

## Educational Policy Committee (EPC)

December 8, 2010

Present: Professors Easter, Koepp, Olson, Stiadle, Student Representative A. Schloop '12, Provost Miller-Bernal (chair), and Associate Provost Speaker

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 am.

1. Minutes from the December 1 meeting were not yet ready for approval.
2. The open meeting scheduled for yesterday was rescheduled to Monday, December 13 at 4:30 pm due to weather. The committee has not yet received feedback on the handouts sent to faculty.
3. We decided to hold a regular meeting on Wednesday, December 15 to discuss the December 13 open meeting.
4. We decided to hold weekly meetings for the spring semester on Thursday mornings at 9:30. Our first meeting of the semester will be on February 3, 2011.
5. We discussed the role of scientific literacy within the Sustainable Community minor and Wells in general.
  - The faculty within NMS has been discussing scientific literacy, and some believe that the current system is working. There has also been discussion on how laboratory sciences fit within the concept of experiential learning. Laboratory sciences should not be substitutive but used as an example of experiential learning already within our academics.
  - We acknowledged an article sent to EPC by Prof. Vawter.
  - Discussion merged to the definition of science in general. Science, as discussed, is the production and study of theories subject to testing: rather than just specific content, science is a process.
  - We mentioned that Wells seems to be becoming more career-focused (e.g. the new business program). Our current science curriculum model seems to stress preparation for graduate school. We considered how we could tie NMS to careers in a liberal arts framework and discussed that the college may have an opportunity to hire innovative-thinking faculty as current NMS faculty retire. This will help tie science to other disciplines, notably the new business program. A special hybrid class entitled something like "Science and Innovation" might be a creative solution. We discussed, however, that students might need a base of knowledge before connections can be fruitfully formed. We also wondered who the science faculty should be serving, pre-med majors or general Wells students?
  - There has been discussion among NMS faculty of introducing more investigatory classes into the curriculum.

- We wondered if courses within the social sciences might qualify as fulfilling a scientific literacy requirement or if we want to include some basic knowledge of the “natural” world. Some peer colleges make a distinction between scientific content and process. Wells currently lacks many lab-based social scientists, and it would take an investment in new faculty to bridge the disciplines. We noted, in addition, that some courses might already be teaching scientific literacy, e.g. theatre courses.
- We concluded that it might be in our interest to ask the NMS faculty what they believe to be the basis of scientific literacy and what the “educated person” should know about science. A subcommittee in the spring could accomplish this and clarify what the learning objectives of scientific literacy and justification of the laboratory science requirement are.
- We noted the importance to include science in the themed seminars within the minor. An exciting idea would be a course surrounding the hydrofracking issue, which would take advantage of our location.

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Alex Schloop '12  
Secretary, pro tem