

EPC Minutes

Present: Leslie Miller-Bernal, Cindy Speaker, CJ Koepp, Ted Lossowski, Amy Godert, Ann Locke

May 5, 2010

Meeting began at 9:00

We began with a review of the report to the faculty for the May Faculty meeting that was prepared. Some minor corrections were noted. 1) We did not discuss the philosophy major this year and 2) we may want to put in the OCS work we did.

Minutes of the previous meeting were discussed and approved with some corrections.

All the interdisciplinary (ID) general education proposals that were presented and discussed brought with them the concern of faculty workload. It will be difficult to make any changes given workload concerns and general apprehension that exists on campus currently.

The question was raised as to whether we can we build on the Wells101 courses – follow up with interdisciplinary courses in the January term. Perhaps two Wlls101 faculty could do an ID course in January that would build on what was done in Wlls101.

We also discussed whether our pillar courses should be relegated to January – it can be viewed as marginalization. Instead we could use the 7 week course modules during the semester – more faculty participation would be possible since more faculty are present on campus. Again the issue of faculty course load was mentioned – how would January courses count toward the normal load? How would a 7 week course count toward the normal load load?

Discussion then moved to some possible ideas for these ID team taught January courses (eg. Darwin's Powerful Idea: Reactions and Responses). These ID courses are a way to engage students in discussion and debate in a different way that they would be able to do during the semester. One of the benefits of the 3-week January courses would be that the student would get to focus on just one course instead of taking these courses with other courses. The courses could be used to address current events ("big questions"), which would give students the opportunity to discuss philosophical questions such as issues of responsibility and ethics as well as explore the greater impact of the problem (global issues). A problem with current events topics is that they may not be able to be recycled, thus resulting in a new prep every time one was taught. An underlying theme throughout our discussion was the importance of creativity and bringing things together.

Since student time is also a concern (since many work over January or have to do other experiences), we could require students to take ONE January experience within their fr/so year. Taking it early would aid in retention and leave the student with three Januaries available to do other experiences (for the experiential learning requirement). In this model there would still need be distribution requirements, though the January courses could fulfill some aspect of the distribution/gen ed requirements.

It was noted that Wells has a very traditional distribution model, where courses are taken in each of the four divisions. Many others have moved towards more general learning goals (e.g. social responsibility, multiculturalism, diversity, global awareness). Courses are usually given designations and students must take courses in those areas.

“Alternative” Januaries were mentioned (along the lines of an alternative spring break). In this type of course the student could travel to other places to examine cultural issues. The primary concern with this idea is money – where would the money come from to pay for flights, housing, etc.

Currently the administration is examining faculty contracts, which are currently 9 months, but faculty is only “working” 8 of those months. Administration is exploring whether more should be expected of faculty. Should we be looking at faculty who are not on-campus even during the “normal” contract time? The committee raised the issues of what constitutes work since many of us may not be on-campus, but are working on spring classes or our scholarship (which is required for tenure evaluation).

Another possibility raised was whether we could adopt the quarter system instead of using the semester system. Various issues were identified with this – principally the need to align our calendar with Cornell, so this does not seem to be feasible. It was noted that the 4-1-4 switch in 1993 was difficult.

Some questions about utilization of the January term were raised. Do we want to continue to look at January experiences? Is our January break too long? Are these experiences a good use of our January (cost of heating)? Something needs to be done with January – either shorten or utilize the time. If January is shortened, we could use May to do these 3 week courses, when it is nicer on campus.

We briefly mentioned our joint meeting with Curriculum Committee (Monday 17, 1:30 or 2pm) and some potential agenda items:

- Discuss the origin of the 3 vs 4 credit hour courses (in the context of faculty and student time). This is a national issue in terms of accreditation. (NY has a standard for credits regarding contact hours)
- Examine the use of January (and the academic calendar)
- Look at courses in major and how CC is exploring streamlining them.

For next week we should:

- come up with some issues to discuss with the CC
- determine whether or not we want to look at January experiences at all.
- examine the relationship between ID courses and the distribution requirements.

Can they replace each other, if so how? If not, should they just be additions on top of what we have? Or should they be replacing something?

Meeting ended at 10:22am.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Godert