Educational Policy Committee (EPC)

November 20, 2008

Present:  Professors C. J. Koepp, Ted Lossowski, Ernie Olson, and Sandy Shilepsky; Student Representative Martina DiMeglio '10; Dean Leslie Miller-Bernal; Associate Dean Cindy Speaker ; and former trustee Gail Kitch via phone.

The meeting began at 4:35 p.m.

1. Approval of the minutes of 13 November 2008. Item #3, “manual” added to “faculty *manual* rewrite.”

2. Ten Year Plan has been revised, printed up, and placed on the Globe.

3.We had an extensive discussion about the upcoming EPC Open Meeting of the Faculty scheduled for 2 December 2008. We tried to think of topics and questions that we should consider and some that faculty could see in advance to help prepare them for this meeting. Some of those possible questions are included below:

Is there a way that Distribution Requirements could be more intentional, perhaps by designating certain courses as fulfilling certain goals and objectives?

How can we improve on what we are already doing?

What are our goals and how are they served by distribution requirements?

Should these discussions be centered at first in the Divisions?

Should we be specifying learning objectives before designing Gen Ed or distribution requirements?

We discussed the value of “exposure” to different disciplines and of what used to be called “appreciation” courses. What is their purpose? How do they function? If they are required, how do they foster student interest?

What would it mean to have no Gen Ed requirements and instead use intensive advising? How much do these current students need clear requirements as guidance? Should we employ portfolios more intensively?

Should students be asked/expected to articulate what are their own learning goals?

Where does writing instruction fit into the Gen Ed requirements?

Should each division speak about Gen Ed from its own perspective? How to distinguish between courses for non-majors (Physics for poets, etc)?

Would we consider having all first year students take a course taught jointly by two divisions over one or two semesters? As with Wells 101-102, all the staffing problems are still there.

Should physical education be required? What should Wellness do for students? What about the value of survival skills (swimming, running, and self defense) and exercise in general?

Should foreign language and math be required?

We need to articulate how Gen Ed requirements relate to our objectives.

Does a focus on Global Issues and Sustainability mean that we should change our Gen Ed requirements?

How can Gen Ed reflect our commitment to intercultural and inclusive excellence?

What are the goals/objectives of a liberal education, or a liberal educated person?

What kind of students are attracted to Wells and what kind of Gen Ed would most serve their needs, goals, and desires?

The faculty needs to be able to articulate the value of Gen Ed to students.

The Gen Ed requirements now work to some extent: students have a sense of what they can and want to do (music or dance, math or logic, for example) and the grab bag gives them some freedom to choose.

Four Possible Questions (or not) for Open Meeting:

1. What are the qualities of a liberal education?
2. Should we have Gen Ed requirements? If so, what should Gen Ed accomplish? What is its value? How to link it to mission statement and learning goals and objectives?
3. Given our current Gen Ed requirements, which things do you find important? Which, if any, could be dropped or altered? What is missing that you would like to see added?
4. How can we relate the Mission Statement and learning goals and objectives to Gen Ed requirements?

How should we structure the Open meeting? What should we discuss? Can we brainstorm together? For the Open Meeting, we are going for an informal conversation.

Eventually, we will need to be able to specify to Middle States our learning objectives for Gen Ed. It can take a long time to articulate these connections. And we need to be thinking about what is right for Wells.

Let everyone on faculty know that we really do want their ideas. Especially urge younger faculty to attend this meeting.

Remind faculty briefly that Gen Ed requirements havne’t been looked at for the last 25 years or so, and that a national conversation is going on relating assessment, Gen Ed, and Mission statement issues.

The major question: how to move forward with Gen Ed?

Other possibilities to keep in mind: thinking of Gen Ed as providing the “Big Picture”

A capstone course for Gen Ed (it would need to be explained), perhaps something relating to Sustainability or Intercultural and Inclusive excellence?

Another possible question for the meeting:

What happens in your division that most students should experience?

Final item: Collegiate cabinet received the report about our meeting. We have not received a response yet.

Meeting ended at 6:18p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Cynthia J. Koepp