**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Committee on Academic Programs

**FROM:** Steering Committee

**RE:** FSP and Liberal Learning Changes

**DATE:** January 31, 2013

**Background:**

Each First Seminar (FSP) currently carries Liberal Learning credit in one of six domains. Given the often interdisciplinary nature of FSPs, the relationship between an FSP and its Liberal Learning domain is sometimes highly artificial and can be limiting for faculty. In addition, the curricular needs of many of the pre-professional programs require students to take FSPs in particular domains, limiting student choice and sometimes negatively affecting student interest in their FSP. Because fostering intellectual curiosity is a primary goal of the FSPs, student choice and interest are vital to the success of the course and program. As a result, LLPC has requested that FSPs no longer be tied to the Liberal Learning domains but rather function as a stand-alone requirement in the undergraduate curriculum. In order to offset the loss of the FSP as a course that satisfies one of the domain requirements within Option C, LLPC also requests that the number of courses required under Option C be reduced from nine courses to eight.

**Charge:**

The Steering Committee asks that CAP review the issues that prompted LLPC’s recommendation, consider the impact of the recommended change, and recommend either 1.) no change in the current status of the curriculum for Option C and the FSPs, 2.) the acceptance of the recommendation from LLPC, or 3.) a new and different revision of the curriculum for Option C and the FSPs that addresses the issues raised by LLPC. Steering is aware that a recommendation to reduce Liberal Learning requirements may raise the question of which courses now in the requirement will be reduced and how that reduction will be made.  CAP may want to consider that question as it explores the issue and makes its recommendation.

**Timeline:**

The Steering Committee requests that CAP give this charge a high priority. A timely decision (if the curriculum will be changed) should not be implemented any later than Fall 2014 but, in that case, would need to be made well ahead of time in order to allow appropriate promotional materials to be prepared (printed materials, web pages, and a video presentation for incoming first-year students).

**TCNJ Governance Processes**

**Step #1 -- Identifying and reporting the problem:** When a Standing Committee receives an issue from the Steering Committee, the first responsibility is to clearly articulate and report the problem to the campus community through regular updates to the campus community and the Governance Web Page ([www.tcnj.edu/~steering](http://www.tcnj.edu/~steering) ). The problem may have been set out clearly in the charge received from the Steering Committee, or it may be necessary for the Standing Committee to frame a problem statement. The problem statement should indicate the difficulties or uncertainties that need to be addressed through new or revised policy, procedure, or program. The problem statement should be broadly stated and should include a context such as existing policy or practice. Problem statements may include solution parameters but should not suggest any actual solutions. Clearly stated problems will lead to better recommendations.

**Step #2 -- Preparing a preliminary recommendation:** Once the campus community has received the problem statement, committees can begin to collect data needed to make a recommendation. Committees typically receive input through committee membership, formal testimony, and open comment from affected individuals and all stakeholder groups. Committees must be proactive in inviting stakeholder groups (including Student Government Association, Staff Senate and Faculty Senate) to provide formal testimony prior to developing a preliminary recommendation. When, in the best judgment of the committee, adequate clarity of the principles contributing to the problem are known, a preliminary recommendation should be drafted and disseminated to the campus community through regular updates and the Governance Web Page.

**Step #3 -- Making a Final Recommendation:** Committees must use sound judgment to give the campus adequate time to review the preliminary recommendation before making their final recommendation. Again, committees are expected to be proactive in receiving feedback on the preliminary recommendation. If a full calendar year has passed since the formal announcement of the preliminary recommendation, the committee must resubmit a preliminary recommendation to the campus community. When, in the best judgment of the committee, the campus community has responded to the proposed resolution of the issue, the committee shall send their final recommendation (complete documentation) to the Steering Committee.

**Testimony**

The presenting of testimony is central to the concept of shared governance. All stakeholder groups will have an opportunity to provide input into governance issues through direct membership as well as invited testimony. Individuals appointed or elected to the governance system are expected to take a broad institutional perspective relative to issues being considered. In contrast, invited testimony will reflect the stakeholder perspective on the issue being considered. Committees are expected to be proactive in inviting stakeholder groups to provide testimony at both step # 2 and #3 of the process. Committees need to identify stakeholder groups that are interested in each particular issue and invite their testimony at scheduled Committee meetings or hearings. Committees should report in their minutes which groups were targeted as stakeholders, how testimony was invited, the form of the testimony (written, oral, etc.), and the substantive content of the testimony.

To see the Steering Committee’s guidelines for gathering testimony, go to <http://www.tcnj.edu/~steering/Guidelines_for_Gathering_Testimony.docx>.