

Educational Policy Committee (EPC)
24 February 2011

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

The meeting began at 9:32 a.m.

Minutes from 17 February were approved with slight changes.

1. Audio Conference with Professor Arum on *Academically Adrift*. The committee members discussed this presentation, its substance, format, and relevance for Wells. Especially concerning was the national data indicating the small amount of time students spend studying outside of class. We all agreed that allowing more time for questions would have been valuable, since most people already knew the findings of the study. Our admissions counselors and college recruiters might find the program useful also, for it makes clear some of the ways that Wells evidently does a better job at keeping students accountable and engaged than do many other larger schools. Few Wells faculty members attended the presentation, yet many of the issues addressed seem worthwhile to pursue. Perhaps we can imagine another occasion or event where the Wells faculty could discuss these matters.

2. Living and Learning Subcommittee. Alex Schloop kindly agreed to join the Subcommittee that will look at a possible new January week. We talked in more detail about January activities, reviewing some of the many iterations January study has taken over the last thirty years or so (off campus study, on-campus study, Leadership week, etc). A few faculty have expressed concern about extending the academic year and faculty workload without compensation during January.

3. The Scientific Literacy subcommittee has had several volunteers from natural sciences and social sciences, but is still lacking representation from the humanities or arts. The provost will put out a second call for volunteers.

4. Capstone and Internship Surveys. At this time we have received ten surveys from the various major chairs. Next week we will start discussing in detail each survey, making comparisons across the disciplines/majors. We heard about some unhappiness of students who fear that certain programs are being “dumbed down.” There should be ways to keep high standards and still have a manageable workload. At least some students see the thesis/project as an essential rite of passage for Wells seniors that they wish to keep. Yet the demands on faculty time are putting great pressure on the status quo. Some concerns were expressed about developing a two-tiered system; to some people that approach seems counter to other notions of community and unity. We need to think about college wide issues, especially as related to senior projects: should every student meet the same requirements? Is there room for some to do more? Individual original research or literature review? Poster session or

formal presentations? Similar questions arise concerning internship and on-campus follow-ups. How can we balance the goal of uniformity across the curriculum with the desires of individual faculty members, majors and divisions to set their requirements as they see fit? We also agreed that we should resume discussions with BCS major that was tabled last year.

5.Homework: We should send in our short definitions of first-year themed seminars and Review # 1 through 5 of Capstone Surveys thus far received.

The meeting adjourned at 10:52.am.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia J.Koepp