LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

PROGRAM REVIEW

College: Liberal Arts

Department or Unit: General Studies, Main Campus Program

Academic Program: General Studies

Date: May, 2004
I. Relationship of the Academic Unit to the College and University Mission

Evaluate the program’s contributions to the College and to the University. Tie the program to the College and University missions.

The College of Liberal Arts seeks to prepare “students for business and professional careers as well as providing the basis for a richer and better life.” The goal of the College is that “students . . . become acquainted with many areas of intellectual interest.”

The General Studies program is designed to produce graduates who are clear communicators, critical thinkers, and competent problem solvers. The degree program seeks to provide students with a broad education with a liberal arts focus and to prepare students for careers and/or advanced studies.

Both the Unit of General Studies and the College of Liberal Arts are committed to the University’s priority of “the education of its students.” Therefore, the Unit and the College are supportive of the University’s commitment “to teaching and advising” and are also “dedicated to preparing students to achieve their goals.”

Full texts of the Unit of General Studies, College of Liberal Arts, and University Mission Statements may be found in Appendix A.

II. Relationship to Other Programs

1. Describe the links between this program and others within the department, the college, and the university. Include such issues as shared requirements, interdisciplinary activities, and so on.

As the General Studies program is not a discipline, these issues do not apply. Students pursuing the General Studies degree must follow the General Education Requirements, but no specific classes exist for the major.

2. Discuss the relationship between your unit and other units which may require courses from your unit—for example, for minors and for content courses for teacher training.

This unit does not offer specific courses.

3. Discuss the extent to which students from other disciplines take courses in your field to satisfy GER requirements and how you think these courses are suitable for that purpose.

N/A

III. Student Demographics
For each academic program you offer, describe the students in the program.

1. Describe the quality of their academic preparation for the degree.

Students must meet the admissions requirements set by Louisiana Tech University. This policy mandates that a student must have a composite ACT score of 22 or SAT score of 1010 or that the student have a high school GPA of 2.2 (on a 4.0 scale) or rank in the upper 35% of his or her graduation class.

Students pursuing the Bachelor of General Studies degree are required to take the following General Education courses for credit:

- 6 hours of English composition
- 6 hours of mathematics
- 3 hours of computer literacy
- 9 hours of natural sciences (a combination of physical and biological sciences)
- 3 hours of arts appreciation
- 12 hours of humanities (including English, history, and speech communication)
- 9 hours of social sciences

In addition, students in the program must also complete the following requirements:

- 36 hours of enrichment electives (in three different academic disciplines or areas)
- 24 hours of an interdisciplinary thematic concentration (either arts, humanities, social sciences, or natural sciences—with a combination of courses from at least two disciplines)

Each student’s progress is monitored by the Coordinator of the General Studies program and by the academic advisors for the program. In addition to the Coordinator of General Studies, approximately 12-15 faculty members serve as advisors for the program.

The Coordinator updates the grades for each student quarterly and communicates with all advisors frequently. Each advisor is responsible for monitoring the progress of his or her advisees and for addressing any concerns to the program Coordinator.

2. What is the student demand for the program?

Demand for the program remains steady. An average of 140 students was enrolled in the Bachelor of General Studies degree program over the last five fall quarters. See the five year enrollment and graduation figures in III.4 and in Appendix B for specific figures.

3. How is the information on students made available to faculty and used in planning the curriculum?

Faculty members may access student information in one of two ways: through the campus’ Mainframe system or through the University’s BOSS (Bulldog Online Student System) network.
Faculty members have access to the following information: Academic Program Summary, Academic Statistics (GPA information), Honors & Degrees Awarded, Graduation Information, Holds, Housing, Information Release Restrictions, Matriculation History, Name Search, Next-of-Kin, Other Institutions Attended, Personal Data, Phone Number, Previous Name, Previous SID, Registration Audit Trail, Residency Status, Schedule of Classes, Sex, Transcript Display, Transfer Credit Summary, Veterans Administration Information, Withdrawal from Courses, and Withdrawals from University.

