

Educational Policy Committee  
April 28, 2011

Present: Professors Easter, Koepp, Olson, and Stiadle, Provost Miller-Bernal, Associate Provost Speaker, and Dean McCarthy; Professor Tabrizi joined the group at 9:40.

The meeting came to order at approximately 9:33am.

Dean McCarthy and Professor Tabrizi had been invited to provide feedback on the January week proposal from student life and faculty perspectives, respectively. Dean McCarthy's concerns centered on who is in charge and who has responsibility for which sessions each day. In particular, would Student Life be running the program or supporting it? He also emphasized that athletes should participate if at all possible since the number of January athletes is substantial. Intensive RA training, Court training, Orientation, and Collegiate training all currently overlap with the proposed January week and so would have to be rescheduled, most likely starting a week earlier.

Dean Miller-Bernal asked when Student Life would need to know for certain that January week would definitely take place. Dean McCarthy clarified that *what* he needs to do is more relevant than *when* he needs to know, although sooner is better. Knowing the available budget (mainly food) is important as well. The various logistical problems can be solved, but he needs to know.

There was a question about the length of the athletes' days. Typically they have activities for over twelve hours per day. Different teams return to campus at different times. On the other hand, by the time of the proposed January week, most colleges are back in session, which would lessen conflict due to tournaments and the like. Perhaps we could start even earlier in January, which Cornell is also considering. It could save money since staff must be available over January already due to athletes.

From the faculty perspective, who would participate in January week when this is a period ordinarily spent on research and class preparation? It is important that it not always be the same people so as to diversify offerings, to equalize workload, and to achieve sustainability. There was some discussion of where academic content enters the mock schedule. Academic activities would occur in the "workshop" slots. January is an opportunity for faculty to do things they cannot adequately do during the semester. Overall, though, there is concern that the week would be approved but not enough faculty would participate.

Discussion turned to how WLLS 101 experiences might be connected to the January week. More generally, what common experiences might be required of all students? Such things can be important at various points in the college career. Moreover, they can have positive effects on retention and admissions. Perhaps connecting to a common book would work. A committee member observed that there is grant money for reading programs.

The group returned to the main concern of who does what and the worry that the academic burden would fall disproportionately on untenured faculty. Professor Tabrizi and Dean McCarthy left at 10:21am.

The Committee then turned to regular business. Professor Koepp will send minutes of the April 21 meeting for approval at next week's meeting.

The final report of the Scientific Literacy Subcommittee was accepted.

Discussion continued on the emerging general education description, beginning with editorial considerations such as the term "appropriate" technology in the second paragraph and the desired mention of "sustainable" in that paragraph, especially regarding the capstone experience.

The big outstanding problem in the whole program remains whether the January week will go forward next year. Learning objectives are still needed for the January term, for instance. Equivalently, what are the academic purposes for the January week? In a sense, the particular academic goals are secondary; rather, a primary purpose is retention and a unified academic experience for all students. Ensuing ideas included the need for a theme for January term, either generally or changing year to year, around which to organize the conference-style week. Thoughts turned to replicating mini-WLLS 101 topics, with consonant writing assignments. The WLLS 101 faculty provide an obvious core faculty pool for the January week. What would happen to upperclassman, though? Perhaps advisors could evaluate their students' work. Faculty panels on topical issues, similar to the recent political, scientific, and economic panel on the Japan tsunami consequences, might be a possibility. Again, the need for followup writing, discussion, assessment, and who would do them arose.

Another general education proposal involves splitting the current WLLS 111 into seven fall weeks followed by seven initial weeks in the spring. While this seems ideal for freshmen, especially with regard to retention, how would students entering in January be accommodated? The group concluded that a single 14 week spring version is the best solution.

For next week, Committee members agreed to keep thinking about January week, especially considering writing, journals, feedback, and common themes, to look at the rest of the General Education proposal, and to ask Jamey Ventura to next week's meeting for his take on the proposed January week.

The meeting adjourned at 10:53am.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Stiadle  
Secretary *pro tempore*