



Student
Academic
Affairs
Board

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April 19, 2002

Dr. Curtis Johnson
Chair, Commission on Academic Priorities
MSC 47

Dear Dr. Johnson:

Those of us on the Student Academic Affairs Board read with interest the draft report of the Commission on Academic Priorities, dated March 18, 2002. CAP raised many compelling issues on the academic foci of the college as well as the rigor, balance, and coherence of our programs. We appreciate the time and effort put in to discussing and making recommendations regarding the issues presented in the report. We also appreciate your willingness to hear our thoughts on these important matters. We have been discussing the draft report for several meetings now - including two open forums open to the whole student body - and what follows are our thoughts and further recommendations on the report. For your convenience, I have organized our recommendations and thoughts parallel to CAP's draft report.

Section I. General Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Geographic Focus

We understand that, as a small college, our resources are limited. Therefore, focusing our resources in several key programs is logical in order to optimally use those resources. However, we feel that an international focus is key to the identity of this institution, evidenced by the facts that International Affairs is our largest major on campus, sixty percent of our students travel overseas on LC programs, and many prospective students are attracted to the College thanks to its international programs.

Given this, although we realize that the Americas, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East are currently where the strengths of our institution lie, we do not want to limit the current or future focus of Lewis & Clark. As internationally-minded people, we realize that the histories and actions of some regions of the world are heavily affected by what happens in other regions. For instance, the colonial period of European history cannot be understood without some understanding of Africa, Latin America, Australia, and the United States. Similarly, the 20th century in both the

United States and China cannot be understood without some understanding of Russia and the other communist bloc countries in Eastern Europe. We therefore do not support choosing specific areas of geographic focus but instead recommend retaining an international focus, thus allowing for later expansion into areas of the world we do not currently cover in order to better understand the international community.

Recommendation 2. Historical Reach

In order to become informed practitioners of our chosen academic disciplines, we must have knowledge about both the current and historical issues and methods of those disciplines. We therefore support your thoughts here in Recommendation 2. However, we are unclear as to what sparked CAP to offer this as a recommendation. Although many majors do not explicitly require classes focusing in the history of their discipline, we feel that historical perspective is effectively taught in individual courses. Even in those courses that focus on postmodern issues, the historical perspectives of those issues are taught. Therefore, we think that, although many majors do not have entire courses devoted to historical perspective, individual courses provide such historical perspective through their individual syllabi.

Recommendation 3. Curricular Balance

We wholeheartedly support this recommendation. The realization of a theory or concept often lies in its application within a field and beyond. This is why it becomes important to experience the things one learns in class in action. Given this recommendation, we would specifically like to see more experiential learning integrated into the classroom. It would thus be beneficial if courses incorporated more activities such as fieldwork, site visits, mock “real world” scenarios, field trips, and other such activities. Incorporating such activities into classes will not only allow students to directly experience what they are learning, but it will also provide students with learning differences different methods by which to obtain the information. These experiential activities can be supplemented by more departmental activities such as speaker series. Promoting field-specific internships might also be an effective way to foster experiential learning. Finally, expanding research opportunities would allow more students to experience what professionals in their field do. Although the natural sciences do a wonderful job of providing research opportunities, we would like to see more opportunities made available in the other two divisions as well. These are some specific ways we think Recommendation 3 can be effectively implemented.

Section II. Arts and Humanities

Recommendation 4. Foreign Languages

In conjunction with Recommendation 1, we see Foreign Languages as being an integral department to LC. We therefore also think this department should be well-supported. Although we feel unequipped to speak to how many tenure-track appointments French should have, we would like to speak to the other recommendations.

First off, we agree that the names of the three main languages programs (French Studies, German Studies, and Hispanic Studies) should be renamed French, German, and Spanish. This is a better reflection of what is actually taught in these programs. However, we do not support renaming the department to the Department of European and Asian Languages and Literatures. We feel this is limiting considering that several of the languages taught in the department are prevalent in areas other than Europe and Asia. Furthermore, this name would prove problematic if languages such as Greek or Latin were added.

