

**Associate in Arts
Liberal Arts**

Section 1: Program Overview

- A. Program Goals.....
- B. Program Visibility and Distinctiveness.....
- C. Program Relevance
- D. Program Value

A. Program Goals

The Liberal Arts program helps its graduates prepare themselves broadly to live and work in the world. Central to the program's mission is the larger mission of the university to help individuals lay the groundwork for success in career-oriented, professional and technical fields. The program's stated goals are to develop the students' ability to think, read, communicate, analyze and solve problems. While the program does not provide specific technical education, its emphasis on critical engaged thinking is a foundational value for the university. Liberal Arts then offers students the opportunity to develop their intellectual capacities as a preparatory experience to their career goals. As such the program rarely see graduates who finish the Liberal Arts Associate Degree as an end in itself but rather as a significant site of exploration that helps them clarify their career goals even as the program strengthens their ability to function academically and professionally.

B. Program Distinctiveness and Visibility

The program has been in existence for many years, with its first graduate completing the degree in 1924. The program's curriculum is the cooperative product of faculty and administrative design. In its current form, the program's curriculum is monitored for relevancy and effectiveness by the program coordinator and the department heads in the college of Arts and Sciences.

The goals have not changed since the 2006/07 review. The program is designed around the general education requirements thus allowing ease of transition for students moving from the associate in arts to another Ferris program or from Ferris to another university. The completion of the associate in arts meets the standards of the MACRAO agreement thus facilitating ease of transfer throughout the state.

The distinctiveness of the program lies in its compliance with general education at the university thus allowing students to move freely from the associate degree to a bachelors without losing credit hours.

We do not recruit for the associate degree per se; however, for the past several semesters the College has sent out email messages to CAS students asking them to see if they meet the requirements for an associate's degree. It is an effort to retain students and has been noted as such by the Associate Provost for Retention and Student Success. More often than not we use the degree as an advising tool. It is quite common for students to move from Career Exploration in University College into the Associate in Arts. It is also a valuable tool for our own college's undecided students. Students who are not sure about a major are counseled into Liberal Arts as the degree offers the student the opportunity to complete the university general education requirements while exploring other possible majors or career options. Any more the associate degree is not an end in itself but rather a way of assisting students to ladder into an appropriate bachelor's degree program.

Northern Michigan College, Michigan Technological University, Michigan State, Oakland University and nearly every community college houses an associate in arts degree. While it could be argued that the associate degree belongs at the community college rather than the university, Ferris has historically served as a community college for the region in addition to its role as a university.

C. Program Relevance

In its publication *College Learning for the New Global Century*, the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education & America's Promise (2007) outlines four broad areas in which all students should be prepared: (1) knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world; (2) intellectual and practical skills, including inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, quantitative literacy, information literacy, teamwork, and problem solving; (3) personal and social responsibility, including civic knowledge and engagement—local and global intercultural knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning and action, and foundations and skills for lifelong learning; and (4) integrative learning, including synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies. Although the publication focuses on developing general education programs to address these areas, these general education outcomes also serve as the structure of a reasonable degree program as in the case of the associate in arts, that develops in students an appreciation for and fluency with diversity in all its forms and prepares them for engagement in an increasingly globalized society. These same goals have been used to guide the current general education review. The basis for the associate in arts is common to the general education core.

As the report states, “In a world of daunting complexity, all students need practice in integrating and applying their learning to challenging questions in real-world problems,” and continues, “In a period of relentless change, all students need the kind of education that leads them to ask not just ‘how do we get this done?’ but also ‘what is most worth doing?’” (National Leadership Council for Liberal Education & America's Promise, p. 13).

On a much more practical level, the associate in arts serves as a retention tool, as noted previously, providing a degree option for students who might otherwise leave the university. The program acts as a place for students to explore their educational options while making progress on their general education requirements. As mentioned previously, the program, is the most friendly internal transfer option at the University, second only to the Bachelor of Integrated Studies, a degree program in Arts and Sciences that specifically uses the associate in arts as a ladder for freshmen wanting to choose the integrated studies option.

D. Program Value

The program is valuable to the University as a retention tool. It is also valuable to students who have nearly completed a bachelor degree but find that they may have to leave the university for financial reasons or other personal reasons. These students can apply for the associate in arts and leave with a degree in hand rather than an incomplete transcript.

