Proposal for a B. A. Degree in Liberal Arts

Rationale:

This new degree program will benefit students in several ways:

- All students will benefit by having more options to choose from as they decide which major will serve them best.

- Some students start a particular major, leave school for a while, and then return to college later in life with different interests and different goals. The B. A. in Liberal Arts will enable these students to create an interdisciplinary major that includes the coursework they have already completed, so that they won’t have to switch majors and start a new degree program from the beginning. These students will be able to finish their degree within a reasonable time, thus reducing their costs and preparing them for a career more quickly.

- Any students whose interests and career goals are interdisciplinary in nature will benefit from this major. Many students discover such interests only after doing significant coursework toward a major. The B. A. in Liberal Arts will enable these students to build on coursework they’ve already completed, thus allowing them to refine their degree program to fit their evolving interests and career goals in an efficient way that doesn’t slow them down or add to their college expenses.

- While many students don’t discover an interdisciplinary interest until after they have begun taking classes toward a major, other students have an interdisciplinary program in mind when they look for a college. WCSU is losing these students to other schools now because we lack an interdisciplinary major. (For example, Southern Connecticut State, Eastern Connecticut State and UConn all offer interdisciplinary majors.) The B. A. in Liberal Arts at WCSU can attract a new population of students who currently are not considering this university.

- Through the B. A. in Liberal Arts more students will discover the option to create a Contract Major, and more students will benefit from that program. Currently most students are unaware of the Contract Major and very few take advantage of it. As part of the advising process for the new B. A. in Liberal Arts all students will be informed of the Contract Major option, since a Contract Major may be a better fit for some of them. (For example, a Contract Major allows for less than 18 hours in any particular discipline and also doesn’t have to be interdisciplinary.) Inevitably some students who are drawn to the B. A. in Liberal Arts will discover that a Contract Major suits them better.
Degree requirements:

To receive a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts degree students must successfully complete

- general education requirements as specified in the college catalog
- at least one year of a foreign language
- a three-credit Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies class (HUM 1xx)
- at least 18 hours in each of two concentrations, one of which must be in a traditional liberal arts discipline in the School of Arts and Sciences, and at least 6 credits in each concentration must be at the 300- or 400- level
- a three-credit Advanced Interdisciplinary Studies capstone class (HUM 4xx)

The minimum cumulative grade point average to receive the degree is 2.0, and the minimum cumulative grade point average within each of the student’s two concentrations is also 2.0.

Introductory interdisciplinary studies course:

Each section of this course will address a particular question, problem or theme through a variety of different disciplines. For example, the phenomenon of emotion could be studied using the perspectives of psychology, sociology, medicine, theatre and philosophy; or the theme of utopias and dystopias could be analyzed using history, anthropology, literature, art, and cognitive science. This approach will give students a demonstration of how interdisciplinary study is done. The class will also include some meta-level discussion of the theory and purpose of interdisciplinary study. This course is meant to provide students with a conceptual framework for their own interdisciplinary work in the concentrations they have chosen. It will also allow students in the Liberal Arts major to get to know each other and learn from each other as they share their ideas with other students whose programs have different concentrations.

Concentrations:

Students must select two academic concentrations, at least one in a traditional liberal arts discipline in the School of Arts and Sciences. Students can utilize all existing minors to construct an interdisciplinary program in Liberal Arts. All departments can, if they choose, modify their minors or otherwise specify the courses required to satisfy the concentration in their field, but unless and until a department completes such modifications the existing minor programs shall be understood as appropriate for the construction of a liberal arts major. There must be a minimum of 18 hours per concentration and at least 6 credits in each concentration must be at the 300- or 400- level. Since some existing minors do not require 18 credit hours or do not require 300- or 400- level courses it will be necessary to add to those minor requirements in order to complete that particular concentration. This
will be done in consultation with the appropriate department and with that department’s approval.

Concentrations will appear on student transcripts and diplomas thus: Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts with concentrations in XXX and XXX.

**Advanced interdisciplinary studies capstone course:**

The first half of this course will follow the same pattern as the Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies course: an examination of a particular question, problem or theme through a variety of different disciplines. The focus for the class will be chosen to best serve the students enrolled in the class each semester. (The Program Coordinator, who will have served as the advisor for the enrolled students over the past several years as they completed their degrees, will teach the class each semester, so she or he will be in a good position to know what topic would benefit each class the most.) The class will be taught at a more advanced level than the HUM 1xx Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies course in order to provide an appropriate challenge to students who are about to graduate, but the basic idea of this part of the course will remain the same: to involve students in a thoughtful work of interdisciplinary studies that will deepen their own understanding of how interdisciplinary work is done and why it is valuable.

In the second half of this course students will complete and present to the class a capstone project that requires interdisciplinary work from their two concentrations.