Furthermore, we feel that requiring all French, German, and Spanish majors to spend a year overseas would be logistically difficult for many students, particularly transfer students and double-majors.

In conjunction with our thoughts regarding Recommendation 1, we do not support phasing out the Russian minor. Although we realize that the language is not currently well-supported in the curriculum, we feel that understanding Russia is important to understanding the histories of the United States, Europe, and Asia. Furthermore, Russian provides diversity to our Foreign Languages department, being the only Slavic language taught at LC. Given its status internationally, it is also important that Russian studies be available as a resource for International Affairs. Finally, since there is a growing number of Russian-speaking immigrants in Portland, we feel that Russian provides an essential link to the Portland community.

Recommendation 5. History and English

We wholeheartedly support this recommendation in the case of English. The curriculum is currently too focused on British literature, and adding more focus in American literature would prove beneficial. We furthermore think that the English department should put more emphasis on international literature as well, specifically post-colonial literature and the literature in translation classes taught in the Foreign Languages department. This would provide more options for English majors interested in world literature.

We would support this recommendation in the case of history, however, only if it involved adding another tenure-line. American history is a small period of history, and we feel that those periods and geographic areas of history currently covered are important as well as per our thoughts on Recommendation 1. We therefore do not think current resources on history should be reallocated to cover American history but rather that resources should be expanded.

Recommendation 6. Art

Although we support the addition of further art historians, we do not feel that said addition should come at the expense of the Studio Art position in Graphic. Although we have affirmed our support for a balance of theory and practice in the curriculum, we feel this balance comes primarily through individual course syllabi, not necessarily through balancing tenure-line positions. We feel Studio Art courses include history, theory, and technique portions that effectively balance theory and practice, in conjunction with the Art History courses required by all Art majors.

Furthermore, Graphic Design is a very upcoming field and we feel it would be ill-advised to phase out. Instead, we recommend that this position be bolstered by

filling it with an individual who has knowledge of the elements of 2-D and 3-D design. This would better the theoretical side of the Art major and would prove beneficial for many of the Studio Art majors, who account for the vast majority of the seniors graduating in Art.

We furthermore reaffirm our support of working professionals such as studio artists. These individuals hold terminal degrees in their fields - Master of Fine Arts - and given that they hold the equivalent of Ph.Ds in their fields, they should be given equivalent treatment by having tenured positions rather than simply lecturer positions.

Recommendation 7. Music

Although we support the creation of the new ensembles in Chamber Music and New Music, we do feel that they will be logistically difficult to realize; we simply do not have the variety of students to create an effective chamber orchestra as suggested in the CAP draft report. Furthermore, we hope that the Music department's commitment to world music and music other than classical music will still be retained.

Section III. Social Sciences

Recommendation 8. International Affairs and Political Science

We wholeheartedly support adding an additional joint tenure-line in political Science and International Affairs. This will not only answer the need for additional courses in both departments but will also bolster the connections between them. Given its size, we would also support an additional tenure-line in International Affairs given the huge size of its classes. This could also increase the international scope of the department. We would further like to see an overseas program created with an International Affairs focus in order to bolster students' on-campus education.

Recommendation 9. Sociology and Anthropology

We agree that the current SOAN major currently lacks focus and does not sufficiently cover the range of topics in the two disciplines. However, we do not feel that adding physical anthropology, archaeology, or demography effectively are the best ways to fix this problem. Physical anthropology and archaeology are extremely expensive ventures that would demand many resources and, although we feel these would be beneficial additions to the SOAN curriculum, the resources necessary to implement them are currently beyond our range. Were the resources and proper facilities to become available, we would wholeheartedly support adding these. As for demography, some demography is covered in Quantitative Research Methods. Students who are further interested in demography could take advantage of the wonderful program offered by Portland State University: the Population Research Center. As a small institution, demography is not a field we need to cover.

