

MEMORANDUM

TO: LLC

CC: CAP

FROM: Steering Committee

RE: Liberal Learning Outcomes

DATE: April 21th, 2021

**Background**

There have been several studies of the The College of New Jersey's Liberal Learning Program in recent years. The Liberal Learning Program's 2015 Self-Study report recommended that

The College should revisit what it considers as its essential outcomes and ... reduce the overall number of individual outcomes to focus on essential outcomes that are central to preparing students and to our identity as a college. (p. 27)

The report of the 2016 External Review Committee for the Liberal Learning Program agreed with the findings of the self-study. Its strongest recommendation for the Liberal Learning program was to:

- "Reduce the total number of LLP outcomes
  - Ensure that the outcomes you keep are actually student learning outcomes
  - Ensure that every outcome in an area is readily measurable across all the courses or experiences students may use to acquire and demonstrate it
  - Ensure that every outcome includes an appropriate level of demonstrated proficiency."
- (p. 5)

The External Review report also noted:

"Finally, the LLP outcomes do not seem to relate to any overarching institutional learning outcomes, the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that every TCNJ should possess by the time of graduation, i.e. making sense of and integrating the entire student experience." (p.3)

The Liberal Learning Task Force met from 2018-2020 and issued its final report to the Steering committee in May 2020. It recommended that TCNJ

"Adopt a short set of clearly articulated, broad learning goals for a TCNJ education." (p.4)  
(see Appendix I at the end of this charge for the Task Force's suggested list of goals).

and that

"these broad learning goals should form the basis for the development of more specific learning goals for Liberal Learning by the Liberal Learning Council ... thereby addressing the

recommendation from the self-study and program review to revise the Liberal Learning outcomes.” (p.4)

At present, in Spring 2021, TCNJ has begun a strategic review that is anticipated to continue through the Fall 2021 semester. Upon its completion, the College may decide to review the set of degree level learning goals, but it is expected that the core learning outcomes for Liberal Learning would not significantly change. In the meantime, it is possible to make progress on revising the list of Liberal Learning outcomes pursuant to the recommendations of the 2015 Self-Study and the 2016 External Review report.

## **Charge**

Steering charges the Liberal Learning Council to recommend an update of the Learning Outcomes for the Liberal Learning Program to implement the recommendations made by the Liberal Learning self-study, and the External report. Namely, LLC should

- Revise the list of learning outcomes of the Liberal Learning program. The list of learning outcomes should be reduced to a small list of essential outcomes. (Because some of the degree level goals suggested by the Liberal Learning Task Force relate to general education, the Task Force’s list of suggested degree level goals may be helpful.)
- Ensure that the final outcomes are student learning outcomes.
- Ensure that every outcome in an area is readily measurable across all the courses, no matter what mode of instruction, or experiences students may use to acquire and demonstrate it.
- Ensure that every outcome includes an appropriate level of demonstrated proficiency.

In keeping with the timeline below, Steering requests that LLC consult with the Committee on Academic Programs, the Council of Deans, Academic Leaders, Assistant Director of Assessment LaMont Rouse, and Records and Registration. Once the LLC has completed this work, it should prepare a preliminary recommendation and seek broad testimony from across the campus community, including, but not limited to: Student Government, Faculty Senate, and Staff Senate.

## **Timeline**

LLC should begin work on the charge immediately. LLC should prepare a preliminary recommendation by January 18th, 2022. LLC should solicit campus testimony soon after with the goal of making a final recommendation to Steering no later than March 9th, 2022.

## **Testimony Tier: Tier II**

This issue concerns the distillation of recommendations of previous studies of the Liberal Learning Program. It requires moderate additional testimony from the campus community. The assigned council or committee should consult with relevant individuals and groups in developing a preliminary recommendation. The completed preliminary

recommendation should then be made available to the relevant stakeholder groups, and testimony should be solicited in the form of written feedback (through a survey and or e-mail).

