support courses, which support the two main subject fields and assist in achieving the stated goals, may be included to attain the 60 minimum credits. [Additional requirements for completing a bachelor of arts (B.A.) or bachelor of science (B.S.) degree are listed in the EOU Catalog.]
2. If the student's plan includes support courses, he or she must attach an additional page explaining how each support course fits in the plan.

3. A **justification essay** (2-4 pages typed and double spaced) clearly stating the student's educational and/or professional goals and explaining why the Liberal Studies Individualized Plan is the most appropriate way to achieve those goals.

The justification essay should:

- Identify the student's educational and/or professional goals.
- Explain why the IP is a more appropriate path to attaining those goals than an existing EOU major, Liberal Studies pre-approved program, or two-minor option.
- Show how the two selected subject areas (or minor and subject area) integrate and support the student's goals.
- Demonstrate that the decision is reasonably well-informed, based on sufficient knowledge and/or experience in the proposed subject fields and the professional or academic areas the student plans to enter after graduation.
- Be focused, well-organized, and well-edited.

The Committee also appreciates an explanation of students' progress toward this decision, including significant academic, professional, or other experiences that have led the student to pursue an IP degree. (For instance, the decision may have been influenced by the student's personal interests, family or employment circumstances, volunteer experience, past schooling, and so on.)

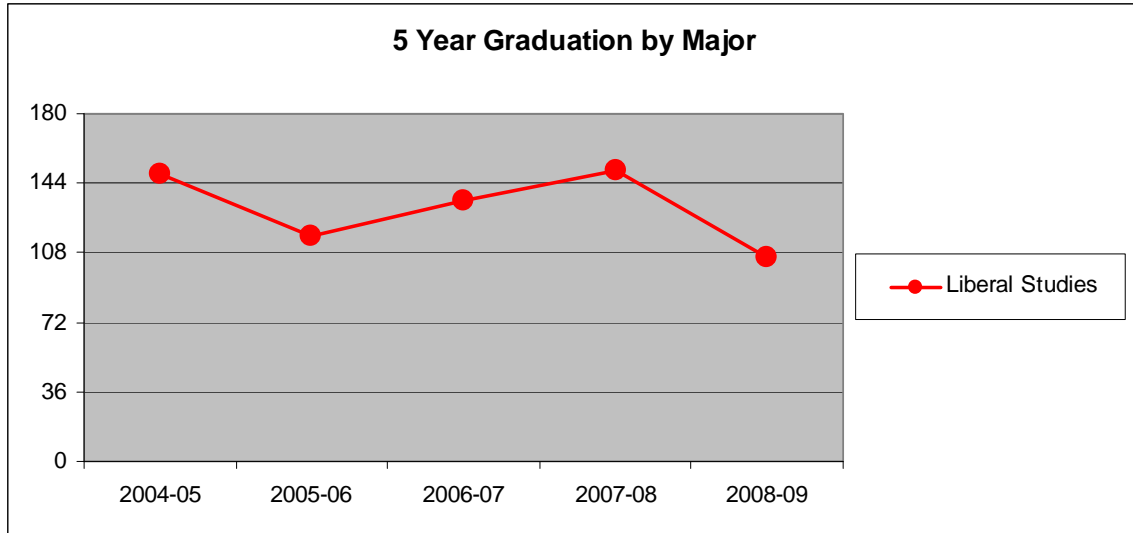
Again, the decision to pursue an IP should be a thoughtful one, guided by the student's educational and professional objectives. Thus, the following are **not** considered good arguments in and of themselves for pursuing an IP:

- "I'm ready to be done with my degree and this is the easiest route."
- "I didn't find the courses in the existing majors or minors especially relevant or interesting." (*Do you have enough experience to judge the relevance of courses you haven't yet taken? If so, how can you demonstrate that's the case?*)
- "This plan will make me more well-rounded than a traditional major would." (*A traditional major/minor combination provides both breadth and depth in two established fields of study. If you want to make the case that you will benefit from a multidisciplinary approach, you'll need to articulate clearly what your plan does better or differently than a traditional approach would.*)
- "It doesn't really matter what my degree is in; I just need a degree." (*This may be true in some circumstances but it's not a compelling argument to make if you haven't done the research necessary to demonstrate that it's true in your case. What evidence can you provide to support this claim?*)
- I want to go to graduate school in ____; this path of study will make me a good candidate for admission. (*Again, this may be true in some cases, but how will you persuade the Committee that it's true in yours? Have you researched admissions*

requirements for the kinds of graduate programs to which you hope to apply? If so, make that clear in your essay.)

05/09

5 Year Graduation by Major



	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Liberal Studies	149	117	135	151	106

Administrative Review

Assessment of Program Outcomes:

Assessment of each program is based on the program outcomes listed under each discipline. Please check program outcomes data in the specific discipline areas located at <http://www.eou.edu/assess/ProgramAssessment.html>.

Enrollment Indicators:

During the past three years the numbers of on and off-campus students admitted to the Liberal Studies Program has not grown. Off-campus enrollments have declined each year since 2006 averaging about 129 per year. On-campus admissions averaged about 25 per year. The reason that the numbers of LS admissions and graduation numbers could show a decline might be attributed to a couple of reasons:

- 1) Freshman and transfer students are encouraged to look at traditional majors before deciding to examine the LS major. This major is not actively marketed for this reason.
- 2) Since this major is primarily used by online students, three new online majors have been added to the list of six other online majors (which

includes LS) during these past five years: Psychology, an English Writing major with a Literature/Film concentration, and an Anthropology/Sociology major with an Anthropology concentration.

Program Goals and Observations:

Goals include:

- 1) Strengthening the LS advising process by working in cooperation with the ACA Advising Director, all academic and faculty advisers. Our plan includes nurturing a team of LS advisers within ACA to improve the LS advising consistency. Schedule informational meetings each term with all LS Advisers. Discuss how on campus LS students will be advised during summer term.
- 2) Seeking to improve communication regarding LS with all aspects of University.
- 3) Strengthening LS capstone process working with academic deans and their respective disciplines.
- 4) Surveying LS graduates to learn how they are using their LS degree.
- 5) Beginning process to consider name of major to “Interdisciplinary Studies.”

Other Observations:

The Liberal Studies major continues to fill a niche for students whose career goals are not met by current majors offered on and off-campus. We have been able to retain students who would have dropped out of the university had we not had this program opportunity.