As for historical perspective, we again feel that historical perspective is effectively covered during individual courses. Specifically, history of ethnography and other historical perspectives in Sociology and Anthropology - including Social Theory - are covered through individual syllabi.

However, we feel that the SOAN department is currently imbalanced between sociologists and anthropologists. We would like to see the number of sociologists increased in order to balance this. Furthermore, in order to increase the focus in the department, we recommend the creation of tracks in the major in sociology and anthropology. This would ensure that students have sufficient disciplinary depth and would reflect the current practices of many students to “specialize” in one part of the major.

Additional Recommendation A. Quantitative Rigor in Economics

Although Economics does currently require Calculus for graduation, we feel that the department would benefit from incorporating more quantitative components into their classes. Much of the modeling currently studied in upper-division economics demands strong quantitative skills, and we do not feel that Economics currently prepares its students well to meet these demands.

Section IV. Mathematical and Natural Sciences

Recommendation 10. Biology

We wholeheartedly support adding a tenure-line in Biology.

Recommendation 11. Chemistry

We also support reviewing Chemistry I order to assess why student interest in dropping.

Recommendation 12. Mathematical Sciences

We also support increasing the tenure-lines in the Mathematical Sciences. Specifically, we would like to see this additional full-time position be filled with an applied mathematician, one who works population modeling, systematics, statistics, conceptual physics, earth sciences, or other areas. Such a position could be a joint appointment. Currently, Mathematics is the only department in the Division of the Mathematical and Natural Sciences that does not have research opportunities readily available (aside from Computer Science). With the addition of an applied mathematician, more student-faculty research could be encouraged and better connections between Mathematics and other departments could be fostered.

Furthermore, we feel that it would be beneficial if mathematics were to create a new Calculus curriculum on the model on Physics 141 and 151. The more rigorous Calculus course could be taken by math majors, however, the other course would be designed for other natural science majors, specifically those in Biology, Biochemistry, and Chemistry, since these disciplines rely upon Calculus in advanced study. Please see Additional Recommendation B below.

Additional Recommendation B. Quantitative Rigor in the Natural Sciences

Although Mathematical Sciences and Physics are very quantitatively-based, we feel that Biology, Biochemistry, and Chemistry would benefit from having additional

quantitative rigor. This would include additional quantitative rigor in their classes - such as using calculus when seeking to understand populations in Biology - as well as additional courses such as the new Calculus curriculum suggested above in our comments on Recommendation 12. Increasing the quantitative rigor in these departments will increase the rigor in upper division classes that will then be able to utilize these quantitative skills. This additional rigor will also better prepare students to meet the demands of graduate school.

Additional Recommendation C. Anatomy Classes

In order to bolster the curriculum required by premed and Biochemistry students and to increase offerings for Biology students, we would like to see arrangements made with Portland State University or Oregon Health and Science University for LAS students to take anatomy classes. Again, this will better prepare our students to meet the demands of graduate study.

Section V. Interdisciplinary Programs

Recommendation 13. East Asian Studies

We support additional language study for EAS majors and the creation of tracks in Chinese and Japanese studies. We hope that efforts will be made to make the South Asian studies track a reality as well.

Recommendation 14. Environmental Studies

We feel that the concerns raised by this recommendation are being met with the recent revisions to the Environmental Studies program.

Recommendation 15. Latin American Studies

We support the revised Recommendation 15 to revise LAS's curriculum to increase structure and coherence in the major. We furthermore feel that the addition of a capstone course will prove beneficial in allowing students to synthesize what they have learned in the other courses taken for the minor.

Recommendation 16. Political Economy

Given the lack of faculty who have a clear expertise in Political Economy, we also support phasing out the Political Economy minor.

Recommendation 17. Classical Studies

We also support the addition of a Classical Studies minor, however, we feel that such a minor should include courses in Ancient China and Japan in order to provide a well-rounded study of the Classics. One possibility would be to create tracks in Classical Asia and Classical Europe. Should they become available, we would also support including classes on the ancient cultures of the Middle East and Latin America.

