Overview

The L&S Curriculum Committee (LSCC) is comprised of faculty representatives from all L&S divisions, advisors, and ex-officio members from L&S Administration and L&S Student Academic Affairs. The LSCC advises the Dean on the curricular integrity of academic programs offered in the College of Letters and Science, from degree requirements affecting all L&S undergraduates, to changes to requirements for existing majors, certificates, and options. The committee reviews proposals to add, change, or delete courses from the L&S subject listings, after departmental approval and prior to final approval by the University Curriculum Committee. To maintain the integrity of the undergraduate Liberal Arts curriculum, the committee also considers requests to allow courses offered outside the college to count toward L&S undergraduate degree requirements by awarding them the designation of “Liberal Arts and Science” courses. This work is described in greater detail online, at https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/page.php?id=20092. At the Dean’s request, the committee considers other issues related to undergraduate education for purposes of advising him, the faculty and L&S departments and programs, and the L&S division of Student Academic Affairs. Below are brief descriptions of issues addressed by the committee this past academic year.

Curricular Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines

Mandatory Major Declaration

Change: The Committee reviewed and approved a proposal to require L&S undergraduates to declare a major before the completion of 86 credits (including credits from transfer, AP, test, study abroad, or retro-credits). The requirement will be enforced by means of registration holds.

In Spring 2014, Dean Scholz charged the LSCC to review the existing major declaration policy in L&S. After LSCC conversations in the spring, a subcommittee was formed to meet in Summer 2014 to discuss further details and create a proposal for change. Committee members identified many benefits of declaring a major, including planning for timely graduation and being connected to department resources. At the same time, members agreed that exploration is an important part of a Liberal Arts experience. Eighty-six credits was chosen as a limit because it allows students, even if they arrive as freshmen with many credits, the opportunity to explore. Yet, the limit also encourages students to meet an important milestone well before they graduate. (First Year students in their first two terms and transfer students in their first term will be exempt from the requirement). Please see Attachment A for the approved proposal that changed the existing policy.
Implementation: A subcommittee with campus stakeholders was formed to address implementation issues. The implementation subcommittee focused both on broad concepts, such as changing the culture of major declaration in L&S, as well as on the technical details to enforce declaration with registration holds. Communication with advisors, staff, and faculty across campus is well underway. Registration holds will begin early spring 2016. In general, the hold will be removed once students have declared a major. Students who are having difficulties with the major declaration process should speak with their advisor about their particular situation for more assistance.

Obsolete Course Project
On request of the Academic Planning and Institutional Research, the committee reviewed and provided feedback on a campus draft policy/process to delete courses not recently taught. The feedback was incorporated, and the policy was strongly endorsed by the committee.

Policy on Credit by Examination
At the request of the Academic Planning and Institutional Research, the committee reviewed and provided feedback on a proposed campus policy on credit by examination.

Graduate Learning Outcomes
At the request of the Graduate School, the committee reviewed and proposed feedback on the draft document on Graduate Level Learning Outcomes.

Graduate Course Attribute
The Graduate School implemented a new course attribute to identify graduate courses numbered below 700. The attribute will be used to ensure graduate students are completing at least 50% of their course requirements at the graduate level. Departments were able to request a designation for their courses where appropriate; these requests flowed through the committee. Changes were implemented by APIR and the Registrar’s Office.

Course Related Issues

The committee approved an L&S Career course, targeted towards sophomores. The course is a cornerstone of Dean Karl Schultz’s Career Initiative. It is designed to help second-year students from across the college’s disciplines sift through the wide array of options available to them—from classes to majors to careers. The course asks students to assess and reflect on their strengths, and then connects them to classes and majors that will lead them toward careers that draw on and enhance those strengths. Students also have opportunities to connect with alumni mentors. It was taught by Greg Downey, Professor and Associate Dean for Social Sciences, for the first time in Spring 2015 to over 225 students.

Peer Learning Courses in L&S
The committee received several new course proposals involving undergraduate peer mentoring/tutoring. In these courses, students engage with content and instruction on leadership, mentoring and tutoring, and then apply that learning to tutoring undergraduate students outside the classroom. Given the unique
and shared characteristics of the courses, committee members developed advice based on existing campus and college policies for departments proposing such courses. The proposed courses have not yet been approved, but in the 2015-2016 academic year the committee anticipates receiving revised proposals that incorporate its advice.

**Proposals to Add, Change, or Delete Courses**

The LSCC is responsible for college-level review of proposals to add, change, or delete courses managed by L&S departments and programs. Proposals approved by department faculty are forwarded to the college-level Curriculum Committee for approval.

A review is conducted to evaluate whether the proposed courses or changes conform to technical requirements (e.g., valid course number, etc.) as well as the pedagogical goals of the College. New course proposals are carefully reviewed in terms of their syllabi, course goals, and possible overlap/opportunities for cross-listing with existing courses. The LSCC chair and staff review all proposals to determine if they are ready for committee consideration, and committee members review all proposals online prior to the meeting. On any of these levels, questions may be asked of the faculty and units submitting the proposals; the committee chair and L&S staff work with departments to resolve questions that come up before proposals are submitted to the University Curriculum Committee. During the 2014-2015 academic year, the LSCC approved proposals to change 170 courses, create 109 new courses, delete 97 courses, and add L&S designations to 31 non-L&S courses.