## **TCNJ Governance Processes**

### *Step 1 – Steering issues a charge*

If Steering considers the issue appropriate for Governance, it will generate a charge and assign it to the appropriate committee or council. The charge will include:

- A clearly defined statement of the issue;
- A specific action that the committee or council should undertake;
- A list of individuals or groups with which the committee should consult in the development of a preliminary recommendation;
- The testimony tier (see page 27) that the committee or council should use in presenting the preliminary recommendation to the campus community;
- A suggested timeline for completing the charge.

Copies of all charges will be cc'd to the presidents of the three representative bodies. This will notify them that Governance is undertaking a new charge. It will also give them the opportunity to request that the testimony tier (see page 24) of the charge be changed. If such a request is made, it must be made within one week of receiving the charge.

### *Step 2 - Governance prepares a Preliminary Recommendation*

Once the appropriate standing committee or council has received the charge, it should start by collecting data needed to make a preliminary recommendation. It should receive input from affected individuals and all relevant stakeholder groups prior to making a preliminary recommendation. For issues that have broad implications or that affect a large number of individuals, initial testimony should be solicited from the campus community at large. For some issues, sufficient initial testimony may come from input through committee membership or solicitation from targeted constituent groups.

When, in the best judgment of the committee, adequate clarity of the principles contributing to the problem are known, a preliminary recommendation should be drafted and disseminated to the campus community.

### *Step 3 – The Relevant Stakeholders provide Testimony*

Once a preliminary recommendation has been completed, the standing committee or council should seek testimony from the campus community. The testimony should be gathered in accordance with the Testimony Tier (see page 27) assigned to the issue by Steering.

For issues that require public testimony from the campus community, the chair of the standing committee or council should approach the president of the appropriate representative bodies to schedule the next available time slot at a meeting of that body.

Testimony should be gathered in a way that allows stakeholders to weigh in fully on the issue. Members of the standing committee or council that wrote the preliminary recommendation should be present to hear and record the testimony.

#### *Step 4 – Governance prepares a Final Recommendation*

Once the standing committee or council has received appropriate testimony, it should revise the preliminary recommendation into a final recommendation. Once the final recommendation is complete, the standing committee or council should use sound judgment to determine whether or not more public testimony is required. If, in its feedback to the original preliminary recommendation, a stakeholder representative body requests to review an issue again, the committee or council is bound to bring it back to that body. If a full calendar year has passed since the formal announcement of the preliminary recommendation, the committee must resubmit a preliminary recommendation to the campus community.

When the committee or council has completed the final recommendation, it should forward it to the Steering Committee. The final recommendation should be accompanied by a cover memo that summarizes the initial charge, how testimony was gathered and the nature of that testimony, and how the committee responded to that testimony, including a description of how the preliminary recommendation evolved as a result of testimony.

#### *Step 5 – Steering considers the Final Recommendation*

Once Steering receives a final recommendation from a committee or council, it should consider whether or not the proper process has been followed. If it determines that the full process has been followed and that the recommendation is sound, it should approve the final recommendation and forward it to the provost.

If Steering decides that the process has not been followed, or that the recommendation is not sound, it should return the final recommendation to the appropriate committee or council and the charge should move back to Step 4.

#### *Step 6 – The Provost and/or President and Board consider the Final Recommendation*

The provost will consider the final recommendation and then accept it, accept it with minor revisions, accept it with major revisions, or reject it. In the case of acceptance, the final recommendation will either be sent to the next relevant individual for approval or will become policy, and will proceed to step 7.

If a final recommendation is rejected, or if changes are suggested, the provost will relay concerns and suggestions to Steering and the relevant committee or council chair. The steps listed under section X of this document – Governance Resolution – will then take place.

*Step 7 – Steering notifies the Campus Community*

Once an issue has been formally approved and has become policy, the provost will notify the faculty co-chair of the Steering Committee, who will in turn notify the campus community through the appropriate means. This may include email, a notification on the Governance website, and/or email to the presidents of the stakeholder representative bodies.

*For a complete description of all steps and of the testimony tiers, see Governance Structures and Processes, 2019 Revision, pages 24-26*

