Rationale for Removing the Domain Designation from FSPs

Currently, each FSP must satisfy one of the six domains of Liberal Learning: Literary, Visual and Performing Arts, World Views and Ways of Knowing, Behavioral, Social or Cultural Perspectives, Social Change in Historical Perspective, Natural Science, or Quantitative Reasoning.

There are several disadvantages to this approach. First, several FSPs each year are “forced” into domains where they have a dubious claim (i.e., they do not adequately address all of the learning outcomes for those domains). Mostly these are in the domain of “Behavioral, Social, and Cultural Perspectives,” occasionally in the domain of “World Views and Ways of Knowing,” or less frequently in one of the other domains. Such “shoe-horning” means that students may not be fully exposed to all of the learning outcomes of the domain in sufficient depth, and if the FSP taken by students represents the sole course they take in that domain, then they may not end up mastering the outcomes of the domain to the degree intended by the program. Second, several categories of majors, including engineering, nursing, and business students and others are restricted from certain FSP sections, because those sections duplicate the domain fulfilled by the student’s major courses, and the tight schedules of these majors preclude students from taking an additional course solely out of interest. Third, some faculty may be hesitant to offer FSPs because they feel that they are not able to develop an FSP that does justice to both the FSP outcomes and outcomes of the domain in which their discipline resides. Fourth, faculty who have great ideas for FSPs that integrate two or more domains, especially from different sectors, may choose not to develop these sections because they do not clearly fall into one domain. These last two factors may be reducing participation by full-time faculty, which in turn increases reliance on adjuncts to staff FSPs, a situation that is less than desirable for a foundational and critical course in the TCNJ experience.

LLPC has recommended removing the requirement that FSPs count for one of the six domains; that is, the domain requirements should be removed from FSPs and the number of courses required for the Option C breadth requirements path be reduced from nine to eight (thereby not affecting the rest of the curriculum). In this way, FSPs would function as a free-standing liberal learning requirement. Each student would still be required to have three courses in two of the broad sectors mentioned above and two in the third sector, and hence students would continue to complete at least one course in each domain. Options A and B would not be affected. FSP sections could still satisfy up to two of the Civic Responsibilities (gender, global, and race & ethnicity).

This change to the Liberal Learning requirements would address each of the disadvantages of the current requirement. First, all students in Option C will fulfill each domain through a course dedicated to that domain, thereby enhancing mastery by students of domain outcomes. Second, students in all majors will have the chance to enroll in all FSPs, increasing the probability that students will be placed in FSPs that spark their interest. Finally, a greater variety of FSPs could be developed, thereby removing some of the barriers to participation by full-time faculty and potentially enlarging the pool of prospective full-time instructors.