**Other Curricular Items**

**Certificate Exceptions**

Committee members reviewed a report of L&S certificate exception trends. The analysis and report was performed by Academic Information Management, in L&S Student Academic Affairs. Committee members discussed college and campus expectations for certificate exceptions and discussed potential strategies to address the high rate of exceptions in some programs.

**Time to Degree**

The L&S Curriculum Committee had conversations about factors that may contribute to higher time to degree for students and potential strategies for addressing time-to-degree issues in L&S. These conversations will likely continue in the 2015-2016 academic year.

**Program Changes**

LSCC guidelines regarding changes to requirements for academic programs remain in effect ([https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/page.php?id=20013](https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/page.php?id=20013)). The Committee and L&S Administration staff continue to work with departments to articulate the connections between requests for curricular changes and efforts to assess student learning in academic programs, to link changes to evidence, and to demonstrate more clearly effective student learning. As part of the approval process for changes to existing programs, implementation dates and teach-out plan are established to ensure that students on the “old” programs are still able to complete those requirement or that they may transition to the new requirements without adversely affecting their progress.
Information about these undergraduate program and policy changes are emailed to the advising community through advisor-link, to better communicate recent changes to advising staff across campus.

- **African Languages and Literature: New ”Language Pedagogy Track” in MA Program**
  Created a new Language and Pedagogy track within a terminal M.A. to allow students to focus on this discipline at the M.A. level and then immediately seek employment as language instructors or pursue admission to doctoral programs in Second Language Acquisition.

- **Biology: Undergraduate Major.** Clarified and simplified the lab requirement.

- **Classical Humanities: Undergraduate Major.** Corrected some small issues with the major requirements, and reduced the number of credits that may be shared between the Classics and Classical Humanities majors.

- **Communication Arts: Entrance Requirements to Undergraduate Major.** Removed all entrance requirements to the major. The department strategically redeployed funds to create additional space in high demand courses, and anticipates having sufficient room for additional students.

- **English: Honors.** The changes aligned the honors program with the changes to the English major approved the previous spring.

- **Gender and Women’s Studies: Graduate Certificate.** Reduced the number of credits required; removed the breadth requirement and replaced it with a requirement to take a ‘foundational’ course.

- **Linguistics: Undergraduate Major.** The request expanded the list of courses that can meet the Linguistics major elective requirements. The expansion reflects the interdisciplinary nature of Linguistics, and identifies courses with this focus across campus. The change also allows DARS to automatically identify electives, no longer requiring manual entry of the exception.

- **Math: Undergraduate Certificate.** The changes reduced the number of required credit from 25 to 12 in courses numbered above 306. While the requirements will no longer include the full calculus sequence, the department anticipates most students will continue to take them as preparation for the required courses.

- **Neurobiology major: New Proposed Major.** L&S Curriculum Committee provided comments/feedback on the new program proposal and endorsed the program for approval.

- **Physics: Undergraduate Major and Honors.** The changes added courses in quantum mechanics and thermodynamics to the requirements, to better prepare students for graduate programs and technical/scientific careers.

- **Polish: Undergraduate Major (and Honors) The change increased flexibility in the major by dropping from the course requirements one specific course and allowing students, instead, to choose to take this course or another as an elective.

- **Psychology: Undergraduate Major.** The change reduced the number of required capstone courses from two to one and aligned Biology requirements to reflect recent changes to Bio 151/152. Students may now meet the Biology requirement by taking 151 alone.

- **Social Work: Master’s Program.** The change clarified language and changed the criteria for satisfactory progress in the program.

- **Honors courses ”B or Better”**
  The committee approved the change to require that all courses that count towards L&S honors
requirements, including non-honors courses, must have a grade of B or better. (Previously, it was not explicit that non-honors courses used to meet honors requirement must reflect a grade of B or higher)

L&S Curriculum Committee Members:

Chair: Dan Kapust, Political Science
Members:
Cécile Ané, Botany and Statistics
Barbara (Suzy) Buenger, Art History
Ivy Corfis, Spanish & Portuguese
Stephen Gammie, Zoology
William Jones, History
Galen McKinley, Atmospheric & Oceanic Sciences
Karen Redfield, English
Lyn Van Swol, Communication Arts
Peter Timbie, Physics
Ethelene Whitmire, Library and Information Studies

Student Members appointed through ASM:
Samantha Stowers
Madeline Krahn

Ex Officio:
Kimbrin Cornelius, L&S Administration
Elaine Klein, L&S Administration
Christopher Lee, L&S Student Academic Affairs
Jacqui Guthrie, L&S Honors Program
Michael J. Pflieger, L&S Student Academic Affairs
Nancy Westphal-Johnson, L&S Administration
Proposed Changes to Major Declaration Policy

Overview and Context

During the summer of 2014, a working group met at the request of Dean Karl Scholz to consider revising the Major Declaration Policy for the College of Letters and Sciences. Specifically, the group was tasked to create a plan ensuring all L&S undergraduate students declare a major by an appropriate time in their undergraduate career.

