

# **THE SATURDAY LIBERAL STUDIES BA DEGREE COMPLETION PROGRAM AT SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY:**

## **PROGRAM SELF-STUDY November 2016**

### **A. INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY**

The Liberal Studies BA Degree Completion Program (DCP) was founded in 1996 in partnership between the Hutchins School and the School of Extended Education in order to serve students whose work or family commitments, or location of residence, preclude them from coming to regular classes at Sonoma State University. The DCP is a trans-disciplinary liberal studies curriculum, emphasizing self-reflection, creative thinking, research, collaborative inquiry, and close observation of original literary, historical, and scientific sources, supplemented by experiential workshops and occasional lectures. The DCP pedagogy is a learning community model in which students become teachers to each other, engaging themes in what Hutchins called the “great human conversation” in search of shared meaning. Students remain in cohorts through the two year program--four ten-unit seminars limited to 15 students each. It is a hybrid program. Students meet in face-to-face seminars on campus one Saturday per month each Semester, and in on-line threaded postings and responses to each other’s essays over on-line weekends.

Students take one ten-unit class per semester for four semesters to fulfill the 40 units in the major. A waiver was negotiated for the required nine units of upper-division general education, as the courses were considered to cover a broad enough range of material to fulfill this requirement, and our students would have difficulty finding classes to fit their schedules. Advising is provided by the Administrative Coordinator, starting with preadmissions transcript evaluation and culminating with assessment of graduation requirements. Summer and Winter Intersession offerings supplement the additional ten units some students need for graduation. Curriculum development and program direction, as well as some teaching, are provided by the Faculty Coordinator.

Class size is limited to 15 students. Students stay in the same cohort throughout the program but have different professors each semester. Generally two cohorts of the introductory course, LIBS 380, begin each Fall semester, and usually one cohort in Spring. Due to the attrition to be expected in this population (adults with work and family commitments), the cohorts usually shrink to an average of 12 students. At any given time there are approximately 50 active students and a further 25 who have completed our coursework but need additional units to fulfill graduation requirements.

### **B. Pedagogy**

The DCP follows Warren Olsen’s founding vision for the Hutchins School. Arguing that the creation of the Hutchins School was to address the problems of passivity, fragmentation and alienation in higher education, Olsen wrote in 1969:

Students will make considerable strides toward intellectual and emotional liberation in which they will have a much better than average chance to become engaged with various worlds each of us lives in. We hope to develop skills of analysis and criticism which would allow students to grapple with the persistent problems of man [sic] and society, to

support students' growth toward lives of integrity and principle by studying the relationship of values to action, and of the significance of the individual in history, to improve the quality of their lives by adding the usable past to their experience, including cultural and aesthetic achievements, and to provide them with the tools and motivation for continual self education.

Pedagogically, the DCP is an integrated general education program, with a core curriculum. Teaching across the courses is encouraged, because human problems don't lend themselves to narrow, disciplinary solutions. The faculty "facilitate" the dialogue and are part of the learning community. A writing instructor works with students in their first semester in order to develop competencies in academic writing.

### C. CORE COURSES

The arc of the DCP curriculum moves from the theme of identity and society, through work and the global future, to technology and the environment. Each of these seminars embodies integrated learning in the humanities, the social and natural sciences. The courses pose problems which challenge adult citizens of our democracy: How am I related to my society; how does globalization affect my local community? What do citizens need to know in order to understand environmental issues and think ecologically? The fourth seminar is a student initiated senior project involving the integration of the skill sets that have been developing over the previous three semesters. Specific topics covered in each course are listed at the end of this report (Appendix I). The DCP does not provide any specific credential preparation, though students are welcome to use their *Senior Project* to that end and are also able to get special permission to take credential prerequisite courses.

The Saturday on-campus meetings are for a full day, typically with a three-hour seminar discussion, a lecture or workshop, and student presentations. The student presentations are an important part of many assignments. They not only allow students to hone public speaking skills, but give them an opportunity to learn from each other.

These sessions are augmented by weekly on-line discussion forums in which students write a short (1—2 page) essay on their analysis of and reactions to a set of topical readings, to which other students respond. The professor caps off each week's discussion with a general comment on the flow, providing additional background material as needed.

The four core courses in the program are as follows:

- LIBS 380 *Identity and Society* looks at changing conceptions of selfhood, drawing from psychological, sociological and anthropological theory, as well as from literature, art, and biology, philosophy and epistemology.
- LIBS 381 *Technology and the Environment* concentrates on the relationship between the human environment and the physical environment and the economic and political aspects of environmental issues.
- LIBS 382 *Work and the Global Future* explores the global economy and its impact on societies around the world.
- LIBS 470 *Senior Project* allows students to combine individual interests with one or more themes from the core courses.