BOSS screens offer the following course information: Class Rosters, Course Inventory Maintenance, Course Inventory Scan (Courses Offered), Course Sections Scan (Sections Offered/Course), Days/Times Offered, Enrollment Limits, Enrollment Statistics, Registration Controls, Schedule Maintenance, Section Subtitles, Time/Days Offered.

4. Provide five-year enrollment and graduation figures.

Enrollment figures have remained fairly steady over the last five years. The following figures represent Fall quarter enrollment in the Bachelor of General Studies program from 1999-2003: 145, 154, 138, 121, 141.

The number of degrees conferred has varied over the last five years, but approximately 34-45% of the number of students enrolled each year earns the degree. The following figures represent annual graduation rates in the Bachelor of General Studies program from 1999-2003: 64, 70, 55, 45, 48.

See Appendix B.

IV. Program Goals and Curriculum

1. List the goals, expectations, or desired outcomes of the program, telling what students are expected to know and what skills they are expected to demonstrate.

The Bachelor of General Studies degree is unique in that it offers a fair amount of flexibility for the students enrolled. While each student must fulfill the General Education Requirements, students are allowed to choose from among four possible Interdisciplinary Thematic Concentrations and from several possibilities for the three enrichment areas. Therefore, every student will not have the same course load; expectations vary with the choices the students make about their curricula.

Nonetheless, the degree is designed to offer a broad-based Liberal Arts education. Students pursuing the Bachelor of General Studies degree should demonstrate critical thinking skills, communication skills, and problem-solving skills.

2. Describe how the above goals are communicated to faculty and students. Indicate how faculty are involved in the development of these outcomes and how these outcomes are communicated to faculty and students through courses, presentations, organizations, etc. If external stakeholders are involved in the development process, please describe.
As the General Studies program is a unit within the College of Liberal Arts, it does not have a faculty per se. Students pursue coursework with faculty from a number of disciplines. These faculty members should be familiar with the University Mission Statement and the Expected Outcomes for All Tech Graduates. They should communicate their expectations and the course requirements in their syllabi (which should be provided to students at the first class meeting).

3. For each academic program you offer, explain how the curriculum reflects program goals. In your description, focus on the structure of the curriculum, which may include the following items:

   Explain how the major is organized: Are there core courses that all majors take? Does the curriculum have options within it?

The General Studies program is a unit and not a specific discipline. Therefore, no “General Studies” courses exist. Students pursuing the degree take courses from many academic disciplines. Beyond the General Education Requirements, no two students are required to take exactly the same classes in the Enrichment Areas or in the Interdisciplinary Thematic Concentration.

See Appendix C for a curriculum guide.

   Explain how major-area courses at various levels—freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior—are designated to build on each other and how the content and difficulty of the courses differs at the four levels. If there are prerequisites for courses, explain the rationale for those prerequisites.

Once again, as choices in the Enrichment Areas and in the Interdisciplinary Thematic Concentration vary, so do the prerequisites. For instance, a student pursuing a Thematic Concentration in Social Sciences must take Sociology 201 before pursuing 300- and 400-level sociology courses and must take Psychology 102 and 202 before pursuing most upper-level psychology classes. Yet, because of the individualized nature of the degree, it is impossible to discuss prerequisites in a specific way; generally, students must take lower-level courses in order to prepare them for the 300/400-level courses. Every student pursuing the degree must earn at least 15 hours of 400-level coursework and at least 30 hours of 300-level courses, so it is expected that students will draw on the knowledge from their 100- and 200-level courses in order to succeed at the higher levels.

   Explain the extent to which students in the program share learning experiences in their major fields. Explain how the program is designed to allow or enable the students to learn together.

Since students pursuing the General Studies degree follow individualized curricula, they do not share formal learning experiences in the major. Collaborative ventures may take place in specific disciplines, however.
Explain which courses in the major field are designed specifically to address writing skills and knowledge of technology.

Students are required to take English 100 or 101 and English 102; these are composition courses. In addition, students must take a computer literacy course. These courses are part of the General Education Requirements.

