**Key Points**

- **Critical thinking**
  - Students are being conditioned to just regurgitate information and not necessarily think critically.
  - Sciences seem to teach recipes instead of teaching students to think abstractly.
  - CSE/Science focused programs treating CLA type classes as second rate (STEM is being overly stressed and prioritized ahead of humanities).
  - Students are not absorbing information as much in terms of critical thinking because they are more concerned about just getting a good grade.
    - Students have a hard time accepting a poor grade in humanities courses, there isn’t a right or wrong answer
    - Course structure can force students to accept the grades and participate
  - Many science/STEM courses don’t include critical thinking and don’t place it at the core of their course
  - Core requirements are not all created equal when it comes to critical thinking
  - Critical thinking means different things to different people
    - Often can mean fundamentally questioning things and asking the hard questions when everything is up for grabs
    - This type of thinking is not applied in all STEM courses
- **LE requirements** seem fine the way they are… the rhetoric around them is what needs to be changed
- Cross-discipline courses could be important. The Cores should not be independent but should interact and depend on each other
- “Cancer is not a threat to humanity, but hatred is” -> humanities are important
  - Higher education is not a vocational training; however, legislators want to focus on training for a certain position and how much graduates make in their first year after graduation
- **Tangent on GCCs**
  - Honors seminars are being taken away in order to push funding towards GCC (Janssen’s POV)
  - Funding is a large problem in the eyes of many faculty members
- **Incentives**
  - What does success look like? Are sciences viewed as more important by legislation?
- **Humanities are being treated as a blow-off class by students**
  - Students don’t want to do the work required in humanities courses, view it as a fluff class
  - Critical thinking can often trump book smarts in the real world
Critical thinking is often overlooked and it is more difficult to grade but is just as important as getting good grades

- Is there any way to look at what studying for four years at this university has done for you?
  - Can we look at anything other than grades to know what students and faculty both get out of a course/their time at the U?
  - How do we know if these Liberal Education Requirements are working to turn out students that have the attributes that the requirements are designed to instill in them?

- Conversation thus far has focused on HOW to teach these courses and not WHAT should be taught/actual curriculum.
  - Certain facts about life and everything (foundational knowledge) needs to be in place before critical thinking can be taught

- Actual LE requirements contents look good. It is the HOW that needs to be changed
  - The problem is the cynicism that surrounds LE requirements. Both students and colleges look at LE courses as a hurdle.
  - Places such as Physics are burdening students so much with problem sets that students don’t take time to appreciate humanities classes
  - Faculty and Instructors don’t have any incentive to encourage students to take the time to work on LE courses, only push their own courses

- Incentive structure discourages faculty members from fighting back against the idea that STEM is more important than the humanities

- Funding Issues
  - STEM brings in a lot of money and is getting preference on LE’s when they are just simply jumping through a hoop
    - Example) Physics courses have WI designator but the instructors do not know anything about writing
      - Physics brings in money and therefore gets perks resulting in students taking these courses more frequently (double and triple dipping attracts the students instead of content)
      - Doesn’t encourage students to branch out and take courses in other departments/areas

**Summary**

The bulk of the conversation during this forum was about critical thinking in courses. A few of the participants voiced concerns that students that take mostly science based, or STEM, courses do not learn how to think critically. This becomes an issue when those students need to take humanities courses, which often utilize critical thinking to fulfill their Liberal Education requirements. The faculty members made it clear that they believed that critical thinking was a vital skill to develop when receiving a liberal education. At this point, there was some disagreement between those who teach STEM course and those who teach humanities. The instructors of the science courses believe that critical thinking is involved in their courses and others like them. These courses are upper level and the students at the table could verify that lower level courses are more focused on being able to memorize and utilize equations. Following
this discussion, there were comments made on funding issues regarding STEM versus humanities courses. Throughout the session, the participants continued to come back to the idea that both students and instructors have a different attitude towards humanities courses than they have towards STEM courses. The humanities are often treated as second rate courses and students do not put as much effort into them when they are being taken solely for the LE requirement.

Overall, the participants concluded that there is nothing profoundly wrong with the current Liberal Education Requirements. The problem lies with how these requirements are perceived by both the students and the faculty members.

**Additional context:**

The conversation when generally quite positive in terms of the actual LE requirements. All of the criticisms focused mainly on how the LE requirements are perceived by students and faculty. There was also a significant amount of criticism aimed at STEM courses and how much emphasis is placed on these courses, which ultimately impacts funding. Every participant agreed that the LE requirements are sound in a curricular sense, but the attitude of faculty and students needs to be altered regarding these courses. These courses should not just be a hoop for students and faculty to jump through.