

EPC Minutes, October 7, 2009

Present: Professors Amy Godert , CJ Koepp, Ted Lossowski, Susan Tabrizi; Student Representative Kelley O'Keefe '10; Associate Dean Cindy Speaker, Dean Leslie Miller-Bernal

The meeting began at 9:35am.

1. Minutes of September 30, 2009 were approved with minor corrections.

2. Discussion of progress of subcommittees:

a. Amy Godert, Experiential learning—This subcommittee is finding it challenging to make outcomes, means of assessment, and learning objectives fit all types of experiential learning (OCS, student teaching, internships). Amy will be meeting with Education faculty. One concern is to make internship requirements consistent across disciplines, a problem that Kelley has experienced as a student—even faculty within one discipline may have very different requirements for internships.

EPC members encouraged Amy not to worry too much about form of her subcommittee report, due on October 21. EPC will refine it and consider how it ties back to Strategic Planning, especially the Academic Vibrancy focus. We hope we can see data on the number of internships done for 4, 3, 2, and 1 credit to see if what “counts” as experiential learning is compromised by allowing 1-credit internships to fulfill one of the two experiential learning activities all students must have for graduation (instead of counting it as “less” than 3-credit internships, for example).

Amy reported that faculty on her subcommittee are concerned about the effects that increasing enrollment will have on our experiential learning requirement.

b. Ted Lossowski, Distribution Across Divisions—This subcommittee has had some difficulty making progress. Ted asked the members to compare their Division's course offerings with the College's 5 institutional goals. Not all courses meet all of the institutional goals, of course, but we on EPC discussed how this isn't necessary, how we're really asking how to ensure that before graduation, students have had experiences that match our institutional goals. We noted that exposure doesn't guarantee true learning and how we need to consider various assessment methods, with the U CONN providing a good model (Cindy commented that there are many other references to good models on the assessment webpage).

We discussed how to address our institutional and academic goals of students developing understanding of diversity and scholarship about women and whether we'd want a new goal related to sustainability. Bucknell has a requirement of social diversity and a course on the natural world (approximately equivalent to Wells' developing focus on sustainability) that we might want to look at. As is true at Elmira College as well, courses that fulfill such requirements are kept track of through a Course Management System.

Currently at Wells our course proposal form does ask whether a proposed course meets any of the academic program goals.

To try to further this subcommittee's reflections on why we have distribution requirements, we suggested that members be asked what they would say to students if students asked why they have to take courses from the different divisions. We all need to keep focusing on what we expect a liberally educated person in the 21st century to know.

Our discussion ranged beyond this subcommittee's purview and considered the desirability of considering "general education" throughout students' four years (not only in the first two years of undergraduate study.) It was pointed out that if we stress general education throughout four years, we need to change statements such as that found on page 29 of our current Catalog that indicate the desirability of students' completing general education requirements in the first two years. We came back to an idea discussed last year—capstone courses that span divisions. This inevitably led to an expression of concerns about staffing since our major fields already feel thinly staffed. Ideally major fields need to be reconfigured, stressing what's appropriate for undergraduates to know (most of whom will not go on to graduate study in a particular major field), at the same time we re-fashion general education.

Other issues mentioned included:

- How we can consider a multi-disciplinary senior capstone course given that faculty also supervise senior theses/projects, especially as student numbers increase?
- We need to keep in mind the relationship between general education and the "academic vibrancy" focus of our strategic planning effort. Trustees are looking for new developments at Wells that will attract funding.
- Currently having all students do presentations on their senior projects is creating too much work for everyone and too many events in the latter part of spring semester. Should such projects be limited to honors students? On the other hand, a hallmark of Wells is that all students do senior projects. We might want to consider holding a one day symposium in which all students in a division present their work in some form (for a total of 4 events) or use a model where students apply to present at a research symposium day (in other words, all seniors might do projects but only some present).

Cindy Speaker and Susan Tabrizi will attend at least part of the next meeting of the subcommittee on distribution requirements (on Wednesday at 12:30) in order to help Ted and CJ represent EPC's goals and expectations.

c) Susan Tabrizi, Information Literacy and Oral Communication.

This subcommittee is making good progress and has already written two of five learning objectives and outcomes. They hope to have a preliminary report to EPC by the 28th. Susan noted that the two issues (information literacy and oral communication) are not

related. We talked about whether a public speaking course would be desirable or whether some of the objectives of oral communication might be met in part through WLLS 101. From a student perspective, it is desirable to have instruction on how to make an effective presentation and for this to occur before the senior year and presentation on senior projects.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Miller-Bernal