



SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

INDIANA UNIVERSITY
IUPUI

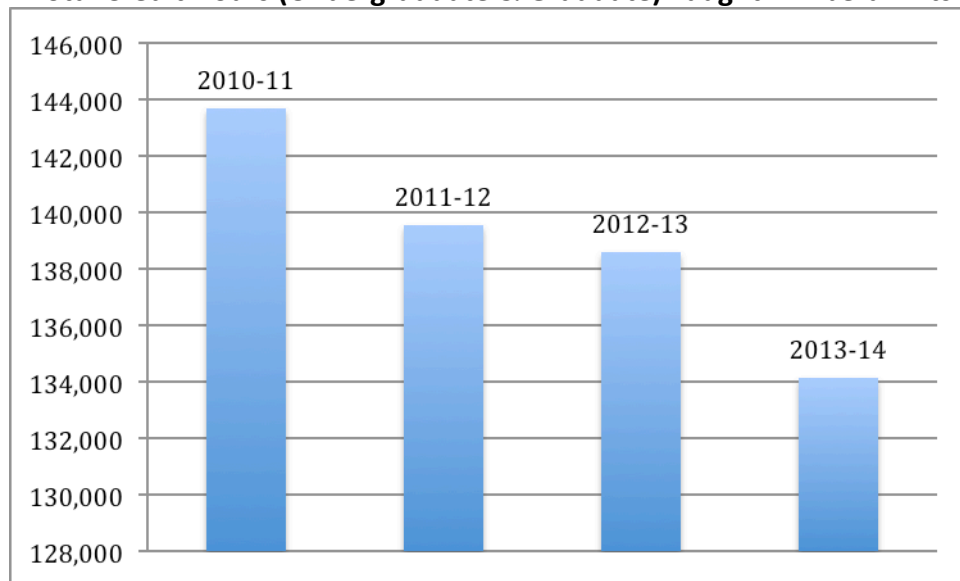
Analyzing the Decline in Liberal Arts Majors and Credit Hours

*Presented to Liberal Arts Faculty Assembly by the Resources and Planning Committee
March 6, 2015*

The Current Situation

As Dean William Blomquist explained in his 2014 State of the School presentation, our students fund the school. In FY 2014, tuition/fees accounted for about 77% of the school's revenue, with state appropriations accounting for only 20%. This means that any change in the total credit hours taught by the school can have a major impact on revenue. In the past four years, credit hours in the school have declined 7%, from 143,672 (in 2010-11) to 134,123 (in 2013-14).

Total Credit Hours (Undergraduate & Graduate) Taught in Liberal Arts

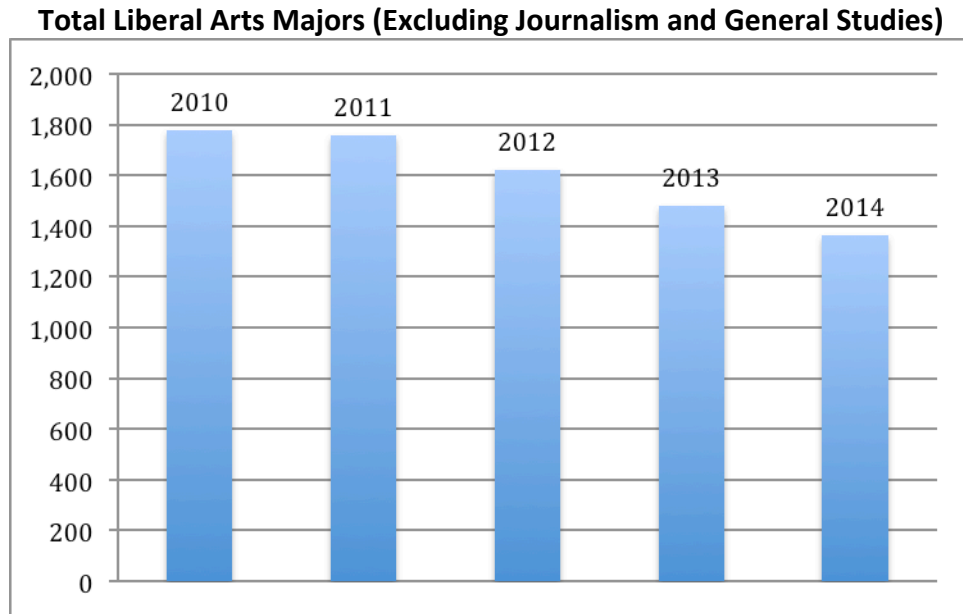


Source: IUPUI Budget Office

In the same four-year period, the total number of academic FTEs (faculty at all ranks) increased 7%, from 239 (in Fall 2010) to 256 (in Fall 2014). Since most of the school's budget goes toward salaries (94% in FY 2014), it was inevitable that a 7% decline in credit hours, coupled with a 7% increase in faculty FTEs, would impact the school's fiscal health. The school reported a \$742,090 budget shortfall in FY 2014, and a greater shortfall is anticipated for FY 2015.

