

Educational Policy Committee (EPC)

October 6, 2010

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

The meeting was called to order at 9:40 am.

- A. **Minutes of September 29, 2010 approved as presented.**
- B. **Business Major proposal not yet ready for our perusal.**
- C. **We returned to our discussion of how we should approach the last big area of revising Gen Ed**, under the rubric of distribution requirements, using the following questions as a guide:
 - 1. Do we support using learning goals, connected to our mission, rather than the approach we currently use—take three courses from two divisions each (for distribution)?

If yes, we will have to decide on what those would be—last year’s EPC referred to them as “pillars” or core ideas but had some trouble settling on them. One list included Social Responsibility (or social justice), sustainability (environmental), innovative entrepreneurship, and experiential learning.
 - 2. Are there particular parts of our current distribution requirements that we would want to have preserved in our Gen Ed program?
 - 3. Do we want to have some of what we assume we accomplish from distribution requirements accomplished by at least one interdisciplinary course?
 - 4. What do we believe an educated Wells person should “look like”?
 - 5. Do we want to use (part of) January for an interdisciplinary course in Gen Ed?
- D. **We continued our discussion of workshops from 9/29**, noting that some particular learning goals might be better served by workshops than by more traditional courses. Not every course satisfies every requirement.
- E. **We discussed the Lab Science requirement**, which has a specific learning goal: to learn scientific inquiry. It takes an empirical view of process, incorporating measuring and testing, to allow students to experience a scientific approach to understanding the world. Do other courses (such as psychology, sociology) that apply quantitative methods satisfy this goal?

- F. **We discussed the way that these learning goals are not the same as traditional distribution requirements.** The former seem more innovative and come closer to a unique vision for Lifelong learning. Ideally, we would hope that students could articulate or write about the ways their courses/experiences encouraged their understanding of social responsibility and sustainability. They could keep a checklist and portfolios that advisors would monitor. In general it seems more meaningful to have students reflect on what connections they can make.

We clearly need check points, ways of monitoring students' skills and goals before their senior year projects, such as a junior year check-in preceded by a sophomore year moment of reflection (reflective essay) at the time when declaring major. Perhaps we could have workshops in the majors? Excellent programs seem to have something beyond checklists. These reflective/monitoring moments could become a distinctive aspect of a Wells education.

- G. **We then discussed the possibility of a Common Minor.** This minor could exist as a cluster of Wells courses, some of which offer creative ways to integrate learning goals appropriate for the student's major—thus would be somewhat individualized.

Could a Common Minor be a recruiting tool?

A Wells College Common minor could include on- and off -campus study and could address issues like social responsibility and sustainability. We would envision that students would take courses in the common minor over all four years. In addition, students could continue to have a traditional minor as well, since the common minor would replace current distribution requirements. All or many of the Gen Ed requirements could be fulfilled in the Common Minor. The Wells common minor could be a transforming or transformative minor, a vision encompassing all.

- H. **We also need to think about committee structure.** Do we need a new division structure? What about the composition of the curriculum committee? Since we have a new administrative structure with provost, vice-provost, student life, etc., we are wondering the Advisory Committee should take a look.
- I. **We also need a time line for our tasks** to make sure that we keep moving ahead, with time for faculty discussion and the approval process, especially if we are thinking of a fuller program such as a Common Minor.
- J. **We should aim to schedule an open meeting in November.**
- K. **Another topic for future discussion:** How to integrate the new business major with the liberal arts curriculum at Wells? How self-contained will it be?

- L. **Short discussion of academic calendar**, January teaching, and workload issues. Wells might consider starting a week earlier in January because so many students are on campus then for athletics and other activities. Also this change would coordinate with Cornell's calendar.
If we started earlier (even if we did not), we might consider adding workshops at the end of term (during Senior Week, for example).
- M. **Homework for next time.** We should each come up with our own version of a Wells minor. What would it look like? Things to keep in mind: what are the "pillars," the core ideas related to the common minor?

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia J. Koepp
Secretary, pro tem