

## Preliminary Findings on Major Classification Project – Jordan C. Hanson (EPC)

### Abstract

One goal of the institutional research undertaken by the Educational Policies Committee (EPC) is to understand the implications of shifting Whittier College to a course system. Decisions about courses within majors has led to a rich set of course selections, with multiple versions within departments. Terms that describe the versions include *concentration*, *emphasis*, *option*, *track*, and *organizational level*. Given the variety of terminology, we seek a way to standardize and clarify these terms for our students. In addition, we hope to facilitate decision-making as departments develop plans for majors under a course system. We performed an initial study, capturing data corresponding to 27 major programs from public-facing website content. We have selected the neutral term *partitions* for the number of options, tracks, emphases, concentrations, and organizational levels for each program. The data includes 7 physical science programs, 10 social science programs, and 10 humanities programs. The average number of partitions per major is  $2.2 \pm 1.3$ . The average number of partitions per major in the physical sciences, social sciences, and humanities majors is  $3.3 \pm 1.0$ ,  $1.8 \pm 1.3$ , and  $1.9 \pm 1.2$ , respectively.

### The Data – A First Pass

The data collected in this initial pass is presented in Table 1. The data was gathered from the Whittier College Academics portion of [www.whittier.edu](http://www.whittier.edu). Examples of notable omissions are the *minors* within the programs, such as *Africana Studies*, or Master's Degree Programs as in Education and Child Development.

Program	Partitions	Division
Anthropology	1	Social Science
Art and Visual Studies	4	Humanities
Biology	3	Physical Science
Business Administration	5	Social Science
Chemistry	3	Physical Science
Child Dev. and Education*	1	Social Science
Chinese	2	Humanities
Economics	3	Social Science
Engineering 3-2 Program	5	Physical Science
English	2	Humanities
Environmental Science	2	Physical Science
French	1	Humanities
Global and Cultural Studies	4	Humanities
History	1	Humanities
Integrated Computer Science	3	Physical Sciences
Kinesiology	2	Social Science
Mathematics	4	Physical Sciences
Music	1	Humanities
Philosophy	2	Humanities
Physics	3	Physical Science
Political Science	2	Social Science
Psychological Sciences	1	Social Science
Religious Studies	1	Humanities
Social Work	1	Social Science
Sociology	1	Social Science
Spanish	1	Humanities
Theater and Communication	1	Humanities

**Table 1.** A first-pass data sample of Whittier College program partitions. \*Does not include Master's Programs.

## The Data – Second Pass using DegreeWorks

The data collected in this second pass is presented in Table 2. The data was gathered from the Whittier College instance of DegreeWorks. Examples of notable omissions are the *minors* within the programs, such as *Africana Studies*, or Master's Degree Programs as in Education and Child Development. The data sometimes differ from Table 1 because an option or concentration is not considered a separate entity in DegreeWorks. One example is our Biology program, which has one partition in DegreeWorks, but three *organizational levels* listed on [www.whittier.edu](http://www.whittier.edu). Using the data from Table 2, the average number of partitions per major is  $2.0 \pm 1.3$ . Broken into humanities, social sciences, and physical sciences, the results are  $1.9 \pm 1.1$ ,  $2.0 \pm 1.3$ , and  $2.4 \pm 1.5$ , respectively.

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Anthropology	1	Social Science
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Child Dev. and Education*	2	Social Science
Chinese	1	Humanities
Economics	3	Social Science
Engineering 3-2 Program	5	Physical Science
English	2	Humanities
Environmental Science	1	Physical Science
Environmental Studies	1	Social Science
French	1	Humanities
Global and Cultural Studies	4	Humanities
History	1	Humanities
Integrated Computer Science	3	Physical Sciences
Kinesiology	3	Social Science
Mathematics	3	Physical Sciences
Music	2	Humanities
Philosophy	2	Humanities
Physics	1	Physical Science
Political Science	2	Social Science
Psychological Sciences	1	Social Science
Religious Studies	1	Humanities
Social Work	1	Social Science
Sociology	1	Social Science
Spanish	1	Humanities
Theater and Communication	2	Humanities

Table 2. Whittier College program partitions, according to DegreeWorks. \*Does not include Master's level courses.