Total credit hours have fluctuated over the years in SLA, so if the downturn were only in this area, it might be less worrisome. Unfortunately, in the past several years, we have also seen a decline in the number of Liberal Arts majors. Prior to 2012, the school had enjoyed a steady upward trend in majors: from Fall 2001 to Fall

2010, total majors increased 41%, from 1,260 to 1,779. But the number leveled off in 2011 and then began a significant decline in 2012. Between Fall 2010 and Fall 2014, total majors dropped 23%, to 1,364, as the chart below illustrates:



Source: IUPUI Office of Student Data, Analysis, and Evaluation

Though the recent addition of General Studies and Journalism to Liberal Arts brought the actual Fall 2014 total of majors up to 2,234, this does not mitigate the concern about the downward headcount trend in most Liberal Arts programs. Moreover, between Fall 2012 and Fall 2014, enrollment in General Studies also declined sharply—down 25%, from 889 to 667. (Journalism bucked the trend, experiencing a 17% increase in the same period, from 173 to 203.)

The decline in Liberal Arts majors is made more worrisome by the fact that our own students are the school's second largest source of credit hours (after students from University College). In 2013-14, Liberal Arts majors accounted for nearly 30% of the school's credit hours.

Reasons for the Decline

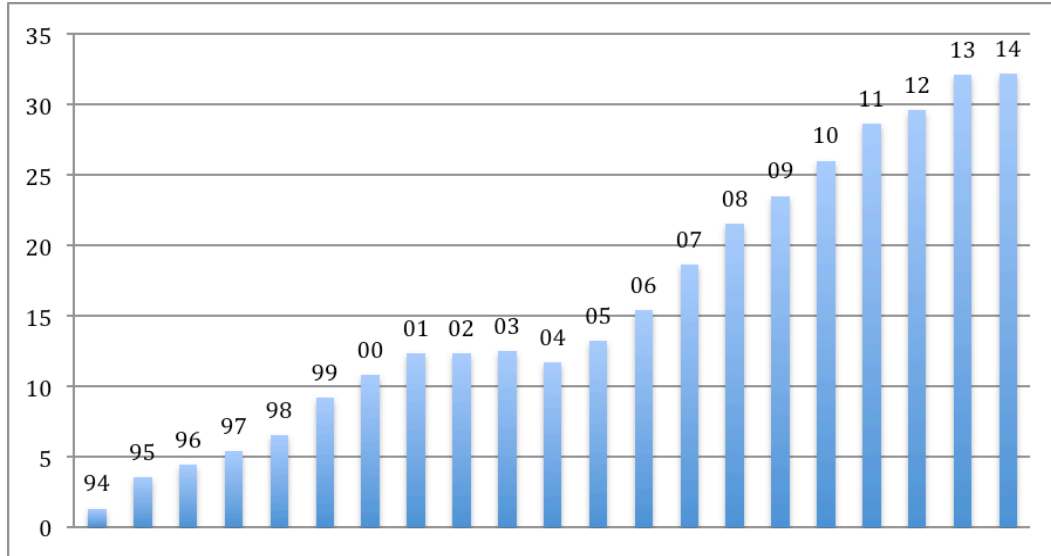
The Resources and Planning Committee has spent most of 2014-15 studying the decline in credit hours and majors and has identified at least six causes. More analysis is needed, but the following are the factors the committee has identified:

(1) Transfer credits, Advanced Placement, and dual credit courses.

To be admitted to IUPUI, transfer students must have at least 26 hours of transferrable credits. Of the 20,798 undergraduates enrolled at IUPUI in Fall 2014, fully a third (6,860, or 33%) were transfer students. Some of these students arrive having already fulfilled general education requirements, which cuts into credit hours they might have taken in SLA. Similarly, with the rise in IUPUI's admissions standards, students are now more likely to come in with Advanced Placement and dual credit courses (e.g., Ivy Tech courses that count toward both high school and college). As one measure of the dramatic increase in transfer credits, the chart below shows the average number of credits transferred in by Ivy Tech

students over the past two decades. (Ivy Tech is by far the largest provider of IUPUI's transfer students, accounting for roughly 30%.) Between 1994 and 2014, the average number of credit hours transferred by Ivy Tech students increased from 1.3 to 32.2. The increase has been particularly rapid over the past decade, nearly tripling since 2004. Many of these credits presumably are ones that students otherwise would have taken in Liberal Arts.