*Does the curriculum have a culminating experience such as a capstone course, comprehensive exam, research project, or dissertation?*

Because of the nature of the degree, students do not pursue a capstone course, a comprehensive exam, a research project, or a dissertation. The General Studies degree represents a unit of the College of Liberal Arts and not an academic discipline.

V. Documentation

1. *Describe the process used to regularly monitor and assess the quality of the program relative to the overall goals of the program and the learning outcomes. Identify the stakeholders and how and when they are consulted.*

The Coordinator of General Studies and/or the academic advisors for the program monitor student progress and meet with students once per quarter. Graduating seniors are asked to complete a survey from the College of Liberal Arts and one specifically for the General Studies degree program.

See Appendix D for survey information.

2. *Present evidence of the extent to which the curriculum/program/major field goals are being met. List the sources of evidence, both quantitative and qualitative. (See suggested measures.)*

Of the students who earned the Bachelor of General Studies degree in the academic year 2002-2003, 84.6% earned twenty-four hours (or more) in courses in the Liberal Arts. These students pursued courses from a number of disciplines; the average was four disciplines.

Of the 2002-2003 graduates, the average Grade Point Average in the Interdisciplinary Thematic Concentration was 2.779, and 82% of the graduates earned a GPA of 2.6 or higher in the ITC. (The graduation requirement is 2.0 overall and 2.5 in the ITC.)

Of the graduates completing the College of Liberal Arts survey in 2002-2003, 75% rated the availability of advisors as “excellent” (50%) or “very good” (25%). In addition, 75% rated the value of information provided by their advisors as “excellent” (42.5%) or “very good” (32.5%).
Of the graduates completing the General Studies program survey, 100% rated their advisors’ knowledge as “excellent” (16.66%) or “very good” (83.33%). Of these students, 83.33% ranked their advisors’ availability to students as “excellent” (33.33%) or “very good” (50%). These students also ranked their advisors based on their (the advisors) interest in advisees: 83.33% believed their advisors were interested in the advisees’ academic pursuits and career goals (16.66% marked “excellent” and 66.66% marked “very good”).

On the College of Liberal Arts survey, students were asked how well the program prepared them for additional (graduate) studies. 67.5% felt that their preparation was “excellent” (12.5%) or “very good” (55%). The graduates were also asked to rate their preparation for careers; again 67.5% rated this preparation as “excellent” (17.5%) or “very good” (50%). When asked how well the program prepared them for “real-life” experiences, 82.5% responded “excellent” (30%) or “very good” (52.5%).

On the General Studies program survey, 100% of the respondents claimed that the program prepared them for future employment: 16.66% gave an “excellent” rating, while 83.33% gave a “very good” rating. Of these survey participants, 66.66% wrote that the program was “very good” at preparing them for “real-life” experiences.

3. Critically analyze/review information and data collected about the curriculum. Identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for this curriculum. Report strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities identified.

Students enrolled in the program seem satisfied with the teaching, advising, skills, and preparation they are receiving, based on the surveys completed by graduating seniors.

Approximately 34-45% of the number of students enrolled in the Fall quarters over the past five years graduate each year.

While the results of the surveys are encouraging, certainly room for improvement exists. Some goals identified for the program in assessments for Southern Association of Colleges and Schools reports include the following: increasing the percentage of students earning at least a 2.5 GPA in their Interdisciplinary Thematic Concentrations and at least a 2.25 GPA in their upper-level courses, increasing the satisfaction with advising and teaching, and maintaining more stability (retention issues) in the program.

As the General Studies program is not an academic unit, many of the goals must be addressed through advising. Therefore, the Coordinator of General Studies will continue to communicate with the academic advisors for the program on a regular basis.

VI. Prior Assessment and Development of the Program

1. Describe how assessment results have been used in the recent past to improve the program goals, learning outcomes, curriculum, faculty, or resources.
This Program Review is the first one completed by the current Coordinator of General Studies. Nevertheless, the program has been involved in SACS assessments, so those reviews have helped to identify strengths, weaknesses, and goals for the program.

Advisors have attended University-level as well as unit-specific training sessions.

In addition, these results have lead to a new practice of recognizing two outstanding General Studies majors in the Spring quarter (a practice instituted in 2003 and continued in 2004) during the College of Liberal Arts annual luncheon.