## **D. CURRICULUM**

### **1. Objectives Specific to the BA Degree Completion Program**

The goals for the BA Degree Completion Program are congruent with those listed in the Hutchins School program review. Because our students are adult learners, assignments focus also on meaningful applications integrated with research in the social and natural sciences. Our learning goals are designed to help adult learners become effective participants in all contexts of their lives. Students come away from our program with these competencies.

- ability to write in a variety of styles
- ability to analyze and synthesize information
- multi-level problem-solving
- organization, design, and implementation of complex projects
- research and documentation skills
- confidence in oral communication skills

### **2. An Emergent Learning Community**

Students' on-line postings in response to the weekly themes which organize each course's reading list form an emergent aspect of the DCP curriculum. Student's interpretive essays pose the questions and standpoints that define their on-line co-inquiry. Like the face-to-face seminars, the online web dialogue provides a forum for each student to respond substantively without interruption, and to engage others through their responses. Juxtaposing multi-disciplinary readings allow students to comprehend the interface of a variety of disciplines focused on a common theme. The seminar approach fosters inter-student dialogue to enhance their critical thinking skills.

### **3. Preparing Students**

LIBS 380 begins with an orientation to the seminar process and on-line format. Course goals are explained in each course syllabus and are gone over in class at the beginning of each semester by the professor. The program goal is for students to complete their BA degree, sometimes decades after they started on it. To that end, intensive individual advising is provided by the Administrative Coordinator, beginning with a pre-admissions assessment. A Self-Evaluation matrix of standards for grading, guidelines for presentations, MLA format for composition, readings that distinguish dialogue from debate etc. are part of the DCP Manual distributed to all students. Graduation requirements are carefully outlined, and recommendations are made for specific classes that will fit each student's academic and workload situation. In addition, a student handbook contains information about degree and program requirements, along with summaries of University policies and links to resources. Finally, the Administrative Coordinator acts as a liaison with campus offices, as our students are generally unable to come to campus during regular hours. As the regulations governing our program can be different than those for regular students, the Administrative Coordinator also helps determine and interpret policy.

#### 4. A Program for Working Adults

The BA Degree Completion Program is specifically designed for those who cannot attend regular SSU classes because of commuting distance or work schedules. Students come to campus only one mandatory Saturday meeting per month, for which they can plan well in advance as the meeting dates for the next semester are given out at least two months before the start of each semester.

The online forum is not conducted in real time, so each student can do the week's readings and post the essay response at convenient times. Longer writing assignments are timed to allow about a month for completion, and are scheduled so that presentations can be made at a class meeting for maximum use of the time spent together.

Recruiting efforts for this population include participation in community college information events and conferences and fairs in the service area, which stretches from the South Bay to Mendocino County and west to Sacramento, at which other SSU programs are represented as well.

#### E. FACULTY

The Faculty Coordinator and instructors are drawn from the Hutchins School. Faculty are well-qualified in their fields and are familiar with the Hutchins pedagogy. They consistently earn high scores on the student evaluations we conduct each semester. All sections of each course use the same reading list. Course faculty meet each semester in planning sessions with the Faculty Coordinator to reevaluate syllabi. Student feedback on the previous semester's courses is part of this process. Assignments and workshops are reconsidered for their effectiveness in illustrating course themes.

#### G PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The DCP is administered by the School of Extended and International Education. In 2005 The Hutchins School became a Department under the School of Arts and Humanities. A new Memorandum of Understanding is being negotiated to reflect this change. Currently, The Hutchins School supports the DCP by opening its adjunct pool for hiring purposes. A tenure track faculty member of the Hutchins faculty serves as liaison to the Academic Senate when the Faculty Coordinator is an adjunct. Faculty salaries are paid by The School of Extended and International Education, and a portion of revenues generated by the DCP are allocated to the Hutchins Department through the School of Arts and Humanities.

