

Changing the name of Liberal Studies to Integrative Studies

Need to Change our Name

Unfortunately, in contemporary culture, the word “liberal” is not associated primarily with the academic curriculum.

- **General misunderstanding:** Some people actually believe that a liberal studies program teaches leftist politics. Someone (one of our former colleagues) once asked me if we had a program in conservative studies, also. To the best of my knowledge the LU Liberal Studies major is free of political advocacy.
- **Limitation for potential advancement and funding for special programs:** When I approached Advancement about raising funds for special projects, I was told that our name would stand in the way of raising money. Outside funding opportunities are essential for growth in LS because we own no courses that can be offered during the summer to generate additional revenue. (LS major courses are offered by and support the budgets of disciplinary departments.)
- **Obvious negatives:** With the title of Liberal Studies, we live under a constant veil of undeserved negatives. For example, The FOX evening line up not only promotes a non academic meaning of “liberal,” it does it with a powerful negative spin on the word.
- **Longwood Board of Visitors:** After a long consideration of “Liberal Arts and Higher Education Today” at their December meeting, the Longwood BOV expressed full support for liberal arts education and noted, “...the connotation of the word ‘liberal’ in today’s environment which leads to misunderstanding of the term ‘liberal arts.’”

Combating handicaps should not be the work of an academic program. Changing our name will separate our major from these negatives and allow us to do and to present our work for what it is.

New title: Integrative Studies

This program requires blending of insights from multiple disciplines, and the term Integrative Studies is the best fit at this time for this program.

- The Liberal Studies major is a four-layered program that requires the student to integrate content knowledge from various areas in meaningful ways:
 - Large number of disciplinary-based courses - math, natural science, social science, English, fine arts and kinesiology – provide solid content knowledge
 - Small number of interdisciplinary courses - ART/MUSC/THEA448, SCED401, GEOG310 and HIST370 - serve as models of bringing diverse disciplinary knowledge together
 - Field experiences or LSTU300 and LSTU461 - require bringing content knowledge, pedagogical skills, research and other aspects of learning together in practical and innovative ways.
 - Extra curricular opportunities – Interdisciplinary Thinking Conference, Various student initiated projects.
- AAC&U has been publishing information about and promoting the idea of integrative learning for some time. “AAC&U definition of Integrative learning: Integrative learning is an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus.”
- Evidence of integrative learning can be documented through any of the interdisciplinary courses, performance in the field experiences and in the LSTU300/461 projects.

Considered but Rejected Name Possibilities:

Multi-disciplinary Studies – This would be good for the “collection-of-courses” program that existed as Liberal Studies before 2009, but we’ve come a long way since then.

Interdisciplinary Studies – We do have a several interdisciplinary courses and we may pursue others, but most of the current LS courses reside securely in a single discipline. While we want to promote interdisciplinary thinking (our fall conference) and include a few interdisciplinary courses, there is no intent to move away from solid disciplinary study for most of the major courses.

Integrated Studies – There are several reasons not to use this form of the word:

- The word “integrated” is used by K-8 as integrated curriculum. Other words that have such specific meaning in K-12 education (such as environmental literacy) have become problematic when used in higher ed.
- Without the word “curriculum” attached, integrated is more commonly understood in terms of diversity. While not a negative, this word could create some of the same misunderstandings as the word liberal
- Integrated sort of implies that the work has already been done rather than putting the responsibility on the student to make the connections.

Some other information that may be of interest:

- Liberal Studies students bring in about \$9,000,000 in tuition in a year.
- The largest major on campus, Liberal Studies includes over 18% of LU’s total student population.

Comment: We need to let this major soar rather than clinging to things that hold it back

Anticipated components in transition of Liberal Studies for Spring-Summer 2014

- Change of name from Liberal Studies to Integrative Studies
- Establishment of a permanent location designated as Liberal Studies (Integrative Studies) space.
 - Moving to Coyner as soon as current residents move to French
 - Will allow director and administrative assistant to work in the same location.
 - Administrative assistant to become a full-time position by August. Part-time appointment started just over two years ago.
- Students finally to be designated as Liberal Studies (Integrative Studies). Liberal Studies students have been lumped together with undeclared students in the LU system as arts and sciences general. This is a bit insulting (and confusing) to LS students.

Other Integrative learning components already in place:

- LSEM – focus on investigating requirements and possibilities and bringing academics and other issues together through taking personal responsibility
- Introduction of “Shaping your Professional Edge” in 2014. Not sure where this will go, yet.

Integrative: combining and coordinating diverse elements into a whole