

Educational Policy Committee
October 20, 2010

Present: Professors Easter, Koepp, Olson, and Stiadle, Student Representative A. Schloop, Provost Miller-Bernal, and Associate Provost Speaker

The meeting came to order at approximately 9:30am and the minutes of the October 13 meeting were unanimously approved.

Discussion for the entire meeting focused on various "universal minor" proposals submitted by committee members. The group proceeded to consider the proposals in turn, going from those departing least from current practice and resource allocation to those that would require more radical changes, although many concerns raised would apply to all of the proposals.

Mr. Schloop's plan essentially rephrases the current distribution requirements as a minor. In addition, it would have students choose 0-credit workshops on such topics as Oral Presentation Skills, Sustainability Awareness, etc. Students might not take 0-credit courses seriously. On the other hand, how would faculty time be counted for such service?

Professor Stiadle's proposal brought the question of what the justification, i.e. relation to goals, is for various requirements. Goals for the science requirement had arisen in previous discussions, but no one could immediately find them in the Catalog. What specific courses address these goals? More generally, any plan will require consideration of the administrative problems surrounding what courses satisfy which requirements. While there could be designations in the Catalog, e.g. whether a course is writing attentive, this would not be practical unless a given course would *always* meet the desired goals, regardless of who teaches it. How should a universal minor be packaged? What stands out or is unique? Is there a theme (or themes)? Themes could help in deciding what courses fit which objectives.

Provost Miller-Bernal's proposal includes sophomore and junior team-taught themed courses along the lines of the WLLS 101 model. Concerns about workload and sustainability arose. Faculty would need to be recruited on a continual basis to develop courses. Collaborative courses can be even more time-consuming than ordinary classes. The proposal also includes voluntary workshops, though the question of students taking them seriously recurred. An intensive week in January for junior and senior majors was discussed. Interdisciplinary courses for first-year and sophomore students could run that same week. While workload issues for faculty are still a concern, shorter collaborative courses, even though intense, could be easier to sustain than semester ones. On the other hand, goals for such courses would have to be broader and more modest than is possible for longer courses. Practical considerations include whether athletic practices would be compatible with this model, whether this model conflicts with the renewed commitment to internships (since we'd lose a week of internship time), and how much credit such courses would earn. One credit hour requires 15 contact hours. Assuming students spend two to three hours out of class, that's 45-60 hours for the week with three hours class time per day. Would such courses be themed? Perhaps they could address community, interdisciplinary ideas, collaboration, or connections. Would there be a comparable expectation of transfer students? Maybe there would be a choice of a certain number of Januarys so as to

accommodate students who do not stay at Wells for four full years. In any event, student preparation for January courses could be an important component. Dean Miller-Bernal remarked that other schools are looking at January possibilities as well. Or perhaps as Wells.

Discussion of universal minor proposals will continue next week.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30am.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Stiadle
Secretary *pro tempore*