Both parts of this course will serve as the basis for assessing the learning outcomes for this degree.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Students who complete the B. A. in Liberal Arts will be able to:

- Defend the combination of concentrations that they chose for their major as a productive alliance. Students will be able to argue convincingly that the two concentrations that they chose can be used together in a complementary way to produce a more complete understanding of complex ideas and problems.

- Create and present a senior capstone project that successfully integrates the methods and perspectives of their two concentrations in a creative, thoughtful and educational way.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the strengths of interdisciplinary studies in general, beyond the two specific concentrations that they chose for their program. This entails being able to explain the essential characteristics of a question that is by nature interdisciplinary, and also being able to give examples from history of problems that were successfully solved using an interdisciplinary approach.
• Demonstrate an understanding of the limitations of interdisciplinary studies. This entails being able to explain the essential characteristics of a question that is by nature not interdisciplinary, and also being able to give examples from history of problems for which an interdisciplinary approach would have been a mistake.

• Demonstrate skills of insightful interpretation, logical analysis, articulate communication in speech and writing, openness to new ideas, and the ability to adapt creatively to change—all of which are essential for success in any profession.

Assessment:

The B. A. in Liberal Arts will be assessed as follows:

• The Program Coordinator will evaluate the work of each student in the HUM 4xx Advanced Interdisciplinary Studies class for competency in all of the skills outlined in the learning outcomes for this degree.

• The Program Coordinator will submit an annual assessment report to the Dean of Arts and Sciences.

Resources:

Staffing:

Program coordinator: The Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Humanistic Studies will serve as the Coordinator of the Liberal Arts degree with the following responsibilities:

• approve each student’s overall plan of study
• secure approval from departments for a student’s concentration plan if it involves any deviation from a department’s established concentration plan
• schedule the introductory and advanced interdisciplinary studies courses required for all Liberal Arts majors
• teach the advanced interdisciplinary studies course
• serve as advisor to students in the Liberal Arts program
• work closely with participating departments, Admissions, and community colleges to ensure smooth transfer of courses
• coordinate and report on assessment for the BA in Liberal Arts
• include the Liberal Arts degrees in the annual report of the Department of Philosophy and Humanistic Studies

Instructors for HUM 1xx Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies and HUM 4xx Advanced Interdisciplinary Studies: These courses can both be taught by existing faculty in the Department of Philosophy and Humanistic Studies so no additional instructors will need to be hired.
All other classes that will support this major are already being offered by each department as part of their major and minor degree programs, so no new instructors will need to be hired to teach them.

Advising: The Program Coordinator will serve as the advisor for all students in the Liberal Arts B. A. program.

Facilities and Equipment:

This degree requires the creation of only two new courses: HUM 1xx Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies and HUM 4xx Advanced Interdisciplinary Studies. These courses should not require any additional facilities or equipment.

Library:

Current library resources should be sufficient for this major since they are already supporting the various minor programs that will serve as concentrations for this interdisciplinary degree.

Possible Career Applications:

Since the concentrations in this interdisciplinary program can come from any field (as long as at least one of them is a traditional liberal arts discipline), it is not an exaggeration to say that a B. A. in Liberal Arts can prepare students for literally any career. One of the guiding ideals of interdisciplinary education is the conviction that underlying connections between disciplines are abundant but mostly ignored or overlooked. Interdisciplinary study aims to uncover these connections and bring diverse fields of inquiry together in a productive conversation. These same skills apply to the job market as well. The ability to see connections that others ignore or overlook will empower graduates from this program as they work to construct meaningful careers in an environment of quickly changing markets, technologies, ideas and opportunities.
### BA Liberal Arts Sample Program Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Education Competencies</th>
<th>Gen-Ed Electives (40 outside of major)</th>
<th>BA Liberal Arts Requirements (42 credits)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Year Navigation</td>
<td></td>
<td>HUM 1xx: Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>WRT101 Composition I</td>
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<td>Information Literacy</td>
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<td>Oral Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quantitative Reasoning</td>
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<td><strong>Concentration 2</strong>: 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scientific Inquiry</td>
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<td>Creative Process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intercultural Competency</td>
<td>Electives (36)</td>
<td>HUM 4xx Advanced Interdisciplinary Studies 3</td>
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<td>Health and Wellness</td>
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<td>Tier 2</td>
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<td>Writing Intensive</td>
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<td>Culminating Gen–Ed</td>
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*Each concentration must include at least two courses at the 300-400 level.*
### Sample Four-Year Plan Generic

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester 1</th>
<th>Semester 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WRT101 Composition I</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Communication</td>
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<td>MAT100 or Quantitative Reasoning</td>
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<tr>
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(Total Credits required = 120. Semester totals will vary by concentrations selected)