2. **Report the implications of the findings, particularly as they relate to needed changes in the curriculum.**

The SACS assessments enable the program to review student satisfaction and academic success annually. Any needed changes have resulted in large part because of those assessments and graduating seniors’ surveys.

3. **Describe how you will use the information you have collected and analyzed, outlining changes to be made based on the evidence collected; such changes might include developing new courses, deleting courses, adding special topics, etc.**

This section does not apply, as the unit does not offer courses.

4. **If your academic unit teaches courses used to satisfy the General Education Requirements at Louisiana Tech University, describe in adequate detail the measures your unit and/or the University are using to evaluate the skills and knowledge added by these courses.**

N/A

**VII. Faculty**

1. **List the major subject subdivisions in your program, listing the faculty who teach in those areas.**

This section does not apply to the General Studies program.

2. **Describe the mechanisms used in your unit to ensure that each faculty member is “providing quality instruction for all classes assigned”** (Faculty and Staff Handbook).

N/A
VIII. Faculty/Student Contact

1. Describe any activities which promote student-faculty interaction, such as organizations, formal meetings, and informal counseling and other contacts.

The General Studies unit does not have a faculty. Rather, faculty members from various disciplines serve as academic advisors for the program (and meet with their advisees quarterly).

Students majoring in General Studies have opportunities to interact with Liberal Arts faculty during the Undergraduate Research Symposium (for student presentations), the Liberal Arts Research Symposium (for faculty presentations), and in clubs or societies sponsored by the different academic disciplines.

2. If faculty serve as advisors, describe how faculty are trained to be advisors in the program. If not, describe how advising occurs in the unit.

Academic advisors must be familiar with the Louisiana Tech Advising Handbook offered by the University Division of Enrollment Management. Advisors receive regular updates on policies and procedures from the Registrar’s Office, the Dean’s Office, and the Coordinator of General Studies’ Office.

The Registrar’s Office has offered workshops to familiarize faculty with the BOSS system for registration. In addition, the Coordinator of General Studies conducts a training session each fall for faculty members appointed to serve as academic advisors for the program.

Students meet with their assigned advisors regularly. In addition, they may contact the Coordinator of the General Studies program for specific questions. Personnel in the Dean’s Office may also assist students, when needed.

IX. Facilities and Support

1. Identify the facilities (classroom, laboratory, studio) and equipment available to the program.

Once again, this section does not apply to General Studies.

2. Report all financial support for the program, including operating funds, travel funds, equipment funds, support from student fees, funds for assistantships and fellowships, funds for student workers, and grant/gift income. Provide a three-year summary and a projection for the coming year.

This program exists as a unit of the College of Liberal Arts. The Coordinator of the program works with the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts. All funding issues are handled through the Dean’s Office and not through the unit.
X. Program Strengths and Weaknesses

Considering all of the above sections on students, program goals and organization, and faculty expertise, assess the program strengths and weaknesses.

1. Identify areas of particular strength in program make-up, students, and faculty. Refer to information documented in this report.

The program offers a broad-based Liberal Arts education. Students pursuing the Bachelor of General Studies are able to take courses from a variety of academic disciplines.

Students report satisfaction with the program (their advisors and their curricula) and with their preparation for graduate studies, employment, and/or “real-life” experiences.

Faculty advisors have frequent contact with their advisees.

2. Identify areas that need improvement, again with specific reference to information given/documentated in this report.

Since the unit does not function as a typical academic area, goals relating to faculty, courses, and/or facilities do not apply.

Certainly, the unit may strive for higher student satisfaction ratings in graduating seniors’ surveys and for open lines of communication between students, advisors, and the Coordinator.

XI. Future Actions to Improve the Program

Project any contemplated changes over the next two years to improve the program. Any changes should be those which can be achieved by the present or realistically-projected additional resources; any improvement dependent on additional resources should have those resources fully explained. Such resources might include increased enrollment, realistic changes in faculty, expanded budgets, higher admissions standards, university recruiting changes, and grants or other outside funding that might be received.

