

College: Fairmount College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Department/Program (s): Interdisciplinary

Degree (s) Offered: Bachelor in General Studies (BGS); M.A. in Liberal Studies (MALS)

Triggers: ACT – BGS program; Graduates – MALS program

Brief Description of Each Degree:

B.G.S. – The Bachelor of General Studies degree allows students to design their own program of study crossing departmental or even college lines. The BGS degree allows the student to become a generalist and may allow pre-professional or nontraditional career students greater flexibility in planning for their unique futures. Most recent data indicates there were 255 majors and 143 graduates. The average ACT was 20. This may be skewed by the fact that most are LAS majors as freshmen and sophomores.

M.A. in Liberal Studies – WSU offers an interdisciplinary MALS degree program for individuals who wish to pursue a particular topical or interdisciplinary interest at the graduate level, but find the existing programs either too specialized or insufficiently individualized. The MALS program offers students an opportunity to design a program of study to answer their particular needs and interests in a focused, coherent manner. MALS has put into place a plan to increase admission numbers (and has exceeded) in an effort to increase the number of graduates.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes:

The learning outcome statements listed in the self-study for each program are not tied to direct measure of student learning. Therefore, the assessment process described does not provide information on the level of achievement of the undergraduate and graduate learning outcomes.

Placement of Graduates:

Anecdotal evidence is provided in terms of the employability of the UG and GR students. The BGS degree program is very popular and provides an opportunity for students to study in an emphasis area that otherwise does not exist at the University. The BGS Program also serves a diverse group of students. Similarly, the MALS program provides opportunities that do not exist otherwise. Ninety-two percent of BGS students report they would complete the degree again, given the opportunity. Among MALS students, they rate the program highly on the Graduate School Exit Survey. Documenting employment rates and characteristics would be helpful to further promote both programs.

Sources of External Support/Faculty Comments: As faculty are assigned to other departments (but offer courses to both program students), faculty productivity is not reported.

Conclusions:

Commendations:

- BGS – increased majors, graduates and SCH.

- MALS – increased admissions.
- Monitor ACT outcomes of the BGS program.
- Especially for the undergraduate program, consider targeted advising programs to move students towards completion in a timely manner. Targeted advising may also allow students the opportunity to learn about other in-demand programs across the University (i.e., engineering, health professions).

By April 1, 2012 (send to the Office of the Provost):

- Efforts should be made to document that the program review process is a part of a continuous improvement approach involving interdisciplinary departmental faculty members.
- The learning outcomes for both programs should be further developed and a revised assessment process needs to be implemented to include the following:
 - Learning Outcomes: Statements that describe what students are expected to know and be able to do by the time of graduation. These relate to the skills, knowledge, and behaviors that students acquire through their program (e.g., graduates will demonstrate advanced writing ability).
 - Assessment Methods: Direct measures used to identify, collect, and prepare data to evaluate the achievement of learning outcomes (e.g., writing project evaluated by a rubric).
 - Targets: Expectations of students to achieve the desired outcome to demonstrate program effectiveness (e.g., 90% of students will demonstrate at least the benchmark performance on a writing project).
 - Results: Actual achievement on each measurement (e.g., 94% of the students achieved at least the benchmark performance on the writing project).
 - Analysis: An evaluation that determines the extent to which learning outcomes are being achieved and leads to decisions and actions to improve the program. The analysis and evaluation should align with specific learning outcomes and consider whether the measurement and target remain valid indicators of the learner.

Prior to the next review in 2014:

- Data should be collected and evaluated in terms of student perceptions about the program. The University implemented an electronic undergraduate and graduate student exit survey in 2011 (by program) for this purpose.
- Data should be collected and evaluated from all program graduates to include salary, employment location, and employment in the field. The University is implementing an alumni survey (by program) for this purpose in 2012.