The UW System’s Participation in *Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP)*

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Board of Regents
October 4, 2007
UW-River Falls
What is Liberal Education?

Liberal education is a philosophy of education that empowers individuals with broad knowledge and transferable skills, and a strong sense of values, ethics, and civic engagement.
What is Liberal Education?

- Prepares graduates both for work and for civic leadership.
- Includes general education and more in-depth study in a major.
- Is global and embraces the diversity of people, ideas and experiences.
Why Now?

“The liberal arts make us ‘competitive’ in the ways that matter most. They make us wise, thoughtful and appropriately humble. They help our human potential to bloom. And they are the foundation for a democratic civic polity, where each of us bears equal rights and responsibilities.”

Employers Endorse Key Elements Of a Liberal Education

% saying colleges should put more emphasis on each learning outcome

- Concepts and new developments in science & technology: 82%
- Teamwork skills and the ability to collaborate with others in diverse group settings: 76%
- The ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings through internships or other hands-on experiences: 73%
- The ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing: 73%
Employers Endorse Key Elements Of a Liberal Education

% saying colleges should put more emphasis on each learning outcome

Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills 73%
Global issues and developments and their implications for the future 72%
The ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources 70%
The ability to be innovative and think creatively 70%
The Essential Learning Outcomes

- Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
- Intellectual and Practical Skills
- Personal and Social Responsibility
- Integrative Learning
LEAP in Wisconsin

The LEAP Campaign in Wisconsin is working to address the topic of student preparation through a variety of coordinated strategies, focused on:

– Campus action
– Leadership
– Public outreach and advocacy
UW-Oshkosh’s Liberal Education Reform

Building upon a planning process initiated by Chancellor Wells, UW-Oshkosh has:

– Developed a unified focus supporting traditional scholarship and the values of a liberal education;

– Included faculty, students, staff and community leaders; and

– Expanded the University’s engagement with the people of the Fox Valley and Northeastern Wisconsin.
UW-Oshkosh Liberal Education Reform

Strengthening the University at the edges, while remaining true to the core values of teaching students to think critically and become socially responsible citizens of the world.
3-Part Series in UW-Oshkosh Magazine on LEAP

Focus on:

– Letters & Science Faculty, Staff and Students

– Value of a liberal education within professional studies

– Connecting liberal education to the community
UW-Oshkosh Liberal Education Reform

Institution-wide effort working to distribute liberal education across all colleges and at all levels of the curriculum, including General Education and the professional schools.
Professional School Accreditation Standards

Professional School Accreditation for Engineering (ABET), Business (AACSB), and Nursing (AACN) require attention to the essential student learning outcomes.
“Liberal Education is not a separate or distinct segment of professional education, but an integrated educational experience, recognized and valued as an on-going, life-long process. Courses in the arts, sciences and humanities provide a forum for the study of values, ethical principles, and the physical world as well as opportunities to reflect and apply knowledge gained to professional practice....”
The Currency of the Liberal Arts and Sciences: Rethinking Liberal Education in Wisconsin

Re-focus attention and interest on the value of liberal education in the 21st century
System Advisory Group on the Liberal Arts (SAGLA)

KEY ACTIVITIES

• Discuss and share useful models among campuses
• Public advocacy
• Multi-campus and system-wide initiatives
• Primary contact and collaboration with AAC&U on LEAP
University of Wisconsin System

System Advisory Group Membership

16 campuses

1 Chancellor (honorary)
1 Provost/Vice Chancellor
11 Letters /Arts and Sciences Deans or Associate Deans
6 Faculty-Staff-Department Chair-Campus Leaders
4 UW System Staff Members

VP for Communication and Public Affairs, AAC&U
Executive Director, Wisconsin Humanities Council

Meet 3X annually, additional work by phone, email, working groups/committees
The faculty and staff in the College of Letters and Science are committed to the promotion of the liberal arts as the key to understanding the value of a broad education and the connectedness among the various disciplines. Many have crafted statements included in their syllabi that speak directly to the importance of general education in relation to other disciplines and in the development of critical thinking across the curriculum. The following are some thought-provoking statements that have been presented to our students via course syllabi. Feel free to utilize these comments in your own efforts to promote the liberal arts.
Sharing Good-Practice Models Among Campuses