Average Number of Credit Hours Brought in by Ivy Tech Transfer Students, 1994-2014



Source: IUPUI Office of Student Data, Analysis, and Evaluation

- (2) **The state-mandated push toward four-year degree completion, a statewide general education core, and degree mapping.**

Since 2003, when the Indiana Commission for Higher Education first adopted performance-based funding for Indiana's universities, state appropriations have become progressively more linked to factors such as numbers of degrees awarded and on-time completion of degrees. As part of this push toward four-year degree completion, the legislature in 2012 required each state university to come up with a 30-credit-hour general education core that is fully transferrable within state campuses. Similarly, in 2013, the legislature required universities to devise degree maps for all undergraduate programs. Though all of these developments ostensibly benefit students, they can also act as a curricular straightjacket, reducing students' opportunities to explore new fields while in college. The transfer credit problem (see #1) only further reduces the opportunity for Liberal Arts to attract students who are still exploring possible majors.

- (3) **The state-mandated 120-credit-hour standard for bachelor's degrees.**

Prior to this change (enacted by the legislature in 2012), many of IUPUI's schools (including Liberal Arts) required more than 120 hours for graduation. The School of Nursing, for example, previously required 125 hours for the B.S.N.; 9 of these credits were for the Cultural Diversity (6) and Humanistic Appreciation (3) clusters that students often fulfilled with Liberal Arts courses. Under the new 120-credit-hour mandate, Nursing reduced the total number of humanities electives to 6 (3 Cultural Understanding and 3 Arts and Humanities under IUPUI's new general education core). Presumably other schools have made similar changes. The inclusion of many Liberal Arts courses in the IUPUI Gen Ed Core may partially offset some of these losses, but the net effect of state-mandated curricular changes is not yet clear.

(4) Enrollment declines in professional schools whose students (or prospective students) have traditionally taken Liberal Arts courses.

Several professional schools at IUPUI have seen a precipitous downturn in headcounts in recent years due to a variety of factors both national and local. For example, in the past decade, undergraduate enrollment in IUPUI's School of Education has declined about 35% (from 1,105 in Fall 2005 to 720 in Fall 2014). Meanwhile, law school enrollments nationwide are at their lowest level since 1982 (in Fall 2014, IUPUI's McKinney School was down about 15%, to 926 students, from its most recent peak of 1,084 in Fall 2011). Anecdotal evidence suggests that the enrollment decline in Education has hurt several Liberal Arts departments; the effect of the Law School's decline is less clear.

(5) The campus's (and IU's) marketing of IUPUI as a hub for life sciences and STEM.

The campus's web site identifies IUPUI as "Indiana's urban research and academic health sciences campus" <<http://www.iupui.edu/about/vision-mission.html>>. Indiana's high school students aren't getting the message that IUPUI is also a place for the liberal arts (and, indeed, that many faculty in the School of Liberal Arts are internationally recognized experts in their fields).

(6) The post-recession downturn in humanities majors nationwide.

Since the Great Recession of 2007-2009, there has been much debate about the state of the humanities in American higher education. The American Academy of Arts & Sciences reports that the number of B.A. degrees conferred in core humanities disciplines fell 2.4% from 2012 to 2013, the third decline in four years <<http://www.humanitiesindicators.org/content/indicatordoc.aspx?i=34>>. Though the number of humanities degrees awarded nationwide is still closer to the postwar high of the 1960s than to the low of the 1940s (when data sets begin), the statistical picture is complicated by the larger percentage of Americans attending college today than in the 1940s <http://www.aacu.org/aacu_news/aacunews13/august13/facts_figures>.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The Resources and Planning Committee recognizes that above analysis is incomplete and does not take into account variations by individual SLA departments. We welcome comments on this document, especially regarding factors we may have overlooked. More importantly, we welcome ideas on how the school should address the challenges outlined above. Some of the factors in the current enrollment downturn may be beyond our control. But others clearly call for action. Among the strategies we see for reversing the current decline are (1) more aggressive marketing of Liberal Arts courses and majors, (2) development of dual-degree or certificate programs that would bring in more students from other schools, and (3) systematic assessment of the effects of recent campus-level curricular changes with an eye toward revisions that may be needed.

If you wish to share your own ideas, please e-mail the committee chair, Peter Thuesen <pthuesen@iupui.edu>, or another member of the committee.

Respectfully submitted,

The 2014-15 Resources and Planning Committee: Bill Blomquist (SLA Administration); Rick Hanson (SLA Administration); Kate Miller (French); Robert Rebein (English); Charles Reyes (Communication Studies); Peter Thuesen (Religious Studies), *Chair*; Shah Towfighi (Economics); Elee Wood (Museum Studies).