Recorder’s Summary

Forum date: 1/30/17
Table number: 15

Key points and ideas that emerged from table discussion (bulleted list of 5-10 points with a couple sentences of description for each):

Restriction of course themes
- Instructors feel that the navigation of required themes is difficult due to its restriction to courses. Courses that offer themes such as historical and environmental should be more readily available for faculty who teach the said course themes. One of the problems that was mentioned was how difficult it was to get a course certified for that said theme. Since faculty are often doing multiple projects while also teaching, they are not going to go out of their way to certify that their course teaches that theme.

Liberal Education is Specific
- Several points were brought up on how the liberal education and the navigation for it is really dependent on the students school and major. For instance, Engineering students are not allowed to explore liberal education requirements due to their rigorous schedules. They have to do specific courses in order to graduate in time, and avoid exploring the liberal education. It was also mentioned how liberal education is also specific to a students organization. In a lifestyle that is more structured, some students may need a straight and strict schedule and be told what to do, however some students may like exploring many options and be okay with it.

“Search for the gut”
- A problem with the current generation of students is that they are seeking out classes that are the most efficient. Instead of exploring other options, they are instead taking courses that will knock off multiple themes instead of one. It discourages curiosity and instead promotes students into taking courses that are funded by efficiency.

Autonomy of course
- Core science courses such as biology and chemistry should be taught in those specific schools/majors. Courses such as PSTL only promote students to “take the easy way out”. Psychology should strictly be taught in the psychology department and biology should strictly be taught in the biology department.

Challenge is good
- Liberal education can be good in that sense that it encourages students to be challenged. An English major can be taking a microbiology course and have it either fuel their interests more, or be a wall in life for that said student.

Solution
- Many have suggested that a more efficient system is to cut down on themes and just focus on the core subjects. A ‘budget model’ was suggested multiple times. It would be more efficient to use and cut down the strains it presents to both students and faculty.
Overall, there was a major theme that the liberal education is flawed, and there needs to be change. The focus of the discussion was headed towards restructuring the liberal education to fit the needs of both faculty and student. The liberal education does nothing but limits students to what they can take because of their previously held requirements with majors already. The themes are too confusing and should not be this difficult. A history professor should be able to teach a historical theme. One theme that seems to persist as an issue is globalization. Globalization is a theme that is covered in many courses offered at the University, why does it have to be more specific to those said courses? The system is complex and difficult to navigate because there seems to be many things to be understood. Many faculty brought up how there seems to be a mistrust with the faculty and the school. Faculty mentioned how they need to be more part of the discussion because they are the ones experiencing it first hand with their students. However, many arguments were also brought up with staff on how the current liberal education system can be beneficial to students in many ways. Some students may need a strict schedule that allows them to understand what they are doing.

The discussion was mainly facilitated by two faculty in the history department. They seemed to have a strong disinterest in the liberal education. There were some faculty in other departments such as political science and astrophysics, however they did not add as much insight as the history professors. The only person who had seemed I favor in the liberal education was an advisor in CLA. The consensus to the liberal education seems that it needs a huge restructure to be more beneficial to both students and faculty.