

Minutes for EPC Meeting, April 21, 2010

Present: Faculty members Amy Godert, CJ Koepp, Ted Lossowski, Susan Tabrizi; student representative Ann Locke; Associate Dean Cindy Speaker; Dean Leslie Miller-Bernal

The meeting began at 9:05 with the introduction of the new student representative, Ann Locke '13.

The minutes for April 14 were approved with only one minor correction.

The meeting involved a wide-ranging discussion of the 2007 AAC&U report cited in the article about Lynn University's changes to its general education program: *College Learning for the New Global Century* from the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative. Some of the points made included:

- While the report didn't point to an identity for Wells, it did give us some sound goals to strive for and practices to employ.
- Our vision could come from the "pillars" we discussed last week (3 or 4).
- We are not clear on a definition of entrepreneurship and how much (or little) it involves profit-making; this affects whether or not we see it as a "pillar."
- Is there really broad support in the Wells community for all pillars? Recently events connected to environmental sustainability have had low attendance.
- Wells needs a "culture shift" in order to support the idea that major fields are meant to support the general or broad education of undergraduates rather than the other way around (general education as being intended to support the work students do in their major fields).
- This type of culture shift, enabling Wells to develop interesting interdisciplinary (and interdivisional) courses, should be easier at Wells than at larger institutions since we are able to have more dialogues across disciplines.
- To foster such a culture shift, major fields would need to require fewer courses in order that faculty members have sufficient time to contribute to interdisciplinary courses. We might say that students major in the liberal arts and have concentrations in particular disciplines.
- Would students and parents "buy in" to the concept of a more innovative and interdisciplinary approach? We noted that the LEAP initiative stresses how much employers want employees who have this type of background and how Wells' stress on experiential learning should demonstrate the ways we are helping students to make connections between their formal education and careers. We also noted that people who stay in one career are the "odd" ones, so liberal arts education that encourages critical thinking and good communication skills is actually the best preparation for the flexibility that the world of work requires.
- Again and again we returned to the point of faculty resistance to a more innovative model and how implicitly at least, they see their job as preparing students for graduate school. Although we don't have precise figures on this, we believe that the percent of our students who go on to graduate school for PhDs is

quite low. More seem to go to professional schools (medical, law, business, social work, etc.).

- To encourage faculty to think about the purposes of undergraduate education and how the goals should not primarily be preparation for graduate school but rather broadly educated individuals who are adaptable, we might ask all faculty to read the LEAP report and discuss it on Day for Faculty in August.
- Members of EPC are interested in meeting with Curriculum Committee (CC) to discuss what CC is learning from its review of academic programs. We tentatively set a day in senior week for a joint meeting (perhaps Monday, May 24).
- We enjoyed playing with metaphors, some of them mixed—disciplines are like silos (fragmented) when we need swimming pools; we are not expecting disciplines to form a melting pot but rather to be like a stir fry with discernible pieces.
- We might want to return to the suggestions Kent Klitgaard made about interdisciplinary courses for juniors and seniors.
- We acknowledged the difficulty of proposing changes at this moment in time given the uncertainty about the future of some academic programs.
- We discussed a few possible models for interdisciplinary teaching: team taught courses or courses where faculty take responsibility for sections of courses. We noted that the latter approach does not provide students with the benefit of seeing dialogue between academics from different disciplines. To use another metaphor, it is more of a relay race when we want a team effort.
- What in their major field would faculty be willing to give up? We can't simply add on to faculty loads; major fields will have to change if we are to develop a more innovative, interdisciplinary curriculum.

For next week's meeting, we decided we would focus on some specifics—the numbers of courses (and sections) a new interdisciplinary approach would require (to estimate the kind of impact these courses would have on faculty's teaching in their major fields). Each of us will come with ideas for **2 different models** for implementing the pillars we have discussed to achieve the essential learning outcomes discussed in LEAP.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Miller-Bernal
Secretary pro tem