Recorder’s Summary

Forum date: 1/30/2017
Table number: 9

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

• A key topic that emerged was that faculty wanted a better understanding of how students are advised as to what LE’s to take, and in general, which LE’s students pick themselves.
  o The table was wondering which of the five themes are most chosen
    ▪ It would be troubling if Civic Life and Ethics, or Diversity and Social Justice are continuously unfulfilled
    ▪ Table members felt strongly that technology and society should be changed to science and society
      • It is important that students understand how science in general interacts with society, not just technology.
      • There needs to be more options for technology and society
  o Are students mainly driven by requirements and what fits in their schedule as opposed to what they want to learn and are passionate about
  o A very good point was that the course catalog is not clear and there is a lack of information about what a student will learn in a course
    ▪ One possible solution was that syllabi should be searchable
    ▪ A good observation a table member made was that the class titles are usually written for people within that major, meaning that while those students understand the class content well, a student taking it for a LE might not be able to comprehend it
• There was consensus that the process of a class submitting for and receiving an LE requirement is too burdensome
  o It was expressed that smaller departments (Chicano studies) with few faculty did not have time to submit LE proposals
  o It was noted that a class’s fulfillment of an LE largely depends on which faculty teaches it
  o There needs to be a bigger push on making sure educators are fulfilling requirements each time a class is taught
  o The table expressed that for example, in CLA, they can’t imagine a course that doesn’t fulfill one of the LE requirements
    ▪ However, most history courses don’t fulfill historical perspectives
• We had a lot of discussion on the LE requirements for students, what they mean, what qualifies for them, and what students should be getting out of them; this was from both an administrative and student perspective
Table members strongly felt that it was an issue that a student can basically complete their LE requirements in high school
  - Only so many of LE’s should be able to come from AP/PSEO/CIS
    - Or none
    - The table agreed that the purpose of the themes is so important that no credits should cover them
  - The narrative and purpose around LE’s has been lost

LE’s should not necessarily be open to everyone
  - For example, having a language requirement, or certain prerequisites might allow professors to teach more meaningful classes that delve deeper into subject matter

The table felt that the LE categories don’t reflect the options within them
  - There should be a process and set of procedures about what the specific classes are supposed to do for students
  - Students need transparency and understanding for why they must take certain courses.

Writing intensive is not similar across departments
  - The W on a course has no bearing on how much writing a student will end up doing
  - One writing intensive upper division should be required both inside and outside the major

There were mixed feelings as to whether there should be high impact learning experiences, or service learning requirements
  - It might be hard to ensure high quality experiences
  - It could cause forced experiences where students will have a bad attitude in the future
  - However, it might make a more lasting impression on a student
    - It could be requirements to do research with faculty, or study abroad.

- The table thought that there should either be a new theme devoted to intersectionality, or that intersectionality should be present among all themes/LE requirements
  - For example, one of the table members expressed that pre-health students don’t understand that they should be concerned about policy as it affects the future ability of them to complete their careers
  - All the issues that the themes represent are inherently related and the understanding of intersectionality is crucial to producing competent individuals

- The table thought that LE management should be shifted more to a departmental level
  - For example, a simpler requirement like 20% of courses need to carry a LE and then departments decide which classes receive that
  - They don’t want to turn everything over to the college/university as opposed to the departments getting a larger part of the decision process
  - However, they did find it important that LE’s remain portable across the various colleges at U of M
Summary of discussion (300 to 500 words):

Throughout the discussion, we touched on many areas. In general, table members felt that departments should have a larger impact over how certain courses receive a LE requirement. In addition, the process for submitting a proposal for a LE requirement is too burdensome, and most faculty do not have the time to compile all the necessary information. We talked a lot about how the LE program loses its meaning if it can be mostly completed from high school credit; this is especially important when regarding the themes. We thought it important that intersectionality be expressed in the LE themes as almost all modern issues are deeply connected and you cannot fully grasp one concept without understanding the other. It was expressed that the LE categories do not accurately reflect the courses within them. As part of this, the table felt that any course in CLA, or more specifically history, should fulfill some LE. We discussed that what writing intensive means is very different across the different colleges and departments; as part of this we felt strongly that students should be required to take an upper division writing class both within and outside of the major. Lastly, it was expressed that students do not currently have the proper motivation when completing the LE program. Students are more driven by fulfilling things as quickly and easily as possible as opposed to exploring and delving deep into issues the truly care about outside their major. We also found that there is not much transparency for students into what they are supposed to get out of a specific course, nor is the course catalog always useful.

Additional context (characterize level of consensus/lack of consensus, tone and tenor of conversation, other notable aspects of the discussion):

Initially, before the forum officially started, some table members showed a lack of interest in attending, and/or paying attention. However, once the discussion started, all members actively participated and seemed passionate about their opinions. There seemed to be consensus on most topics discussed. I think it is important to note that for each person there were things they knew very well about the LE program, while other parts were a complete surprise for them; both from an administrative and student perspective.