**CEPP Minutes - October 8, 2013**

**In attendance:** Peter von Allmen (Chair), Beau Breslin, Rochelle Calhoun, Caroline D’Abate (scribe), Pat Fehling, Sarah Goodwin, Rubèn Graciani, Renee Schapiro, Charles Tetelman

**Not in attendance:** Amy Frappier

1. **Welcoming new member**

CEPP welcomed a new student member (Renee Shapiro) to the committee.

1. **Approval of Minutes from October 1 meeting**
2. **Follow-up on Study Day policy**

CEPP discussed recent concerns about Study Day policy. An update was provided regarding the recent Model UN conflict that occurred this fall for some students (an event taking place off campus on Study Day). That issue is resolved and the students have been encouraged to take part in Model UN.

However, CEPP continues to recognize a need to revisit Study Day policy here at Skidmore. In contrast to the end-of-semester Study Days (which tend to be carefully monitored with clearly communicated policies), there is less clarity around the mid-semester Study Day. Whose purview it is to determine what is/is not allowable activity on Study Day remains unclear. It is CEPP’s sense that there are events external to the college (for example, but not limited to, this year’s Model UN) that might be academic in nature, but should still be permitted and possibly endorsed/funded (as applicable) by the college.

CEPP agreed there is a need for the DOFVPAA and DOSA to address the mid-semester Study Day and report back to CEPP. Issues to be considered over the next year include: Is the name “Study Day” fitting (versus Mid-Semester Pause, for example), defining the purpose of Study Day (e.g., is it for studying or is it for a mid-semester “pause”), does the timing fit the needs of students/faculty (i.e., is it aligned with common exam/paper times), clarifying what activities might be endorsed/constrained on Study Day, who approves activities for Study Day, development of a general policy for mid-semester Study Day, and procedures for communicating said policy.

1. **Proposal to adopt institutional definitions of civic engagement**

CEPP addressed SRC’s (Subcommittee on Responsible Citizenship) request (via IPPC) to review and endorse the adoption of common, institutional language for Civic Engagement at Skidmore. Since SRC’s proposal states that these definitions “would appear on our civic engagement webpage and assist the community in describing and assessing our work in this area”, CEPP gave these definitions and the larger proposal a careful review. Two main concerns arose.

First, the high-level definition for civic engagement was viewed to be a bit narrow. In the first sentence, it states “Civic engagement is based on an understanding of political, economic and civic institutions, democratic principles and practices, and concern for public issues and scientific and cultural literacy.” Several members of CEPP indicated that the use of “political, economic and civic institutions” could be problematic for two reasons. One, there is a bit of circular logic – i.e., defining “civic” engagement with an “understanding of …civic institutions”. Moreover, this definition limits the basis of civic engagement to understanding only political, economic and civic institutions – precluding consideration of other organizational/institutional forms that may also play a key role in civic engagement. Cultural arts institutions and community- or social-based organizations might also provide a strong basis of understanding for Civic Engagement.

Therefore, CEPP encourages SRC to revise that first sentence of the Civic Engagement definition to cast the net more broadly. A proposed revision is as follows: “Civic engagement is based on an understanding of political, economic, cultural, and other institutions aimed at the public good; democratic principles and practices; and concern for public issues and scientific and cultural literacy.”

Second, in the definitions for Civic Learning, Civic Skills, Community Service, Community Research, and Service Learning, the term “environmental” seems to be the only reference to science. CEPP wonders if SRC is substituting the term “environmental” for the broad term of “science”? Therefore, CEPP encourages SRC to consider use of the term “scientific” or “science” where appropriate.

1. **AAC&U FLILL forum meeting in Providence RI**

CEPP heard from two members who attended a recent AAC&U meeting on Faculty Leadership in Integrative Liberal Learning (FLILL). They reported on the information sharing that occurred when representatives of 15 schools met to discuss integrative learning trends and issues. A major take-away from the forum was how other peer institutions are employing integrative learning practices. For example, one school utilizes a competitive process for math majors (numbering 90+ at this institution) to apply for a two-week, January term with the opportunity to do graduate level, integrative work. Another school fulfills its writing requirement not with a course, but with writing portfolios. Students are required to submit their writing portfolios (from across the disciplines) to a panel of faculty evaluators who grade the writing samples (S/U). The general theme in these peer institutions was finding ways to get students to draw on and integrate their learning in a common, central experience.