Although we do not support reallocating current resources for such a position, we do support the addition of a joint position in Latin and History, should resources become available. We feel that such a position would fill a gap in the History department's curriculum and would be supportive of student interest in studying Latin.

Section VI. Off-Campus Programs

Recommendation 18. Focus of Off-Campus Programs

Given our desire not to limit the geographic focus of the college, we do not support the limitation of programs implied by this recommendation. However, we do support examining the current overseas programs with an eye to bettering those that we do have. We also wholeheartedly support the Commission's affirmation that off-campus study is an essential part of the identity of the College.

Recommendation 19. Faculty Leadership of off-Campus Programs

Although we understand the need to ensure quality leadership for off-campus programs, we feel that staff members who hold the appropriate degree, experience, and motivation should also be considered for leadership of Off-Campus programs. This gives LC students and staff a unique opportunity to connect in a way not possible at other institutions.

Recommendation 20. Expectations of Students

We support the set of recommendations presented here.

Recommendation 21. Consortial Arrangements

We support this recommendation as well and feel that it is an excellent way to increase the variety of off-campus programs available to students. However, in supporting this, we hope that efforts are still made to help students integrate back into the campus environment and that curricular support is still available to students who attend programs through such consortial arrangements.

We would further support consortial arrangements made between sister colleges and universities in other countries which students could attend for a semester and then transfer the credits to LC. This would be similar to the Munich model but would allow more flexibility for students and would serve to foster good relations with various institutions across the globe.

Recommendation 22. Establishing and Evaluating off-Campus Programs

We support this recommendation, too, as long as such a task force gives due weight to the pivotal role off-campus programs play at Lewis & Clark. We also hope that the geographic scope of programs offered will not be limited, as communicated in our thoughts regarding Recommendation 1.

Recommendation 23. Public Representation of Off-Campus Programs

We have no comments regarding this recommendation.

Additional Recommendation D. Rigor in Off-Campus Programs

We support the creation of a task force to investigate ways to increase the academic rigor on off-campus programs. We feel that the rigor of off-campus programs does not match that offered on campus, even after considering the differing nature of the off-campus experience. The addition of components such as independent studies, communication with faculty back at LC, and research projects to be completed upon return would greatly increase the rigor of programs.

Additional Recommendation E. Pre and Post Periods of Off-Campus Programs

We feel that the periods before and after an off-campus program are important to preparing a student for the experience and for synthesizing the experience with what they experience when back in the US. Given this, we would like to see more emphasis placed on pre-trip meetings. In order to increase the level of preparation and seriousness of said meetings, we recommend that the weekly pre-trip meetings held for programs be credit-bearing classes worth 1-2 credits. This would allow for ample preparation by both trip leaders and students.

We also encourage methods to help students integrate back into on-campus life, possibly through additional meetings with their off-campus groups and other individuals, presentations regarding their off-campus experiences, and assignments or reflections about their experiences.

Section VII. Curricular Initiatives

Recommendation 24. Rhetorical and Quantitative Reasoning

We agree that students need to be more rigorously trained in quantitative reasoning skills, even in the natural sciences (see Additional Recommendation B). Therefore, we support any efforts to increase quantitative rigor in those classes generally taken to satisfy categories B and C of the Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning general education requirement. We furthermore support bolstering the requirement for Category B by requiring MATH 115 or equivalent in order to satisfy this requirement. Although we respect the value of courses such as the Perspectives courses in the Mathematics/Computer Science, we do not feel these courses provide sufficient quantitative training for a liberal arts degree.

As our original recommendations to CAP demonstrate, we wholeheartedly support additional training in rhetorical skills as well. Inventing America does not provide sufficient experience in speaking skills to fully prepare students for the demands of some majors. We feel that having students present their work and even lead class for a day provide good opportunities to better learn rhetorical skills.

