

EPC Minutes September 6, 2011

Provost Speaker and Professors Koepp, Lossowski, Sievers and Tabrizi in attendance

- The meeting began at 9:30am
- Minutes of August 30 meeting were approved with minor grammatical and typographical corrections.
- Discussion of Celebrate Scholarship and Engagement Days:
 - A discussion of responses from consultation with division members:
 - Suggestions from Arts included some type of art gallery experience, perhaps led by student show, other details to be determined. This would not be senior art project show but would instead be more like the annual student art show that happens in February.
 - Social science suggestions included working off established themes such as Earth Day, Women's History, Civil Rights and Liberties in addition to Activism Symposium
 - Humanities is still working on this issue and will be consulted again. Workload issues were raised in their initial discussion.
 - Natural and Mathematical Sciences are also concerned about workloads. Their discussion raised a question about how this interacts with science colloquium and the extent to which it is redundant with or would result in watering down what is planned to be the exceptional quality of science colloquium student presentations (as planned by BCS for this year). One suggestion was that these days should be used for outside speakers and, perhaps, in connection with student presentations.
 - Continued EPC discussion:
 - An update was given regarding Curriculum Committee discussion and suggested that there is concern about what the days are supposed to be. Another concern from the committee was about getting too scripted or theme based.
 - A concern was raised as to how to cultivate participation in these days across divisions so that they do not become Balkanized.
 - The committee considered these days in the context of the general question: How do we give the signal that Wells is the type of learning community that we want to project (to internal and external audiences)? In other words, how do we demonstrate that we take our values, including scholarship, seriously?
 - It was suggested that one way to conceptualize these days is that they are another way of making visible the work that goes on at the College and the fact that it is valued.
 - On a related note, another suggestion was to tie these days to and, in doing so, elevate values that we profess to hold such as social justice, rights and liberties, engagement in scholarship, activism and environmental sustainability,

- A suggestion was made that the fifth day (assuming that the other 4 reflect themes such as civil rights and liberties, earth day, activism symposium, women's history or the like) might be used as a scholarship presentation day that highlighted student work.
 - This might be a day where honors student presentations are done and other students do poster presentations.
 - Art now does a show where all students who take courses present at least one piece. They may be moving to a juried show instead. Suggestion that it could be a combination, again, showing all work and then selecting some pieces for the juried show.
 - Another idea was to ask faculty to demonstrate their own scholarship at scholarship celebration days.
 - Another consideration is having students present on each of the 5 days even if their work may not directly tie into the theme
 - This might be a solution for students who are completing theses in the fall. Another idea is that students or selected students from these majors might do another, larger presentation in the spring.
- There was a discussion of the importance of cultivating faculty buy-in given that this is the commitment that we have made to students.
 - Issues of workload were raised and it was acknowledged that any plan would need to be well thought out and sustainable in order to foster legitimacy.
- The committee discussed ways that we might coordinate these days with other big speakers and series that we already have (such as the Beckman lecture). This was seen as a potential way to increase the visibility and importance of these days and to create a sense of community.
 - Another possibility might be a gallery opening with a professional artist giving a talk on their work and possibly a hands on workshop experience in their area of expertise.
- EPC discussed whether this should be brought to the faculty in open EPC meetings or Dean's Forum. It was decided that EPC members would go back to their divisions with generalized suggestions from EPC to gauge support and report back comments and concerns. The committee agreed that it was best to work through constituent feedback to formulate a plan and then go to the faculty for a more concrete discussion of alternative proposals.
 - The committee representatives will go back to their divisions noting that EPC is suggesting 5 days over the course of the spring semester that are oriented around Wells values such as social justice (civil rights and liberties); environmental sustainability; a historical and contemporary focus on women (given our own history); activism; and scholarship.

Each day would be coordinated with some of the larger, established events on campus, as feasible, (such as the Beckman lecture, student project presentations, etc.) further helping to promote the goals of fostering engagement and participation, generating and perpetuating a sense of community on campus and celebrating the work that we do.

- Discussion of new capstone requirement:
 - Major issue for EPC to decide is the timeline for developing the senior capstone requirements.
 - There was some hesitation in pushing this too soon, before other discussions such as first, second and third year seminars, Scholarship and Engagement Days, etc. are resolved.
 - Committee agreed that the legitimacy and sustainability of the new curriculum required more concrete plans sooner than later, with the caveat that they be done with the inclusion of faculty input and that they be done well. A goal for a plan for the senior capstone was set for the end of May 2012.
 - General discussion of the senior capstone requirement yielded a question as to the feasibility of requiring a capstone in addition to thesis requirements in some majors. It was noted that there is an issue of heterogeneity across majors regarding thesis requirements that remains unresolved.
 - It was explained that capstones are intended to be interdisciplinary, not the same as a thesis focusing on majors or work in the major. This reflects that idea that general education is a process across all four years and not just something to check off a student's to do list.
- The meeting concluded at 10:35am.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Tabrizi