

Educational Policy Committee (EPC)
October 27, 2010

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

The meeting began at 4:34 p.m.

1. CJ distributed copies of her ideas for the common minor.
2. Minutes from the October 20, 2010 meeting were approved as corrected.
3. Tom announced that he has been asked by a member of the faculty for a report from EPC at the next faculty meeting. Reason for the request appears to be general angst about what the college's vision is and where the campus is heading. Leslie will follow up so that a report is provided at the November faculty meeting.
4. The question was raised as to how EPC can coordinate with the vision group from the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC). Siouxsie reported that while she was only able to attend the recent meeting of SPC for a few minutes that the group was discussing what a vision statement was. Because of conflicts with the meeting time, it appeared that only a small subset of SPC was able to participate in the meeting.
5. Review of common minor drafts
 - a. Cindy's -- This model includes yearly seminars, disciplinary perspectives, tutorials, foundational skills, workshops, and application. Many of the elements the committee and past subcommittees proposed are incorporated into the model. One element that is different is how physical activity courses would be involved.

Perhaps using meaningful lives as a theme for a senior seminar would be better than using it for a first-year seminar. Are students actually ready to engage with such a topic when they first arrive? Though it is not necessarily a bad thing to expose students early to something with which they may struggle.

Perceived strengths and positives include: use of seminar structure providing personal space while at the same time a more shared united experience given common themes; issues emphasized could depend on particular faculty involved (what is brought to the foreground vs. left in the background); disciplinary perspectives providing foundational knowledge and introducing students to the research methods of broad areas; sequential development (important from a student development perspective); an understandable plan that can be used for branding and marketing purposes (here's what you will experience as a Wells student). Perceived weaknesses and negatives include: this would be a major change; the number of seminars required would affect faculty load (especially given the reduction in full-time faculty); the exclusion of OCS/study abroad as fulfilling a requirement.

It is possible that some existing courses could be reworked to fit the proposed model. The group discussed whether courses could count for both a seminar requirement and a discipline requirement. It would be up to individual majors to decide this. Also discussed was whether such a model would be accessible for transfer students and students who study abroad for a full year.

It appears that the model resonated with members of the committee. What would this model look like from a faculty perspective? A student perspective? The group considered how some of the seminar topics could actually be done in large lecture courses.

b. Siouxsie's – This model includes WLLS 101 and 111, foreign language, physical education, critical and analytical reasoning, a sustainable community component in the thesis, community classes (with service learning), and January internships and/or linked courses presented in a four-year plan. Options for electives give students freedom of choice. By having foreign language within the first two years, students get the opportunity to take more if interested. By incorporating the sustainable community element into the thesis, the thesis proposal could act as an assessment tool (similar perhaps to how the sophomore essay operated in the past).

Incorporating service learning was seen as very positive by the committee. Having it built into the curriculum in a reliable manner was very appealing. Service learning could be included in Cindy's model as well. The idea of service to Wells and the larger community resonated with the group.

c. Ernie's – Ernie indicated that his model was influenced by Leslie's and Cindy's. The model includes WLLS 101 and disciplinary foundations in the first year (Connected to Creativity), local and global interconnections in the second (including modern languages), critical action and reflection in the third year (with an emphasis on ethics), and a senior capstone experience in the fourth year (Creative Connections). The model attempts to be as inclusive as possible representing student and faculty interests. Unlike other models that would require new courses, this model would make use of current offerings. Connections between courses would be made more obvious and the courses could include both seminars as well as large lecture courses. The proposed partnered/linked courses would not have to be offered at the same time though they could be (in which case an additional hour could be utilized to facilitate the linkages).

This model intentionally highlights modern languages. It is meant to indicate how important languages are to the College and that we are committed to sustaining languages at Wells. Here languages are seen as being holistically connected to other subjects.

In the second year, there would be an emphasis on theory and method. The emphasis in the third year would be on ethics. Highlighted would be connections to the community – both local and global – as well as possible business connections. Every discipline has ethical concerns. The junior year focus would be on research methodology. Oral communication could be incorporated here. The one required course in the third year could be large lectures (1cr) with smaller group seminars (3cr). Service learning could also be incorporated here. These courses would not have to be new. It could be possible to modify existing courses. The large lectures could present case studies or an ethical dilemma that the smaller sections could discuss. For students studying abroad their third year they could either do the requirement in the fall or spring, or possibly even be exempt from it.

The thesis experience in the senior year would be modified in this model. Students would come together in groups, perhaps by division, in order to make connections. Motivation here included how to run the thesis experience in a more sustainable way, sustain upper-level theory courses, and lessen the isolation that students in small majors feel in their senior year.

Ernie sees his model as fitting with what EPC has already agreed to – writing, CAR, quantitative reasoning, lab science, etc. The model is not meant to be a substitution for general education nor is it

meant to require a lot of additional credits. It is an organizational approach that includes sequential development with very intentional connections being identified and interweaving method and theory.

6. For next meeting, members should review the ideas CJ distributed at the beginning of the meeting. An additional homework assignment is to review all the minor models and identify best features which should be pursued, worst features that should be let go, and rethink the minor (in effect create a “meta minor”).

The meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy Speaker, Associate Provost for Academic and Student Life