

Educational Policy Committee (EPC)
April 7, 2010

Present: Professors Amy Godert, CJ Koepp, and Susan Tabrizi; Dean Leslie Miller-Bernal; and Associate Dean Cindy Speaker

The meeting began at 9:03 a.m.

1. Dates for student advising and course registration

The committee briefly discussed the dates for advising and registration week. Members asked when the Curriculum Committee would bring the curriculum to the faculty. Dean Miller-Bernal indicated that the Curriculum Committee was having an extra meeting this week in order to have the curriculum to the faculty at next week's faculty meeting.

There was also a brief discussion on the current admissions deposit numbers and how these compared to past years.

2. Minutes from the March 31, 2010 meeting

The minutes were approved as corrected.

3. Minute takers for upcoming meetings

The following assignments were made:

April 14: Susan
April 21: Leslie
April 28: CJ
May 5: Ted
May 12: Amy

4. Information Literacy and Oral Communication

The committee discussed last week's meeting in which Linda Lohn, faculty director of WLLS 101, shared her thoughts regarding the subcommittee's proposal. Susan indicated that she sees the only real difference between the two approaches is an assignment. She likes the developmental model and the way Linda articulated it.

Members expressed support for the idea of having WLLS 101 students complete assessments at the beginning of the term so that faculty can know what students know and point them to the tools that will help them further develop their skills. In thinking about WLLS 101, the College needs to keep in mind where students are in their skills and what can be reasonably accomplished in the course. It would be useful for faculty as a whole to understand what the appropriate level for writing (and for assignments in general) can be expected of first year students.

Since it appears that a Stage 1 can be incorporated into WLLS 101 and perhaps even other introductory courses, the committee moved to discussing Stage 2. Considered here were issues and questions of

what our majors currently look like, what our peer institutions are able to do (given more students and more faculty), what majors should be trying to accomplish, the expectations for senior theses, and variability across majors regarding the thesis and comprehensive examinations. If the learning objectives tied to a Stage 2 for Information Literacy are not met in the majors are there other options for them to use (such as the new information literacy course)? Concerns were expressed that a single course is not compatible with how the subcommittee was conceptualizing information literacy as involving a reiterative (or developmental) process.

The committee questioned if we are asking too much of our majors; the committee also questioned whether the committee was saying that we cannot discuss Stage 2 until the majors determine their senior capstone experience as many of the majors are discussing changes to their thesis requirement. It was noted that Stage 2 could also be met by a model similar to that which Professor Klitgaard suggested earlier this year that had interdisciplinary courses at the junior and senior level.

5. Next Steps

If the committee puts information literacy and oral communication on hold, it can begin to revisit the distribution requirements. And while information is needed from the majors regarding their senior/capstone experiences, now probably is not the best time to ask for it. However, the committee could compose the questions it is interested in having majors address and then distribute them to the faculty in early fall.

The committee discussed the possibility of having non-discipline capstone courses. For example a WLLS 401 (to bookend WLLS 101) that could be multidisciplinary. Another idea discussed was having team-taught division capstone courses.

An observation was made that in this general education revision that our approach has been to tweak our current requirements. Perhaps given the current challenges the College is facing it may be the time to think about doing something different. How can Wells be different than its peers? How can we be a unique small liberal arts college? Since we are no longer working with the deadline of completing the proposal this spring, perhaps we can take time to imagine different models. Some ideas briefly discussed included tandem courses, an additional 1-hr seminar if you're enrolled in certain courses, using core institutional values as organizing themes, stressing academic program goals previously identified (e.g., women's scholarship, sustainability, and diversity), connecting to the Center for Business, emphasizing careers, making use of our location. Reference was made to the AAC&U article previously distributed on Lynn University's core.

For next week's meeting, members agreed to reread the article on Lynn University (Cindy to resend it with the minutes) and be prepared to discuss big ideas that could distinguish Wells as we re-imagine ourselves.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Associate Dean Speaker