Recommendation 25. Senior Capstone Experience

We also support having senior capstone experiences in each department. Capstone experiences prove important because they allow students to synthesize the information and skills they have learned over their past four years. We see a lack

of clearly-defined senior experiences in many departments. Although we recognize that it is infeasible for each department to have a similar experience, we do feel that every department should have such an experience and that those experiences should be communicated. It would be good to see these experiences better articulated in departmental literature and to communicate their purpose within each department. We therefore support this recommendation as long as the form and length of the capstone experience is left up to individual departments.

Recommendation 26. Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning

We were very glad to see CAP promoting interdisciplinary teaching and learning. This is one of the unique aspects of the liberal arts that we feel should be increased here at LC. This can be accomplished through a variety of methods, whether it be by having more team-taught classes, creating classes that synthesize the teachings of several departments, or incorporating the works of other disciplines in courses where they relate, perhaps works that address a specific department's issue from another department's perspective. Departments should also encourage students to take courses where their subject matter overlaps, perhaps even including them in their major requirements. We feel that this would allow students to jump between disciplines and understand problems from these multiple perspectives. Another possibility would be combining visiting speaker budgets to bring more interdisciplinary speakers that might appeal to students from multiple departments.

Specifically, we would like to see more interconnections drawn between the following departments:

- ❖ International Affairs and Political Science
- ❖ International Affairs and Sociology/Anthropology
- ❖ Mathematics and the other Natural Sciences
- ❖ Psychology and the Natural Sciences

Recommendation 27. Consistently Rigorous Grading

A difference of .3 grade points between grade distributions in divisions is indeed wide. Although we are unsure what, if anything, should be done about this discrepancy, we are glad to see that the Commission has indicated this as an area of concern and as a topic for individuals to consider.

Section VIII. Additional Thoughts

In our discussions of the Commission's draft report, we had the following thoughts on the Commission and how it conducted its review of the College's academic priorities. We present you these thoughts for future consideration.

Composition of the Commission

Although we respect each of the individual members of CAP and carefully considered the issues presented in this report, in the future we would like to see a more representative body. Specifically, we would like to ensure a balance between senior and junior faculty. Although we understand the need for institutional memory, we feel that this need can be met while still allowing junior faculty to

participate in such a body as the Commission. Allowing junior faculty to participate will also provide fresh ideas and will increase the diversity of opinions.

In addition, we feel that having a representative from each major on campus would provide a full range of viewpoints and would ensure effective representation of all of our major programs. Although we do not question that the Commission tried to objectively represent and review each major and program to the best of their ability, we do feel that having a representative from each department would better this representation. SAAB is based on this model and we have found it to work quite effectively. It has allowed us to consider a multitude of perspectives not otherwise possible.

Finally, although we realize that our input was carefully considered, we feel that there should be at least one, if not more, student representatives on such a body. Students may only be here for four years, but we are an integral part to the institution and feel that there should be student members on any body similar to CAP that is created in the future to ensure that our viewpoints are represented. Specifically, we would recommend that the Chair and Vice Chair of SAAB be made members of any body similar to CAP that is convened in the future.

Methodology of the Commission

In future such investigations, we encourage the Commission to look at individual course syllabi as well as major requirements and course descriptions. We feel that course syllabi provide a better representation of what is actually taught in departments and would allow a better view of what is taught in individual departments.

Section IX. Conclusion

We here at SAAB find the issues being addressed by the Commission on Academic Priorities through its draft report to be of great importance to faculty and students. Defining the academic path of our College will allow us to better promote the Liberal Arts as both an academic journey and a way of life. On behalf of SAAB, I would therefore like thank you for addressing these issues and for giving us an opportunity to address them as well. If you have any questions about our discussion and thoughts regarding your recommendations, please don't hesitate to contact me at saab@lclark.edu or x7155. Again, thank you for your time, and good luck in completing your discussion on these important issues.

Sincerely,

Matthew "Buzzy" Nielsen
Chair, Student Academic Affairs Board

Cc:
Michael Mooney, President
Tom Schoeneman, Chair, Commission on Teaching