

Educational Policy Committee (EPC)
October 23, 2013

Present: Professors Ted Lossowski, Lauren O'Neil, Susan Tabrizi; Student Representative Shane Puskar '14; and Provost Cindy Speaker

The meeting began at 10:31 a.m.

1. The Provost indicated that the Committee Chair was unable to attend given an appointment off campus.
2. Minutes from October 16, 2013 approved as corrected.
3. The Committee discussed the final changes needed for the goals document. The Provost will update the document, send it to the Committee as well as provide it to the registrar and put on the assessment web page. The Committee discussed how we can publicize the goals, develop possible promotional materials (with some nice graphics), and ensure that prospective students and families are exposed to the material (e.g., perhaps a foam board at the academic fair part of an Admissions Open House). The Provost will talk with the Director of Communications and Marketing.
4. The Committee returned to discussion of the new course schedule and how to move forward. As part of the conversation, the need for creating better teaching and learning spaces on campus was discussed and the observation made that the technology conversation going on via e-mail among the faculty and IT was timely.

The Committee agreed to have 8:00am be the start time for instruction for the draft schedule as well as include a Wednesday afternoon block after the common time. Implications from 4-credit courses that are not labs (e.g., 101 and 102 in modern languages, MATH 111 and 112, CS 131 and 132, and certain senior capstone courses) were considered. This led to a discussion on the purpose and variability of the senior major capstone experience as well as relationship between the major capstone and the general education capstone.

Faculty representatives were charged with going back to their divisions to find out why certain courses were not 3-credit courses.

5. As EPC has taken on the responsibility of assessment oversight, the Committee discussed the work it needs to do here. A conversation is needed on how to create a sustainable process. Faculty would like some assessment workshops on easy and useful best practices. The Provost discussed how this work intersects with the Periodic Review Report (PRR) process currently underway. Given the changes to the budget process that the new president is implementing, the Committee discussed the benefits of changing the current submission date for assessment reports and agreed to move the due date from January 15 to May 31.
6. The Committee discussed other business that it needs to complete. Members see as the next priority returning to the work on the Sustainable Community curriculum. The Committee needs to address the junior and senior seminars and consider "double-dipping" issues. Also on the agenda is review of position requests.

As discussion continued issues related the major capstone experience (the “thesis” experience) were revisited. Also questioned was the purpose of the comps. It was noted that there is quite a bit of variability in what constitutes comps across the curriculum. Faculty workload issues were also raised and issues of inequities noted. In many ways the conversation became one of considering what is the nature of appropriate undergraduate work at the senior level. How does the major capstone and the general education capstone relate to one another? Should the thesis experience be moved outside the major discipline which may help ensure more consistent requirements? Are we limited by our size, resources, location, etc. for students to be able to conduct original research? Members agreed that the Committee should hold an open meeting on what is the senior experience at Wells (considering both the major and general education). Committee members are to look at their calendars to see what some possible dates could be for such a meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 11:51 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy Speaker, Provost and Dean of the College