#### F. STUDENT BODY

##### Student Outcomes

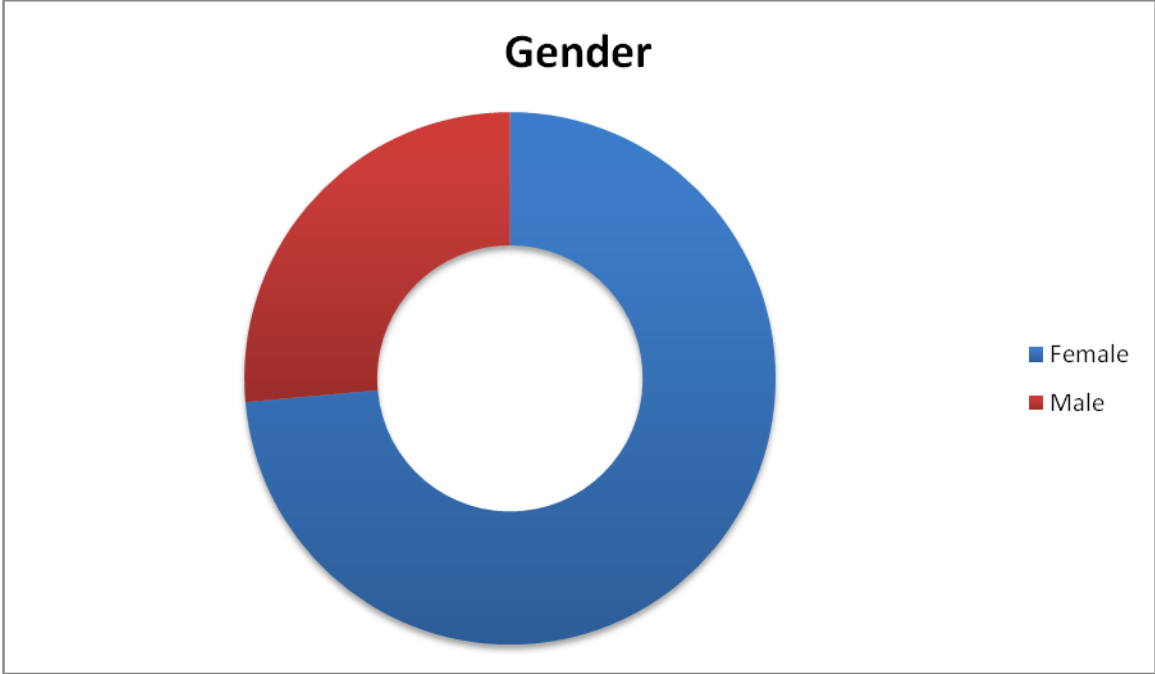
Started program since inception, 1997	564	
Completed program coursework	420	(75%)
Program complete; requirements to finish	85	
Graduated	335	(64% past 1 <sup>st</sup> semester)
Qualified for University honors	54	(16%)
Cum laude	27	
Magna cum laude	18	
Summa cum laude	9	
Distinction (department)	4	

### Current Students

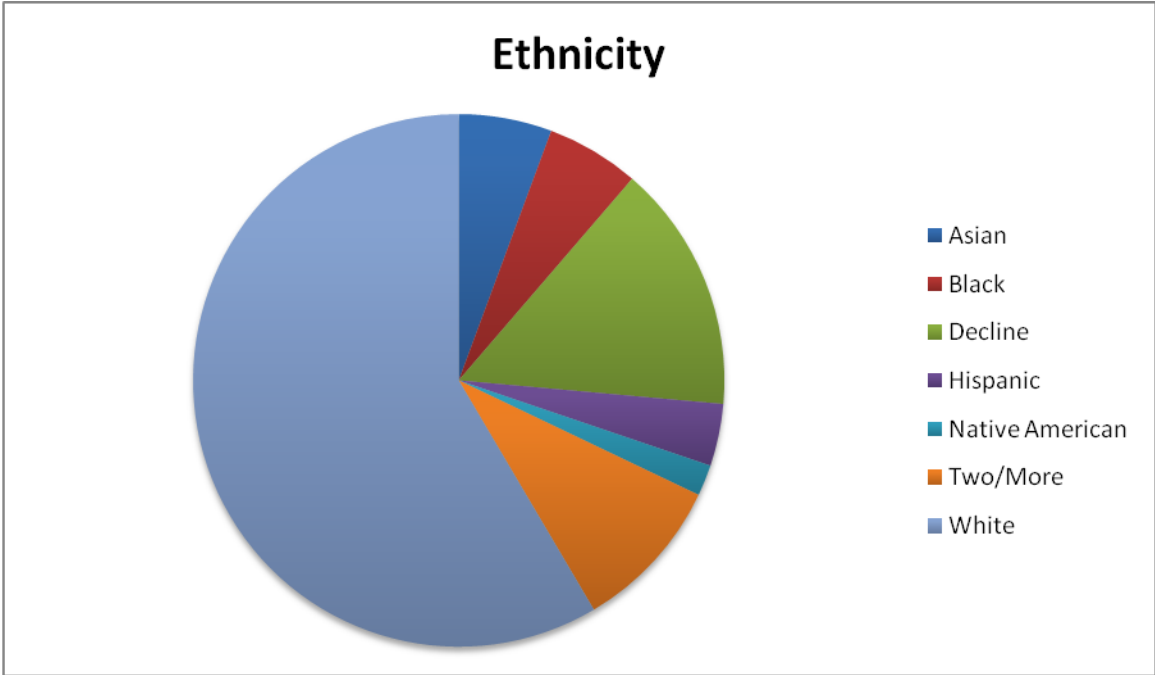
Currently enrolled students	53
Age range: 23—60	Percent
66+	0
56—65	10.5
46—55	12
36—45	36
26—35	36.5
25-	3
Geographic location	Percent
Local (0—25 miles)	57
Napa (30 miles)	6.5
Marin (30—45 miles)	5
Solano (40 miles)	12.5
Mendocino (45—75 miles)	8
Lake County (50 miles)	1.5
City/East Bay (50 miles)	5
South Bay (100 miles)	3
Sacramento (100 miles)	1.5
Other (over 100 miles)	0

