

To: Bob Snyder, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

From: Jená Burges, Vice Provost and Dean for All-University Programs

Subject: Recommendation for Liberal Studies/Nonteaching Option

Date: March 2, 2009

Cc: Martin Flashman, Chair, University Curriculum Committee  
Ginny Kelly, Director, Advising Center

This memo is in response to the request that all Deans forward their recommendations regarding programs in their College which were ranked in Categories I and IV in the recent Academic Prioritization Report. Among the All-University Programs for which I am the Dean, the Nonteaching option of the Liberal Studies major, ranked in Category IV, is the only one requiring such a recommendation.

The UCC's initial report noted a number of barriers to the success of programs like this, which operate outside traditional department structures, and I agree that HSU needs to develop new structures for supporting cross-departmental collaborations and cross-disciplinary programs. Absent such structures, however, a program like Liberal Studies/Nonteaching cannot thrive.

I also agree with the UCC's suggestion that providing "students who have completed a high unit number but have not met the specific requirements for a specific major" with a "constructive approach to helping them graduate" can be of benefit to the students and the university, if it is done in a thoughtful, rigorous, and cohesive manner. However, the program does not currently have that capacity.

Based on the evidence provided, and on my own involvement in and observation of the program, I concur with the UCC's conclusion that "if it is to continue, this program needs a home and involvement of permanent faculty. It would be ideal for the program to be housed in an existing department." Such a department would need to be committed not only to overseeing the program (e.g., conducting Program Review, perhaps implementing the recommended capstone course), but also to advising its students, developing and assessing its outcomes, and strengthening the cohesiveness of its curriculum.

Without these commitments, the integrity of the program would continue to suffer. Accordingly, if no existing department is prepared to undertake these commitments, I recommend that the Liberal Studies/Nonteaching option be discontinued.