Implementation of the Recommendations from the Liberal Learning
Self-Study and External Review
Liberal Learning Program Council
April, 2016

The Liberal Learning Program Council (LLPC) has identified two groups of recommendations arising from the Liberal Learning Self-Study and external review: major and minor. Major recommendations represent larger-scale changes that have the most potential to enhance the Liberal Learning Program; implementing these recommendations will require College-wide discussions and collaboration, including sending proposed changes through governance. Minor recommendations represent changes to the program that can be implemented either administratively or without submission to governance. This document focuses on the major recommendations (a full list of the major and minor recommendations are available at the end of this document).

There were five major recommendations from the Self-Study (SS) and external review (ER):

1. Revise the Liberal Learning student outcomes (SS and ER).
   Currently, there are too many outcomes, many need rephrasing, and some important outcomes from national conversations are not included.

2. Pursue true integration between Liberal Learning, the majors, and co-curriculum (SS and ER).
   The Self-Study highlighted the need to reduce or eliminate the appearance that Liberal Learning and major programs are separate and/or conflicting. The external reviewers have encouraged the College to engage departments, majors and co-curricular staff in conversations designed to identify how their learning outcomes align with the Liberal Learning outcomes.

3. Revise the curricular structure of Liberal Learning (SS and ER).
   Once the outcomes have been revised, the LLPC will engage the campus in consensus building around a curricular structure that will achieve the revised learning outcomes, preserve the strengths of the current program, add those best practices recommended by AAC&U that are appropriate to TCNJ, increase connections among Liberal Learning courses and with major programs, and make it apparent that TCNJ provides a liberal arts education as a whole.

4. Improve Liberal Learning advising (ER).
   The external reviewers identified as an area of concern the high rate of self-advising by students with respect to the Liberal Learning, and they recommended that substantial attention be devoted to advising following the revision of the outcomes, structure and assessment of the Liberal Learning Program.

5. Implement a robust direct assessment of Liberal Learning (SS and ER).
   Currently, there is little direct assessment of student mastery of Liberal Learning outcomes; most assessment is indirect (i.e., measures student and faculty perceptions).

The logical first recommendation to implement is the revision of the outcomes for the Liberal Learning Program. Such a revision is necessary before we can consider major recommendations 3, 4, and 5, and this recommendation will be the focus of the remainder of this document.

The LLPC voted unanimously to develop a set of degree-level goals, i.e., a set of 5-10 high-level goals that represent the knowledge and skills that all TCNJ undergraduates would have by the time they graduate. We have chosen this approach, rather than simply proposing a revision of the current Liberal
Learning outcomes, because the approach solves simultaneously two of the most important issues identified in the Self-Study and by the external reviewers: 1) students view their TCNJ education as consisting of two, often conflicting, components (Liberal Learning and the major), and 2) students often see little value in their Liberal Learning education.

Currently, the way we perceive and communicate about a TCNJ education does not conceptualize that education as a coherent entity but as two major parts: Liberal Learning and the major. Students do not seem to be able to point to the benefits of Liberal Learning in the same way they can for their majors, nor is it easy for them to communicate to employers and professional and graduate schools how, and for what, Liberal Learning has prepared them. Indeed, the student survey conducted as part of the Self-Study revealed that only 47% of our students view Liberal Learning as essential to their TCNJ education (compared to 88% of tenured/tenure-track faculty) and 49% feel that Liberal Learning gets in the way of their majors and minors.

A set of degree-level goals can transform communication about the value and essentiality of a liberal education, allowing students to understand and articulate clearly what a TCNJ education delivers. Because such outcomes would be met through classes inside and outside of the major and through co-curricular activities, degree-level goals would permit true integration between Liberal Learning Program, the majors, and the co-curriculum, as recommended by the external reviewers. Eventually, we should be able to provide a “roadmap” for students that connects the degree-level goals with courses, co-curricular activities, and the Signature Experiences. This approach will also allow us to simultaneously address the specific recommendations from the Self-Study and the external review for improving the current outcomes (add outcomes that have emerged as essential in national conversations but that are currently missing from our outcomes, improve the phrasing of outcomes, and reduce the number of outcomes).

Currently, there are two sets of degree-level goals that have been proposed by national groups engaged in such conversations: 1) the LEAP Essential Outcomes from AAC&U, and 2) the Degree Qualifications Profile (a joint effort of the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, the Institute for Evidence-Based Change, and the Lumina Foundation). The two sets are listed on the next page, with links to websites that provide additional information and to several institutions that have implemented degree-level goals.

LLPC’s plan is to use these two sets, as well as examples from other institutions, as the starting point for crafting one or more sets of degree-level goals that fit TCNJ especially well. These will be submitted to CAP, who will gather testimony. Once a set of degree-level goals is approved, the LLPC will begin work on the more specific outcomes that will be included under each broad degree-level goal.

Timeline
Spring 2016
- LLPC engages in conversations with campus on the general idea of degree-level goals.
- LLPC drafts one or more alternative sets of degree-level goals.

Fall 2016
- If needed, LLPC continues its work on the draft of degree-level goals.
- LLPC sends proposed degree-level goals to CAP for campus-wide discussion and the gathering of testimony, with the goal of consensus and approval.

Spring 2017
- LLPC, or a larger group led by LLPC, defines the specific outcomes that would be included under each broad degree-level goal.
- LLPC sends specific outcomes to CAP for discussion and the gathering of testimony, with the goal of revision, consensus, and approval.
Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts
  Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

Intellectual and Practical Skills, including
- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving
  Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

Personal and Social Responsibility, including
- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning
  Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

Integrative and Applied Learning, including
- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies
  Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems

Specialized knowledge (i.e., a major)

Broad and Integrative Knowledge

Intellectual Skills
- Analytic inquiry
- Use of information resources
- Engaging diverse perspectives
- Ethical reasoning
- Quantitative literacy
- Communication fluency

Applied and Collaborative Learning

Civic and Global Learning

Examples of Degree-level goals at Other Institutions

California Polytechnic State University – San Luis Obispo*
Chapman University*
Clark University
Elon University
Fairfield University*
Franklin Pierce University
James Madison University*
Northern Illinois University
Portland State University
Sacramento State University
St. Joseph’s University*
SUNY-Geneseo*
University of Illinois-Springfield
University of Wisconsin System
Washington State University

*TCNJ comparator institution