The program has limited value to external entities in a correlative context. It helps create a more broadly educated workforce and a citizenry who have stronger critical habits to bring to the public forum, but it provides little direct advantage toward employment, particularly at a time when the bachelor degree is becoming the standard requirement for employers.

Associate in Arts
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Section 2: Collection of Perceptions

1. Graduate Survey

*Employers, current students, and faculty were not surveyed for this review. There is no advisory committee for this program because the degree does not prepare students for any specific career path.

Question	Valid	Missing	Mean	Median	Std Dev.
Q1 The AA was useful to my career	45	0	2.84	3.00	1.021
The AA was effective	45	0	3.04	3.00	.978
The AA faculty were available for help outside of class	45	0	3.73	3.00	1.036
I feel I got a solid general education	44		3.25	4.00	1.014
I would recommend this program to others	45	0	3.16	4.00	.976
Overall level of satisfaction with program	45	-	3.16	3.00	.976

The majority of responses were positive in regard to the usefulness and quality of the program. One comment made by a graduate was very telling. The grad wrote that AA was of no use because he/she went on to get a bachelor and a masters

degree. This ironically speaks to the very purpose and nature of the program. The AA was a steppingstone to further education. On its own it serves very little purpose, but as a point of partial completion along a longer and higher academic path, it serves its purpose.

Associate in Arts
Liberal Arts

Section 3: Program Profile

- A. Profile of Students
- B. Enrollment
- C. Program Capacity
- D. Retention and Graduation
- E. Access
- F. Curriculum
- G. Quality of Instruction
- H. Composition and Quality of Faculty
- I. Degree Program Cost and Productivity Data

A. Profile of Students

Year	Resident	Non-Resident	Age	AVG.GPA	MIN GPA	Max GPA	AVG ACT	MIN ACT	MAX ACT
200808	24	0	23	2.51	1.14	4	21	15	32
200908	22	0	20	2.77	1.75	4	20.86	15	32
201008	18	0	21	2.72	1.49	3.66	20.35	15	27
201108	26	2	20	2.93	2.05	3.9	20.72	16	29
201208	12	2	20	2.73	2.73	3.82	20.42	16	29

The typical AA student is traditional age with average GPA and ACT. This makes sense in light of the purpose of the program. Students electing the AA are often transferring from University College where they have either worked on remediating skills or have been undecided about a career path. The AA student is not typically a high achieving student with stated career objectives; rather, they are students in search of an academic path and the AA serves as a point of completion along the way.

B. Enrollment

YEAR	Frosh	Soph	Jr	SR	TOTAL
2009	9	8	3	2	22
2010	5	6	4	3	18
2011	11	12	4	1	28
2012	4	9	1	0	14

Enrollment is on the decline. As noted previously, an associate degree is no longer a degree that can secure one employment. Fewer students elect the degree as incoming freshmen with the intent of graduating in that degree. It is most often used as an advising tool for students undecided or who intend to transfer into another program or to another institution.

Gender/Ethnicity (fall data)

YEAR	Enrolled	Male	Female
2008	24	9	15
2009	22	14	8
2010	18	6	12
2011	28	13	15
2012	14	2	12

The data on gender and ethnicity reflects the data university-wide.

Full/Part Time (fall data)

YEAR	Full Time	Part Time
2008	18	6
2009	21	2
2010	16	2
2011	23	5
2012	11	3

Ethnicity

Year	Unknown	Black	Hispanic	Native	Asian	White	Hawaiian	Multi
2008	0	1	1	0	0	21	0	0
2009	3	1	2	0	0	16	0	0
2010	1	3	2	1	0	11	0	0
2011	1	3	1	0	0	21	0	2
2012	0	1	1	0	0	12	0	0

C Program Capacity

Because the program is reliant on General Education courses that are offered each semester with great variety, and because there are no designated faculty or equipment needs, there is no determined program capacity.