The working group included Michael Pflieger, Elaine Klein, Jo Ann Meier, Gery Essenmacher, John Hawks, Daniel Kapust, Nancy Westphal-Johnson, and Kimbrin Cornelius. The group met three times to discuss the need for such a policy, consider what one might look like, and how it might be implemented.

Current Policy

The current L&S Major Declaration Policy states:

“Students must declare a major through the department administering that program. The effective date of major declaration determines the major requirements to be completed. Students should request a Major/Certificate Declaration form from the academic department/unit administering the major. This form should be completed by the student and left at the department office administering the major. If a student decides to change his/her major later, the student should return to that department office and cancel his/her major. Students may have as many majors as they wish, but they must complete the Major/Certificate Declaration form for each major and cancel any major they feel they cannot complete.”

Proposed changes

The attached document includes the new proposed policy. The essence of the change is to require L&S undergraduate students to declare a major before they have completed 86 credits. If students have not yet declared when they complete 86 credits, registration hold will be placed on these students’ records. A student may not register until they have declared a major or until the student has been granted an exception.

Rationale for Change

Declaration of a major is a fundamental part of a student’s progression in their academic career, and integral to timely graduation. Declaring a major benefits students in a number of ways, including:

- Students who declare early are more likely to complete their degree within four years.
• Declared students are connected to important pedagogical benefits, such as participation in a department’s culture and membership in a cohort of students, and are connected to resources such as advising, faculty connections, and course access;
• Declaration helps departments identify students who intend to complete one of their majors, and assists with outreach to those students;
• The process of declaring ‘locks in’ students to current requirements, and ensures they have the right to complete under those requirements.

Despite these critical benefits, and the clear connections to timely graduation, L&S policy allows students to take courses indefinitely without declaring a major. Identifying undeclared students with a significant number of credits could represent a clear and critical advisor intervention point. Advisors help guide undeclared students through important and sometimes difficult decisions that must be made to continue degree progress. For example, what majors meet the student’s interests and talents? What should the student do if she/he isn’t able to meet his/her preferred program’s entrance requirements? What are other resources on campus that can help? Placing a hold that delays registration is a significant intervention, and it is intended to help students who may have stumbled on the path to timely completion of their academic program.

This policy change will also help the college align communication about the importance of major declaration, so messaging is intentional and consistent from arrival to graduation. This required change will promote critical interventions by advisors who will guide students toward majors that suit their talents and interests. By implementing this policy, we are also ensuring the best use of student’s resources, as well as University resources, by encouraging students to develop a plan for continuing their studies.

**Considerations regarding time of the hold intervention**

86 credits was identified as a suitable/optimal threshold because it marks the minimum credit level for “senior standing.” In addition, when looking at student declaration data, the majority of L&S students have identified majors by this point. We hope this is a point where targeted intervention makes good sense, and we are not needlessly interfering with students who cannot yet declare their major because they are still working on their entrance requirements.

Students enter L&S with a widely varying number of credits completed; they may enter with retro, transfer, text, and/or AP credit. All types of credits are included in the limit. Inevitably, some students will encounter this policy much sooner in their residence than others. Nevertheless, because 86 credits represents such significant progress towards a degree, the policy will apply to all L&S undergraduate students. As with other policies, students with special circumstances may speak to an advisor or dean for an exception.

Some students declare majors late in their academic careers because they hope to gain admission to restrictive programs either inside or outside L&S (for example, the Business School). We intend such students to be advised effectively by an advisor rather than delay making alternative plans.
Implementation

The Dean will charge an implementation committee that will develop an overall implementation plan. Once the plan is fully developed, L&S Student Academic Affairs will be responsible for coordinating all aspects of it.

The implementation plan should adhere to several principles:

- Close coordination with other campus units to support positive action for students (Registrar’s Office, Cross-College Advising, L&S departments, SOAR, etc).

- Coordinated, college-wide communication about major declaration throughout the lifecycle of the student experience. The messaging may be different for targeted groups (freshman are encouraged to explore, for example, but are also given information on how to declare).

- Online resources to help students understand how to declare, and how to get assistance with choosing a major.

- Multiple modes of messaging to ensure students receive fair warning.

- A clear identification of who may remove holds, documentation of the process to do so quickly, and training to advisors, staff, and faculty who may encounter students with this registration hold.

- Understanding the declaration process for all L&S programs, and identifying best practices to ensure students will not encounter ‘bureaucratic’ or processing delays between the time students indicate what they will declare, and when they may register.

- Document exception policies, and provide guidance to advisors and faculty about what is a reasonable exception.