

## **Response Summary: What does it mean to call a college or university a “liberal arts and sciences institution”?**

**Essentially Unanimous** - We are in general agreement that a LAS institution is one that:

- ◇ produces well rounded individuals educated in diverse disciplines and their interrelationships through strong and broad common general education requirements
- ◇ promotes intellectual inquiry and values learning for its own sake
- ◇ teaches students to learn, adapt, think and communicate by studying the intellectual and artistic achievements of humankind

### **Identifying features of LAS institutions contained in only *some* responses-**

#### ◆ Size

- ◇ has small class sizes
- ◇ has small student body size

#### ◆ Research

- ◇ has a balance between teaching and research where each is valued
- ◇ has a primary focus on teaching and a significantly more limited commitment to research
- ◇ supports *only* student centered faculty research

#### ◆ Teaching/Education

- ◇ has foreign language requirement
- ◇ distances itself from career specific/vocational academic disciplines such as business and education
- ◇ has emphasis on undergraduate education / offers *only* undergraduate education
- ◇ more than 50% of students graduate with degrees within classical “liberal arts” disciplines
- ◇ offer a few select fields of study, not a million majors
- ◇ provides high quality teaching
- ◇ has a commitment to teacher/scholar model
- ◇ promotes liberating the mind
- ◇ emphasizes 1-on-1 teacher/student interaction
- ◇ has a “cohesive” student body
- ◇ has classes taught by faculty rather than by grad students or adjuncts
- ◇ prepares students to be good citizens, be globally aware and to work with diverse populations
- ◇ faculty free to devise non-traditional (quirky) courses
- ◇ provides a common shared experience between students and faculty

◇ humanities highly valued

◇ students and faculty are not just a number

◇ emphasizes being something rather than knowing something /is process-oriented versus content-based

◇ continues of the tradition of liberal values (not politically meant) and a humanistic culture

#### ◆ **Other Comments:**

- ◇ the meaning of the term has evolved over time and continues to evolve – we are shaping its meaning
- ◇ this term applies only to small, private, elite college focused on the basic academic disciplines
- ◇ “a certain elevation above utilitarian concerns” - George F. Will
- ◇ less independence of individual schools at LAS institution
- ◇ the term has lost its meaning through misuse
- ◇ LAS is an indication of *prestige*

## **Response Summary: Advantages/disadvantages of continuing to use this phrase**

**Note:** The following list does not attempt to quantify the results. For instance, it does not reflect the fact that some of these appeared in *many* responses while others appeared only once nor does it rank them according to significance. The vote (85% in favor of continuing) is a better indicator of the sentiment of the faculty than can be determined from this summary below. Also, keep in mind that several teams said “there are no disadvantages” and one team emphasized that some apparent disadvantages are advantages when viewed from a different perspective.

### **Advantages to continuing to call C of C “Liberal arts and sciences university”:**

- ◆ Philosophical:
  - ◇ we really do believe in this form of education (as votes from round 1 demonstrate)
  - ◇ sense of tradition / identity / history
  - ◇ momentum: we have used this in all recent foundational documents
  - ◇ communicates our emphasis on teaching to students, parents, and other stakeholders
  - ◇ many of us believe that this is the most accurate description of the College, and it would be misleading to avoid using the term for marketing purposes
- ◆ Practical:
  - ◇ the terminology provides a focus on values that improves all aspects of the College
  - ◇ attracts better students and faculty
  - ◇ distinctiveness within SC system
  - ◇ leads to better teaching and interaction between faculty of different disciplines
  - ◇ the liberal arts model works well for our students who have not yet selected a major
  - ◇ makes campus seem smaller than it is, more comfortable for students
  - ◇ ensures strong General Education requirements / these requirements would suffer if we change
  - ◇ alumni / trustees / faculty may be offended by the change if we stop

### **Disadvantages to continuing to call C of C “liberal arts and sciences university”:**

- ◇ prevents us from offering some large/vocational majors, even if they could be strong and popular
- ◇ general public has misconception that “educated in liberal arts” means “not sufficiently qualified to get a job”
- ◇ gives people the wrong impression of the College if this label makes them think we have fewer than 2000 students or weak programs in science, education and business.
- ◇ this discussion has revealed confusion over the meaning of the term “LAS university” among our faculty which is cause for concern(e.g. note contradictory remarks in response to #1 as to what it means about research)
- ◇ devalues the graduate school, school of education and school of business
- ◇ makes it difficult to recruit graduate students (especially foreign students)
- ◇ a few of us hold definitions of “LAS” that really exclude the College and they believe we are being dishonest when we use this term

Summary compiled by Alex Kasman based on responses to campus-wide discussion of College identity / March 2006

In compiling this summary of all responses recorded in the public discussion, I have attempted to be objective and comprehensive. However, it is not possible to avoid any personal bias or to completely characterize such a diverse collection of viewpoints in this brief document. You are therefore encouraged to please visit the websites at <http://math.cofc.edu/kasman/responses.php> where all of the original team responses to both rounds of discussion can still be found in unedited form. -ak