This section should be grounded on the analysis in the earlier sections of this document.

As part of the SACS assessments, one goal of the program is to raise the percentage of students who report satisfaction with the degree plan, with advising, and with preparation for future employment and/or education.
Another goal is to raise the GPA in the Interdisciplinary Thematic Concentration. Advisors have been trained to impress upon their advisees the importance of performing well in courses related to their concentration. Ideally, 70% or more students should maintain a GPA of 2.6 or greater in the ITC (a GPA greater than the minimum curriculum requirement).

The Coordinator of General Studies will continue to offer annual training sessions for advisors and will continue to communicate with all General Studies academic advisors frequently through informal meetings, memos, and E-mail.

The Coordinator of General Studies will work with the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and with the Director of Admissions to assist students with understanding the goals and requirements of the degree program.

APPENDIX A

Mission Statements

The Mission of the Unit of General Studies

The Bachelor of General Studies program is designed to produce graduates who are clear communicators, critical thinkers, and competent problem solvers.
The program seeks to provide students with a broad education with a Liberal Arts focus and to provide students for careers and/or advanced studies.

The Mission of the College of Liberal Arts

The College of Liberal Arts is committed to the University’s dedication “to quality in teaching, in research and creative activity, and in public service.” First and foremost, the College of Liberal Arts seeks to support the mission of Louisiana Tech University in maintaining “a faculty committed to teaching and advising, a student-oriented faculty dedicated to preparing students to achieve their goals in a rapidly changing economic and civic environment . . . a faculty that will through both theoretical and applied research and creative activities, contribute to the development of new knowledge, new art, and new technology.”

The Mission of Louisiana Tech University

Louisiana Tech University is a comprehensive public university committed to quality in teaching, in research and creative activity, and in public service. A selective admissions university, it offers a broad range of fully accredited undergraduate degrees to qualified students in Louisiana, as well as from the region, the nation, and foreign countries. Integral to the purpose of the University is its expanding commitment to graduate-level education in its areas of strength; Louisiana Tech offers master’s degrees in a variety of areas and doctoral programs in areas of specific expertise.

Louisiana Tech maintains, as its highest priority, the education of its students. To that end, it recruits a faculty committed to teaching and advising, a student-oriented faculty dedicated to preparing students to achieve their goals in a rapidly changing economic and civic environment. The University provides, in a challenging, yet safe and supportive environment, extra-curricular and athletic programs that foster and enrich the development of its students. In addition, it provides opportunities for interaction between students and the larger business and civic community. The University encourages its students to regard learning as a lifelong process.

Recognizing that research and service are fundamental to its mission, Louisiana Tech recruits and retains a faculty who see research and teaching as intertwined and complementary and who, through both theoretical and applied research and creative activities, contribute to the development of new knowledge, new art, and new technology.

Louisiana Tech University understands its community and civic obligations. Through on-campus learning, through its off-campus presence, through outreach programs and continuing education, the University will continue to enhance the quality of life and the economic development of the region, state, and nation.
As a university with a rich engineering heritage, Louisiana Tech has a special responsibility to integrate advanced technology into teaching and learning. At Tech, advanced technology supports quality teaching, research, administration, and service. The University is committed to providing its students with the advanced technological skills that will help to ensure their success both in the internal environment of the University and in the wider surrounding community.

APPENDIX B

Enrollment and Graduation Figures for the Main Campus Bachelor of General Studies Program for the Five-Year Period of 1999-2003

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<thead>
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<th>DATE</th>
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APPENDIX C

Curriculum Guide
Bachelor of General Studies Degree, Main Campus

GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

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<th>Course</th>
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<td>3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math 100 or 101</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math 125</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer literacy (MCS 246, CIS 110, etc.)</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural sciences (must include both physical and biological sciences with at least six</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Fall, 2002 121
Fall, 2003 141
hours from a two-quarter sequence) 9 hours
Arts appreciation (ART 290, HPE 280, SPTH 290, or MUGN 290) 3 hours
History (101, 102, 201, or 202) 3 hours
English 201 or 202 3 hours
Speech 377 3 hours
Humanities elective (English, history, philosophy, or 200-level or above foreign language) 3 hours
Social sciences (a minimum of two disciplines with courses available from sociology, psychology, political science, geography, economics, and anthropology) 9 hours