CEPP recognizes it will be helpful to consider integrative learning and how it might fit into Skidmore’s future. Next steps for the college might include a FIG on integrative learning, discussions about how to define integrative learning (as a chronological process, as moments of integration, as interdisciplinarity – integrating ideas across disciplines, in majors – integrating learning across courses of the major), gathering more data on the types/forms of integrative learning, considering how integrative learning might relate to our GE review and GE requirements, etc. In sum, some kind of cross-fertilization will occur in the long run, sharing ideas across the GE curricular conversation and the dialogue surrounding integrative learning.

1. **GE Curriculum Review - Discussion of Committee of the Whole and next steps**

CEPP debriefed the highlights of Friday’s Committee of the Whole discussion on GE review. Several main themes emerged from Friday’s discussion. One, there are some concerns among the faculty that utilizing the Goals for Student Learning and Development (GSLD) might bind us too much to the past (since they were created several years ago), rather than give us freedom to think about (and imagine) the future. In addition, there were some concerns in applying GSLD for curricular reform versus for past assessment work. Yet another theme that emerged was interest in how much our current curriculum rests in GE requirements.

CEPP recognized these concerns and used them as the basis for a discussion on what CEPP’s next steps should be in GE review. CEPP members agreed that having some kind of goals/objectives for learning are important to building a curriculum (i.e., there is a need to define what it is we want, as an institution, to achieve with a GE curriculum). Other suggestions for structuring meetings with small groups of faculty/students/staff include the following starting points:

* Once we define what it is that we want our GE curriculum to achieve (i.e., goals), then we might examine how well our current GE requirements are accomplishing those goals.
* We might propose the same questions to small groups of faculty that we did at Friday’s meeting. Since only a few individuals shared their thoughts/concerns on Friday, we might be able to generate a more inclusive, robust discussion in these smaller, breakout groups. Therefore, asking folks to weigh in on “What process should we use?” (i.e., How should we have these conversations moving forward?) as well as on “What should the substance of our GE requirements be?” (i.e., What would you like to see in a revised curriculum?) could be good starting points.
* Sharing some sample requirements from peer institutions (e.g., Vassar, Amherst), considering entirely new models (e.g., having our requirements centered around developing literacy in a variety of ways, employing an integrative learning model), and taking a critical look at our existing model.
* Considering how we might develop a GE curriculum that supports our institutional goals, the goals of a liberal arts institution, and/or our mission (creative thought matters)
* We might examine whether a GE curriculum should be about breadth or about integration across the disciplines. For example, focusing on breadth requirements might breed departmental territoriality rather than what students need to know to become informed, engaged, educated citizens.
* Might we consider building our GE curriculum on several themes? For example, one theme might be “Evidence” (i.e., use of different pieces of evidence, evaluation of different sources of evidence, examining pieces of evidence, thinking critically about evidence).
* Might we consider building our GE curriculum on varying literacy outcomes? For example, quantitative literacy, scientific literacy, cultural literacy, writing literacy, visual, information, literacy in the arts, others – with students choosing (and/or faculty identifying) courses from each division (sciences, humanities, social sciences, pre-professional). Such an approach might promote student ownership of their GE curriculum and mindfulness of the meaning of their undergraduate work as it could force students to think about *why* they are taking difference courses.
* Then again, we could consider developing a GE curriculum that really puts us on the map. We might not necessarily have to use the existing curriculum or what others do as a starting point. One CEPP member said, our approach could be “Let’s be brave here. What could be truly unique?” CEPP pondered if we could identify connections between student affairs and academic affairs that might differentiate Skidmore in a unique way – possibly employing some requirements for graduation that might not be academic. Other differentiating approaches might be solicited in these small group sessions.
* Finally, CEPP agreed that we might be able to generate particularly rich discussions among the faculty with questions such as: “What does the world need from liberally educated students? What does the world need from graduates of higher educational institutions in general? What does the world need from Skidmore?

Beyond sharing status of CEPP’s work with small groups in October and November, we might utilize these smaller break-out sessions to identify the few big ideas. Then, we could use January’s Academic Summit to dig into the key ideas with a larger group of cross-disciplinary faculty.

Meeting adjourned at 5pm.