Liberal Education Discussions among faculty

Liberal Education Dialogue
(L E D)
Public Advocacy

Campus-Community Dialogues about liberal education

Developing minds for 21st-century challenges:
A campus and community discussion about university education

Monday, February 27  |  6:30-8:30 p.m.  |  Plaza Hotel, Eau Claire  |  Two Rivers Ballroom
Public Advocacy

• Public Radio Programming
  – Single programs
  – New series at UWSP

As part of its involvement in LEAP Forward Wisconsin -- the first pilot state-wide LEAP initiative -- the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point has launched a monthly radio segment on WSPT 1010 AM.
University of Wisconsin System

Public Advocacy

• Editorial and opinion pieces

**The Badger Herald**

**Opinion & Editorial**

Rossmeissl correct on liberal arts

by Guest Columnist
Monday, March 27, 2006

Rob Rossmeissl (“Colleges increasingly shun liberal arts,” The Badger Herald, 3/22/06) called attention to an issue of concern nationally and within Wisconsin. We agree that not enough attention is paid to the value and purpose of a liberal education, despite the fact that many UW students pursue baccalaureate degrees in liberal arts and science disciplines, and many professional education programs incorporate essential liberal education elements. Badger Herald readers may be interested in current efforts within the UW System to...

Also by Guest Columnist:

• Abbott dishonors Wisconsin Idea (May 7, 2007)
• Societal strife gives Marxism renewed clout (May 2, 2007)
• Education will help drinking culture (April 26, 2007)
• First time must be thought out (April 20, 2007)
• Attempting to understand a troubled mind (April 23, 2007)
Public Advocacy

Presentations for alumni and other groups

College Learning for the New Global Century
Coordinated system-wide efforts

Support for November 2007 Liberal Education Conference at St. Norbert’s College

(UWS, WTCS, WAICU, AAC&U)

Focus on faculty and instructional staff (campus teams)
Coordinated System-wide efforts

Planning Liberal Education conference (November 2008)

Liberal education as a focus for “de-fragmenting” our universities

Instructional, administrative, support personnel (all campuses) + business leaders
Coordinated system-wide efforts

Announcing the Recipients of the Annual Liberal Arts Essay Scholarship Competition
Liberal Arts Essay Scholarship Competition

• To promote understanding of the value and purpose of a liberal arts education

• $2,000 scholarships, three awards based on essay competition

• Doctoral/comprehensive campuses and 2-year campuses

• On some campuses, scholarships for nominees to system level encourage participation
Imagine yourself as a graduating senior with a younger sibling who will be starting college next year. What advice would you offer to this brother or sister who is setting off on the path of a liberal education? What experiences should your sibling anticipate—or seek out—that might afford a richer comprehension of liberal education's ideals?
2007 Essay Theme

Choose a contemporary issue or problem that you consider significant and write an essay demonstrating the ways in which your liberal education helps to understand, contextualize, and address the issue or problem.
Last year at this time, I was wandering the streets of Japan. With my digital camera and a sense of adventure, I explored the shrines and temples... I recall the industrial city... Gradually the landscape changed. It seemed that I had just stumbled into a whole different dimension... I realized that there was an equilibrium between the sacred shrines and the surrounding community. My understanding of the world and how it worked changed in that moment. I feel that the liberal arts is much like my neighborhood in Japan, a mixture of elements coming together to serve a purpose.
I remember when the news broke in the fall of 2005 that UW-Eau Claire had enforced a policy prohibiting senior RA Lance Steiger from holding Bible studies in his room or residence hall. I was news editor for The Spectator at the time… The Associated Press had picked up the controversy before us, leaving us scrambling to catch up on our own turf… “This could be big,” I said in one of the all-time great understatements of my career…

Suddenly, I was directing and contributing to coverage that had some serious implications. .. The difference between the ideal journalism of the classroom and the journalism of practice… hinges on two conditions: the efforts of individual journalists and the expectations society expresses…
Drawing Motivation and Support from Each Other

“…not a lone voice in the wilderness any more.”
Visit the System Advisory Group website at UWS homepage (A-Z Index, SAGLA)

http://liberationeducation.uwsa.edu/sagla.htm
Questions?

• What do you think are the key components of an undergraduate education? Have we captured them here?
• How do we articulate and advance the importance of liberal education for Wisconsin’s future?
• Besides public advocacy in their own sphere of life and influence, what can the Board of Regents do to support UW institutions in the teaching and learning of liberal education?