

Committee on Educational Policies and Planning (CEPP) 2008-09 Annual Report

The Committee on Educational Policies and Planning (CEPP) for the 2008-09 academic year consisted of the following people:

Erica Bastress-Dukehart, History, faculty representative (07-10 term)
Rochelle Calhoun, Dean of Student Affairs, administration representative
Terry Diggory, English, faculty representative (08-11 term)
Susan Kress, Vice President for Academic Affairs, administration representative
Dan Nathan, American Studies, faculty representative (06-09 term)
Kyle Nichols, Geosciences, faculty representative (06-09 term)
Rik Scarce, Sociology, faculty representative (07-10 term)
Claire Solomon '10, Student Government Association Vice President for Academic Affairs
Bob Turner, Government, faculty representative (08-11 term)

The committee met 30 times this year (including two retreats). In addition, CEPP members served on several subcommittees and task forces, including:

- Advisory Committee on Off-Campus Programs (ACOP), a standing CEPP subcommittee*
- Assessment Steering Committee, a standing CEPP subcommittee
- CEPP Grade Appeal Procedure subcommittee
- CEPP and Curriculum Committee (CC) Enrollment Cap subcommittee
- CC subcommittee to address the new writing requirement
- University Without Walls Working Group
- Center Study Group
- Responsible Citizenship Task Force
- Information Resources Council

During the 2008-2009 academic year, CEPP took up the following issues.

Academic Planning

From the beginning, CEPP discussed academic priorities and planning. This was an especially important subject after the economic downturn in September and October. In particular, CEPP considered the order of priorities, the process of adding or subtracting new priorities, and the issue of resources.

Dean of Studies Restructuring Review

In early October, CEPP and the Dean of Studies Restructuring Review subcommittee jointly submitted the Dean of Studies Restructuring Review (which is on the CEPP website). Following through on an earlier commitment (see the 2005-06 CEPP Annual Report), the Dean of Studies Restructuring Review subcommittee was constituted in the Spring of 2007, chaired by Kyle

* Formerly known as the Advisory Committee on International Study (ACIS).

Nichols, and charged “with reviewing the restructuring of the Office of the Dean of Studies and the relationship between the Office of the Dean of Studies and the new Office of Student Academic Services.” The subcommittee submitted a report to CEPP in April 2008. CEPP revisited the report in the Fall and suggested some minor revisions, in consultation with the subcommittee. The review was then made public and submitted to Muriel Poston, Dean of the Faculty, and Rochelle Calhoun, Dean of Student Affairs. It was agreed that the 2009-2010 CEPP Chair will enquire about the status of the report’s recommendations.

Grade Appeal Procedure

In May 2008, responding to a March 5, 2008 memo from Dean of Studies Michael Ennis-McMillan, CEPP charged a subcommittee with considering an academic grievance policy. Erica Bastress-Dukehart chaired the subcommittee, which assessed Ennis-McMillan’s recommendations; examined similar policies at other institutions; consulted with College counsel, the Committee on Academic Standing, and the Committee on Academic Freedom and Rights; and discussed the matter at Academic Staff in March. By the end of the year, the subcommittee generated a proposed grade appeal procedure. Next year’s CEPP will initiate a conversation with the Faculty about this subject.

Assessment Steering Committee

A new standing CEPP subcommittee (formerly the Assessment Task Force), the Assessment Steering Committee was chaired by Sarah Goodwin, Professor of English and the College’s faculty assessment coordinator. With prior approval from Susan Kress, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the subcommittee hired a part-time assessment facilitator, Lisa Christensen, who works out of the Registrar/Institutional Research Office. After much study, consultation (including a CEPP-sponsored faculty forum in March), and reflection, the Assessment Steering Committee presented CEPP with an institutional “Goals for Student Learning and Development” document, which CEPP endorsed in May. The document includes a preamble that reflects the distinctiveness of a Skidmore education and ties the goals to the College’s history, culture, and aspirations. The primary audiences for the document are expected to be internal. At the same time, the document will be made public and will be a key element in our Middle States reaccreditation process.

Online Courses

CEPP discussed this subject a great deal. Various views regarding the benefits and disadvantages of online courses were expressed. Two fundamental issues emerged: 1) should Skidmore knowingly allow students to receive credit for online course work taken at other institutions? and 2) should Skidmore offer online courses for residential students? CEPP read recent scholarship and news stories on the subject; consulted with Justin Sipher, Chief Technology Officer, Beth DuPont, Director of Academic Technologies, and Ann Henderson, Registrar & Director of Institutional Research; and solicited information from the Annapolis deans and Northeast deans listservs, all of which was useful. CEPP agreed that this topic deserves its continued attention and that it should foster a conversation with the community.

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Articulation Agreement

After consulting with Muriel Poston, Dean of the Faculty, and the Engineering Advisory Committee (which was chaired by Bill Standish), CEPP presented a motion to establish an

articulation agreement with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute that would permit eligible Skidmore students to obtain dual Bachelor degrees in liberal arts and engineering. The articulation agreement is fundamentally the same as agreements already in place with the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth College and Clarkson University. The motion passed unanimously at the November 7 Faculty Meeting.

Mysore, India Pilot Program

In September, CEPP received two documents from Joel Smith, Associate Professor of Religion and faculty member in Asian Studies, Rob Linrothe, Associate Professor of Art History and faculty member in Asian Studies, and Cori Filson, Director of Off-Campus Study & Exchanges, via ACOP: a proposal for the termination of Skidmore's affiliation with the New York State Independent College Consortium for Study in India (NYSICCSI), and a proposal for the establishment of a Skidmore in India Program with Jagadguru Sri Shivarathreeshwara Mahavidyapeetha (JSS) in Mysore, India. After assessing the proposals, and in accordance with Skidmore's guidelines for academic affiliations, CEPP brought a motion to terminate Skidmore's NYSICCSI affiliation, which passed on December 5, and approved a two-year pilot program in Mysore with JSS. (Subsequently, due to personnel changes and challenges, the administration decided to suspend the Mysore pilot program.)

