

Educational Policy Committee (EPC)
September 8, 2010

Present: Professors Siouxsie Easter, CJ Koepp, Ernie Olson; Student Representative Alex Schloop '12; Provost Leslie Miller-Bernal (chair); and Associate Provost Cindy Speaker

The meeting began at 9:30 a.m.

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first EPC meeting of the year. Introductions were made as new members were present. The Chair shared that the faculty secretary was looking for a replacement for the NMS representative given the recent resignation of Professor Godert. The Wednesday 9:30 meeting time may need to be changed if the new member is unable to meet at that time.

2. Minutes Taker Assignments

Those present volunteered for minute-taking responsibilities. Schedule is as follows:

9/8	Cindy
9/15	Ernie
9/22	Siouxsie
9/29	Leslie
10/6	CJ
10/13	Alex
10/20	(new NMS rep)
10/27	Cindy
11/3	Ernie
11/10	Siouxsie
11/17	Leslie
12/1	CJ
12/8	Alex

Suggestion was made that as the new member will only have one minute-taking assignment of a regular meeting that individual take the notes at an open meeting if the Committee holds one.

3. Discussion of the Committee's Work

The Chair expressed her hope that the Committee gets a proposal for a revised general education curriculum to the faculty this year. Recognizing the competing desires for something visionary and for something practical, an appropriate strategy may be to try for something more modest now that can be reviewed later. A number of reports exist from prior subcommittees of the Committee in which good work has been outlined regarding changes to current requirements. The Committee has been stuck on revising the distribution requirements. Conversations regarding them have included discussion of changes to the academic calendar and the incorporation of interdisciplinary courses. There has also been some discussion about capstone experiences. Perhaps in the spring, the Committee could review capstone experiences and consider the variability of them (including the comps) and discuss whether the capstone should be broader than the major. One question to address is that given the increase in the student body is the current model feasible?

4. Review of Notes from Day for Faculty

In advance of the meeting, the Chair distributed via e-mail, the notes compiled during the reporting out period of Day for Faculty as well as her powerpoint presentation.

Discussion included:

- FYE/SYE courses as a means of opportunity for providing integration for courses students take in conjunction with one another.
- Importance of encouraging a campus mindset that considers how a student's courseload fits together. The importance of advising here in articulating the connections between courses.
- Use of staff and residence life as a means of achieving learning objectives
- Incorporating body and movement knowledge as an important domain. How do the proposed changes for the PE requirement fit with this?
- Incorporating knowledge of beyond the west as a learning objective seems important given the world in which students are living. Interculturalism may be too broad of a term.
- The use of student portfolios to document students achieving successfully higher levels. Reference to Alverno's approach to assessment.
- How to make the educational experience more personal and individual while at the same time having it be more efficient from a faculty perspective.
- Considering where introductory courses fit – in the major, general ed curriculum – and how they should be assessed.
- General education should continue throughout all four years.
- What are the appropriate experiences for students and what are the successful levels they should be operating at?
- What is really necessary for us to have as part of our general education curriculum? Do we need gen ed? (There are Middle States requirements that do need to be met.) Do we need majors? What will attract students? (These days it seems to be career-related issues.) What will help Wells survive? What do students graduating high school today know?
- The need for a modified general education curriculum and modified majors to work with the students we have.
- Issue of the number of faculty.
- The ideal is to put resources into growth areas; redeploy resources.
- Review of the modern language recommendation that came from a previous subcommittee.
- The idea of an interdisciplinary minor that could be common for all students. Perhaps it would be easier than pairing courses. But current minors have difficulties at times because of course sequences. Could still have regular minors as well.
- Sequence of WLLS courses – the value of having students come back together. Perhaps develop WLLS courses for each year.
- Concerns about diluting the majors. Do we have too many courses required in the majors? How to achieve both depth and breadth in an undergraduate curriculum. Loyalty to a particular model of a major field restricts what can be done.
- Politics of some majors being cut while others are expanding given what students want.
- General education, WLLS 101, and capstone courses are huge investments and are often labor intensive for faculty. Workload issues for faculty increasing as the number of first-year students increase. Variability of workload exists given some majors have few students.
- What is it we are going to emphasize?

The Chair noted that she does not want to start all over again. We do have the subcommittee reports from the past two years. We have not considered the lab science requirement yet which has been sacrosanct at Wells. Question was raised as to why lab science is any different than the other areas in the distribution requirements. Scientific literacy which is important can be approached from different perspectives. Recognition of the concerns or fears some faculty would have if they do not teach a course that is part of the general education curriculum.

How do we excite faculty? How to inject enthusiasm in people? How do we create an intellectual atmosphere across campus?

What would faculty answer if they were asked what is essential for students to know? (Example from a committee member – skills to critically analyze information.) What are students' expectations about what they will graduate with? (Example from a committee member – an ability to be articulate and express ideas.) Brief discussion of the Committee's past discussions regarding student presentation ability.

What is or should be a common Wells' education experience?

5. Next Steps

Committee members should reread the reports of the various subcommittees available on The Globe (on EPC's page on the Faculty & Staff tab) in preparation for next week's meeting. Given where we are today as an institution, would the Committee still support the recommendations from these reports?

The meeting adjourned at 10:51 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy Speaker, Associate Provost for Academic and Student Life