### Inactive Students

	274
On leave of absence	7
Withdrawn	91
Withdrew first semester	42
Discontinued for personal reasons	39
Moved to another SSU program	10



**Female Students = 39**  
**Male Students = 14**



**Ethnic Groups Represented in the Saturday Hybrid Degree Completion Program**

<b>Asian</b>	3
<b>Black</b>	3

<b>Decline to State</b>	8
<b>Hispanic</b>	2
<b>Native American</b>	1
<b>Two or More</b>	5
<b>White</b>	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>

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## APPENDIX 1

### COURSE SUMMARIES for the LIBERAL STUDIES BA DEGREE COMPLETION PROGRAM

#### LIBS 380: Identity and Society

##### Topics:

Memory and Memoir  
 Conversation  
 What is a Coherent Community?  
 Society and Self  
 Social Environments: Shaping the Self  
 The Origins of Psychoanalysis  
 Human Natures  
 Gender  
 The Development of Identity  
 Observing/Reflecting Body/Mind  
 Ways of Knowing  
 The Self as Mystery and Metaphor

##### Book List:

Camus: The Stranger  
 Freud: Civilization and Its Discontents  
 Gendlin: Focusing  
 Kozol: Amazing Grace  
 Shurbin: Your Inner Fish  
 Various: Tao Te Ching

##### Assignments:

Weekly Postings  
 Three Memoirs  
 Summaries and Academic Essay  
 Observing/Reflecting Mind/Body  
 Creative Expression  
 Retrospective Essay

#### LIBS 382: Work and the Global Future

##### Topics:

The Development of Globalism  
 Corporate Culture  
 Women's Work

Ideology and Liberation  
 Individual and Social Cooperation  
 Displacement and Homelessness  
 Modes of Production  
 The Ideology of Capitalism  
 Toward a Humane Economy:

Building Community  
Crisis in the Global Economy Part 1  
Crisis in the Global Economy Part 2  
War and Empire  
Grassroots Globalism/Activism

Hawken: Blessed Unrest  
Kane: Savages  
Klein: The Shock Doctrine  
Lappe: Getting a Grip 2  
Marx: The Communist Manifesto: A Road  
Map  
Nazario: Enrique's Journey  
Roy: An Ordinary Person's Guide to  
Empire  
Rushkoff: Life Inc.  
Yes! Magazine

Book List:

Ellwood: The No-Nonsense Guide to  
Globalization

Assignments:

Weekly Postings  
Family History: Work and Politics  
Local Region Fieldwork  
Global Activism  
Retrospective Essay

**LIBS 381: Technology and the Environment**

Topics:

The Economy and the Environment  
Ecosystems, Part 1  
Ecosystems Part 2  
Climate Change  
Principles, Policies, Practices Part 1  
Principles, Policies, Practices Part 2  
Organisms Part 1  
Organisms Part 2  
Water Part 1  
Waste  
Water Part 2  
Agriculture Part 1  
Agriculture Part 2  
Ways Forward: Deep Ecology/Renewal

Weekly Postings  
Running Commentary and Summary  
Journal of Process  
Preparation Materials/Resource List  
Annotated Bibliography  
Literature Review  
Written Component of Project  
Portfolio of Written Work  
Formal Presentation

Assignments:

Weekly Postings  
Council of All Beings  
Spot Paper  
Collaborative Investigation: Solutions/New  
Approaches  
Water Report  
Ecological and Carbon Footprints  
Environmental Activism  
Retrospective Essay

**LIBS 470: Senior Project**

Topic: chosen by student

Assignments:



Book List:

Berndt, Heinrich: Life Everlasting  
Carson, Rachel: Silent Spring  
Dodson, Stephen: Ecology  
Kolbert, Elizabeth: The Sixth Extinction  
Leopold: A Sand County Almanac  
Mastrandrea & Schneider: Preparing for  
Climate Change  
Outwater: Water  
*The Future of Food (DVD)*

