

Minutes of the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) with Curriculum Committee (CC) - Henry Wells Room, Long Library
December 8, 2015

Present: Provost Cindy Speaker; for EPC - faculty members Jeanne Goddard and Niamh O'Leary, student rep. Chris Castro; for CC - Registrar and Director of Academic Advising Nicole Pellegrino, Director of Admissions and Financial Aid Susan Raith Sloan, faculty members C.J. Koepp Deb Gagnon; student rep Stephen Armstrong.

Call to Order: 12:18PM.

Approval of EPC minutes postponed until next regular EPC meeting.

The purpose of meeting with the Curriculum Committee was the discussion of the new General Education curriculum in development by EPC. Specific items were addressed, as well as the overall goals and challenges of the Gen Ed curriculum at Wells.

SPECIFIC LINE ITEMS:

#2 Writing and Public Speaking. Who will teach this course?

Staffing may be possible if the result of our work is to prioritize this course institutionally.

#3 Why not provide here a list of regular courses?

This makes it difficult to assess the specific skills we seek in Gen Ed requirements. Also we aim to encourage students to explore areas other than their first expressed interest.

Global Languages and Cultures: Question about the reduction to 1 semester of language required. Question about the 2-semester language requirement for Phi Beta Kappa membership and how rigorously that requirement needs to be applied.

OVERALL DISCUSSION

Need for a director/coordinator of any "First Year" experience.

Importance of teaching writing and information literacy early in college.

Training of current faculty to teach writing is not supported by the faculty at large; faculty want the focused teaching of the craft of writing by a qualified professional.

Concern that writing and speaking courses without a theme feel "empty", though nothing in the course as proposed would prohibit use of a theme.

Advantage/disadvantage of a shared first year syllabus as with our older model of the first year experience.

Should all Gen Ed requirements be offered without pre-requisites? How does this impact the idea of Gen Ed as a developmental progression over the four years?

Advantage/disadvantage of having upper class and first year students in the same courses; importance of first year sense of cohort vs. potential for upper class students to model classroom participation.

Ongoing concern that we are overloading first-year students with required courses, which is unappealing from student perspective. Can 101 and 1xx (as proposed) be conflated? Maybe not all first year students need to take all three courses - perhaps students could be assessed and exempted from further writing courses. Discussion of number of credit hours, and ways to distribute first year requirements across the first two semesters.

Concern that entire Gen Ed program, as proposed, is too large - 40-50 hours leaves less room for a minor or for electives. Yet there will be overlaps between Gen Ed and the student's major requirements. It is important to clarify the relevance of Gen Ed requirements.

Admissions perspective: students rarely like to be "told" what to take, but parents react favorably to structure. We talk about a "writing intensive experience" at Wells. Some titles could be clearer: what does "The Human Experience" actually mean? Some schools are currently marketing Gen Ed programs, with appealing titles and time spent during campus visits, explaining Gen Ed program and the reasons behind it.

Broad use of the Community Read was seen as positive.

This writer left before the meeting adjourned – remaining minutes below are by O' Leary.

Some discussion of #14 ("Making the Most of your Wells Education"). Should this be part of the gen ed curriculum? Should we add in some Computer Science courses? Is WLLS 121 (Research Tools and Skills) content covered in proposed WLLS101? Perhaps students should take one course in this category, not two. The Registrar does not favor courses that must be taken at certain times – how does this square with the value of taking some of proposed courses early in the Wells career?

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Goddard (with a few notes by Niamh O' Leary at the end).