Recorder’s Summary

Forum date: Monday, January 30, 2017
Table number: 2

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

- **Choice of classes:**
  - we want to avoid students feeling as though they are checking boxes. Many students find it is hard to meet all of the requirements, let alone finding a class that they are interested in. One solution to this was finding ways to integrate more LE options into the majors to allow classes to be framed in a way they can use and apply the skills they learned. Grand Challenge Courses were also brought up.

- **Learning objectives of LE:**
  - Students need to see a purpose of a class and many can not articulate what they learned. By reflecting on what was learned, it is easier to see how these skills can be applied to life, a resume, or the next educational step such as grad school applications
  - Identifying who our students are and who we want them to be upon graduation must first be addressed before determining the goals and objectives of any particular course

- **Themes**
  - The themes seem as though they could better be applied as learning objectives as opposed to separate classes students are required to take. Beyond fewer courses, this is a major proponent for taking double-dip courses.
  - The global perspective theme specifically seems as though it could better be defined as cross-cultural. Less that students should learn about cultures other than their own but they should understand how other cultures compare to their own. What are the similarities and differences?

- **Transfer Students**
  - Transfer students or any student that doesn’t follow the basic 4-year track must be considered in these decisions. Transfer students have often completed some degree of an LE curriculum prior to transferring. Do our courses allow for these credits to transfer?

- **First years with AP credits**
  - Many students come into the university with some of their LE requirements already fulfilled through AP, IB or PSEO programs. Assessing how these students, in addition to transfer students, can achieve the same educational experience is a crucial element. Another way of examining this is to understand the relationship to each students development and where they should be upon graduation

- **Accountability**
  - The more check box like the requirements are the easier it is to be transparent with students in regards to what they have/still need to fulfill to graduate. By
making the requirements more open and flexible, it is harder to generate a report such as the APAS to plan for graduation.

- **Advising**
  - As mentioned many students feel like they need to check boxes and get as many LE requirements out of the way as soon as possible so they can avoid the burden as a senior. However, in this rush students become unaware of their options and miss out on opportunities to study or learn abroad.

- **Transferable skills**
  - There are certain skills all students should possess upon graduating regardless of major in order to be a successful and well-rounded applicant and adult such as literature and data analysis. Prior to taking a literature-fulfilling course, many students have never been exposed to the process of literary analysis. These critical thinking skills could be as simple as assessing the credibility of a news article and employers look for this in applicants.
  - On the other end of the spectrum basic data analysis is an important tool for employers such as using Excel for spreadsheet calculations. This could be used in place of the mathematics requirement, however, exposure to statistics is also applicable for any major.

**Summary of discussion (300 to 500 words):**
The backgrounds of the people seated at the table covered a variety of disciplines and emphasis areas including: speech pathology, electrical engineering, the study abroad center, transfer admissions, and academic support. The conversation centered around two areas: (1) the number of courses required to graduate, and (2) how to attend to the disparity of needs and requirements of different students such as transfer students and the students in different colleges.

By requiring classes as both cores and themes, students are effectively required to take up to 9 classes outside of their major in order to graduate. This makes it especially difficult for students in high-credit majors, such as many of the engineering disciplines which require upwards of 120 credits, to graduate in four years. One remedy to this issue could be to alter or eliminate the themes and integrate them into the core requirements as learning objectives or case study elements. This is essentially equivalent to the double-dipper courses that many students already prioritize when taking LE courses. This strategy also alleviates the feeling of the requirements being check boxes that simply need to be fulfilled.

It is difficult to address the needs of students who are coming from different educational backgrounds. For this reasoning, identifying key transferable skills that are the desired outcome of the course could enable students across majors to graduate with these skills that are seen as marketable for any job or employer. The skills directly address were literary or critical analysis and data analysis or statistics. Regardless of the intent to go into literature or engineering, the ability to read a news article, peer reviewed paper, or a novella and assess the merit of the information presented is not only an employable skill but also a key skill for a well-rounded citizen. Comparably, most job applications require a working knowledge of Excel or other data processing program. This is often in addition to a working knowledge of statistics and probability and could be a marketable skill for anyone entering the workforce.
Additional context (characterize level of consensus/lack of consensus, tone and tenor of conversation, other notable aspects of the discussion):

The general consensus was that the LE requirements require some adjustments. The entire table had some stake in the conversation and agreed that requirements needed to be changed to varying degrees. The tone of the conversation was generally understanding but there was an element of urgency that some of the components identified above are addressed in the near future.