INTERDISCIPLINARY THEMATIC CONCENTRATION
Humanities, arts, social sciences, or natural sciences*
(Students must take a minimum of six hours and a maximum of twelve hours in any particular discipline.) 24 hours

ENRICHMENT AREAS**
Enrichment block #1 12 hours
Enrichment block #2 12 hours
Enrichment block #3 12 hours

APPROVED ELECTIVES 15 hours

ADDITIONAL NOTES
Students are required to complete 45 hours of course work at the 300- and 400-level.
Minimum GPA requirements are as follows: 2.5 in ITC, 2.25 in upper level courses, 2.0 overall.
No more than 24 hours of any discipline will receive credit.
No more than 27 hours offered by the College of Administration and Business can be counted for graduation credit.
Practicum courses do not apply for graduation credit.
No more than two hours of HPE or music activity courses will receive credit.
Humanities include English, history, foreign language, philosophy, speech communication, and linguistics.
Arts include architecture, art, music (history and/or theory), and theatre (history, drama writing).
Social sciences include economics, geography, political science, psychology, sociology, and anthropology.
Natural sciences include biological science, chemistry, geology, physics, and math.

*Students who choose a concentration in natural sciences must choose at least two enrichment areas in disciplines from the College of Liberal Arts.
**The Coordinator of General Studies must approve the Enrichment Blocks. (Almost any discipline that can be an academic minor can be an enrichment area, but choices are subject to Coordinator’s approval.)

APPENDIX D

Sample Surveys for the College of Liberal Arts and the Unit of General Studies

Note: Both surveys allow students to respond anonymously.

*College of Liberal Arts  
Assessment of Bachelor’s Degree Program

Rating scale: 1=Excellent, 2=Very good, 3=Average, 4=Below Average, 5=Poor, 6=Don’t know
Advising:
1. _____ Availability of your advisor
2. _____ Value of information provided by your advisor

Teaching:
3. _____ Teachers’ knowledge of their subject matter
4. _____ Appropriate exams and other forms of evaluation
5. _____ Teachers’ attitudes toward students (fair, open to inquiry and debate, etc.)
6. _____ Accessibility of teachers for consultation outside of class

Curriculum:
7. _____ Content and quality of courses in your major field
8. _____ Variety of courses in your major field
9. _____ Availability of courses and sufficient sections of courses in your major field
10. _____ Appropriate class size in major field courses

Professional Preparation and Life Skills:
11. _____ How would you rate the undergraduate education you received at Tech in preparing you for a graduate or professional program?
12. _____ How would you rate the undergraduate education you received at Tech in preparing you for a future occupation?
13. _____ Regardless of its effect on your future occupation, how would you rate the undergraduate education you received at Tech in teaching you independence, self-discipline, how to learn, critical thinking, moral judgment, and other life skills?

General Studies Program, Main Campus
Assessment of the Program

Rating system: 1=Excellent, 2=Very good, 3=Average, 4=Below Average, 5=Poor

1. Did you find the curriculum to be broad and flexible? for example, were you able to take courses from many Areas of interest? 1 2 3 4 5

2. Did you find the curriculum guide to be helpful? 1 2 3 4 5

3. Was your advisor knowledgeable about degree requirements, and/or was he or she
willing to contact the program coordinator or the dean when questions arose? 1 2 3 4 5

4. Was your advisor available during advising/pre-registration periods? 1 2 3 4 5

5. Did you find that your advisor took a personal interest in your degree plan? 1 2 3 4 5

6. How well do you think the General Studies degree will benefit you in seeking employment? 1 2 3 4 5

7. How well do you think your studies have prepared you for “real-life” experiences? 1 2 3 4 5

In the space remaining, please make written comments.
What did you find particularly appealing about the General Studies degree?

What areas of the program could be improved?

What is your future plan? (Do you plan to pursue additional educational opportunities? Will you begin a career?)