

SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Strategic Planning Day “Best Ideas” from the Liberal Arts Core (LAC) Conversation

- 1) It is very important that some package or packages of LAC interdisciplinary cluster options be provided for both undecided and transfer students.
- 2) A required freshman year, first-semester class which focuses on educating students about the nature and benefits of the liberal arts education, informing and exciting them to take control of their college experience.
- 3) One or more courses for freshmen focused on writing and research skills and centered on engaging current themes.
- 4) Simplification of the LAC.
- 5) First-year experiences for students, which involve teacher collaboration.
- 6) Integrate subject matter between classes, with an especial focus on integrating the LAC and student major as early as possible.
- 7) Encourage an appreciation and recognition of both diversity and similarity.
- 8) Exposure of students to different “ways of tasting reality;” that is, the different (and similar) approaches to understanding the world taken by, say, a chemist and a poet.
- 9) Topic-based freshman education with strong integrated teaching.
- 10) Focus introductory classes on the general qualities and philosophies of a discipline.
- 11) Have faculty model the good-faith embrace of the Liberal Arts expected from students. Team-teaching, posting syllabi in a central online review area for consideration by other faculty and students, and even simply visiting other classes to participate in their discussions.
- 12) Illuminate the community impact of a given subject from the immediate and local to the far-reaching and global.
- 13) Have one of the freshman experiences be plotting their proposed 4-year course choices and progression towards graduation. Note that the upcoming new DARS program should assist in this task.
- 14) Maximize on the many documented potential benefits of a well-executed and supported freshman seminar.