D. Retention and Graduation

Year	Graduate Head Count	Avg. GPA	Min. GPA	Max. GPA	AVG ACT	Min ACT	Max ACT
2008-09	5	3.63	3.25	4	19.00	19	19
2009-10	8	2.78	2.3	3.24	23.33	17	32
2010-11	5	2.74	2.56	2.91	17.50	17	18
2011-12	7	2.76	2.52	3.1	19.00	16	23

Enter Date	N=	status	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6
2007	8	% graduate	0	0	13	25	25
		% still enrolled	38	25	12	0	0

		% persisters	38	25	25	25	25
		5 non persister	62	75	75	75	75
2008	7	% graduate	0	0	0	0	0
		% still enrolled	43	29	29	43	
		% persisters	43	29	29	43	
		5 non persister	57	71	71	57	
2009	7	% graduate	0	0	0		
		% still enrolled	71	43	57		
		% persisters	71	43	57		
		5 non persister	29	57	43		
2010	1	% graduate	0	0			
		% still enrolled	100	100			
		% persisters	100	100			
		5 non persister	0	0			
2011	7	% graduate	0				
		% still enrolled	71				
		% persisters	71				
		5 non persister	29				

It is not a goal of the program to “retain” students; rather, our intent is to use the program to ladder students into appropriate bachelor degree programs at Ferris. That also explains the low numbers of graduates.

Employability of Students

Whereas two decades ago an associate degree might lead to employment, that is no longer the case. Most job descriptions, even at FSU, require minimum of a bachelors. The associate degree is most often a mid-point for students intending to complete a bachelors but who may need to stop out temporarily or intend to transfer to another institution.

E. Access

The curriculum for Liberal Arts is one of the most flexible and widely available curricula to students. Enrollees literally have hundreds of choices from among the classes offered each semester.

The impact of the program has been negligible to university systems. The most significant affect is on the faculty and administrative personnel who advise students.

F. Curriculum

Program requirements are typical of similar liberal arts programs throughout the state. In addition to meeting the standards for general education at the associate level, students are required to choose one class from the social awareness category and/or one class from the cultural enrichment category. The rationale for this requirement is to provide a classical education that is consistent with standards for liberal arts education. Students may take up to 10 credits from colleges outside of Arts and Sciences and must be a resident of the College of Arts and Sciences for two semesters.

All other requirements are standard for general education and other associate degree offerings at Ferris.

G. Quality of Instruction

There is no plan to benchmark performance and student mastery beyond existing measures deployed in the General Education Program and in the programs in Arts and Sciences.

H. Composition and Quality of Faculty

There are no faculty designated to Liberal Arts.

I. Degree Program Cost and Productivity

Student Credit Hours

YEAR 2009	Frosh	125
	Soph	106
	Junior	39
	Senior	29
YEAR 2010	Frosh	66
	Soph	75
	Junior	48
	Senior	33
Year 2011	Frosh	141
	Soph	144
	Junior	33
	Senior	12
Year 2012	Frosh	52
	Soph	108
	Junior	12

	Senior	0
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Degree Program Costing 2009-10 (SmSFW)

Total Cost per Student Credit Hour (AVG for Program)	\$167.90
Total Program Cost	\$11,920.82

Section 4: Conclusion

- A. Relationship to Mission
- B. Visibility and Distinctiveness
- C. Program Value
- D. Enrollment
- E. Characteristics, Quality and Employability of Students
- F. Quality of Curriculum and Instruction
- G. Composition and Quality of Faculty

A. Relationship to Mission

The Liberal Arts Program emphasizes the ability to think, read, communicate, analyze, and solve problems. These activities are central to all programs at Ferris.

B. Visibility and Distinctiveness

The program is not widely marketed to students and is not appreciably different from other programs in the state.

C. Program Value

The program serves a small but vital function at Ferris. It exists mainly to help students make progress toward earning a discipline-specific degree at the university. The program offers one of the most internal transfer-friendly curricula, allowing Ferris students to make steady progress toward their career exploration and goals while finishing their general education requirements.

D. Enrollment

It is anticipated that small but persistent demand will continue for this program for the foreseeable future.

E. Characteristics, Quality and Employability of Students

Program students appear to be typical of the university population as a whole. Employability for program graduates is more directly impacted by the additional education students select after completing the degree.

F. Quality of Curriculum and Instruction

The quality of the curriculum and instruction as measured by past Academic Program Review reports for discipline-specific degrees in Arts and Sciences is high. Because the degree is essentially the General Education curriculum, we rely on the results of General Education Assessment which employs multiple measures including the Proficiency Profile Information, the National Survey of Student Engagement and the College Student Experience Questionnaire in combination with our assessment methods by outcome.

G. Composition and Quality of Faculty

The Liberal Arts Program does not have program-designated faculty. Quality and composition of faculty can be extrapolated from Arts and Sciences faculty as a whole.