Spelman College Exchange Agreement

In early November, CEPP approved a reciprocal student exchange program with Spelman College, a prestigious historically Black liberal arts college for women in Atlanta, Georgia. The program will begin next academic year (2009-10) and will permit eligible students (that is, academically qualified women) the opportunity to attend Spelman for a semester or an academic year. It will also permit qualified Spelman students to study at Skidmore for a semester or an academic year, either on campus or through one of Skidmore's study abroad programs.

Schenectady County Community College Articulation Agreement

Also in early November, CEPP met with Michael Ennis-McMillan, Ann Henderson, and Muriel Poston to discuss the continuation of the 2004 Articulation Agreement with Schenectady County Community College. CEPP agreed with Ennis-McMillan, Henderson, and Poston that the program is successful and should continue. As a result of this program's success, the College is considering articulation agreements with other community colleges in New York.

New York University College of Nursing Articulation Agreement

Late in the Spring, CEPP received, discussed, and approved an articulation agreement with NYU's College of Nursing. It will need to come to the Faculty in the Fall.

Study Days

In November, CEPP received a memo from David Karp, Interim Associate Dean of Student Affairs, regarding potential changes to the College's Study Day policy, which apparently exists only in a virtual state, without any clear oversight. CEPP determined that it is not empowered to approve the revisions Karp proposed, and that any changes to the policy would need the Faculty's approval. CEPP recommended that the Dean of the Faculty and the Dean of Student Affairs could work together on this issue, with CEPP coming in later in the process to lend its support, if necessary.

University Without Walls

CEPP received “A Report From The University Without Walls Summer Working Group” in early December. Dan Nathan represented CEPP on the working group, which was formed in June after the Faculty voted to retain UWW. CEPP discussed the academic program and the viability of the new UWW model outlined in the report. Although the committee agreed that the new program was academically more rigorous, it expressed serious concerns about simultaneously “ramping up” the academics and making UWW economically self-sustaining. CEPP then asked the departments most responsible for delivering the model if they were willing and able to support UWW in the way the model suggests. CEPP was concerned with programmatic commitments, not whether individuals would agree to do this work. All of the departments that responded to CEPP’s initial inquiry said they could not support the new UWW model. At the January 9 CEPP retreat, the committee discussed the matter further and at length. CEPP concluded that Skidmore, given its nature, size, and the multiple, seemingly ever-growing demands on its limited resources, could not sustain the kind of external degree granting program that students expect and deserve. As a result, CEPP voted, unanimously, to bring a motion to recommend to the administration that Skidmore close UWW. On January 30, the Institutional Policy and Planning Committee (IPPC) voted, unanimously, to join CEPP in bringing a motion to close UWW. The motion was co-written by CEPP and IPPC (and is posted on the CEPP home page), and was introduced at the February 6 Faculty meeting. CEPP participated in two information meetings—the Faculty-only one was on February 13, and the IPPC sponsored open meeting was on February 17—prior to the February 27 Faculty meeting, when the motion was discussed and subsequently passed.

Forum

On March 20, in Emerson Auditorium, CEPP hosted an open forum to discuss the interim report from the Center Study Group and the Assessment Steering Committee’s “Goals for Student Learning and Development” document. The event was well attended and produced robust conversations. CEPP members agreed that this was a good practice, an opportunity for open dialogue and a consultative moment.

Academic Honors

CEPP approved two honors convocation prizes for Environmental Studies, one for the science track and one for the social and cultural perspectives track.

CEPP and Curriculum Committee Enrollment Cap Subcommittee

In January, at the CC’s behest, CEPP and CC formed a subcommittee, chaired by Bob Turner, to “determine the state of enrollment caps across the college and propose appropriate revisions to the existing CEPP/CC enrollment cap guidelines.” Its report was submitted in July and CEPP will discuss it in the Fall.

Internships

In late April, CC asked CEPP to consider several internship-related issues. CEPP agreed that flexibility in internships is a positive development and is supportive of creative ways of facilitating internships. CEPP also approved variable credit hours for IN 100.

Academic Calendar 2011-2012

In mid April, CEPP discussed and endorsed the 2011-2012 Academic Calendar that Ann Henderson proposed.

CEPP Agenda

The number of action items sent to CEPP from various constituencies makes it difficult to pursue issues originating from within CEPP. As a result, CEPP considered the following:

- how relevant is the distinction between CEPP's "own" issues and those that come to the committee?
- what are the implications of the terms "policy" (implying review) and "planning" (implying envisioning the future) in CEPP's title?
- might time limits be identified on the agenda for each meeting?
- might certain items be dealt with outside of meetings?

It was agreed that, despite being productive under the current procedures, CEPP could be more efficient by taking up these issues.

CEPP Membership

Mimi Hellman and Rubén Graciani were elected to three-year terms and will replace Dan Nathan and Kyle Nichols, who have rotated off the committee. Erica Bastress-Dukehart will chair CEPP during the 2009-2010 academic year. Finally, in the interest of maintaining continuity, Bob Turner will retain membership on CEPP while he is teaching in London during the Fall of 2009.

For more details, note that CEPP's minutes as well as many of the documents discussed in this report can be found at <http://www.skidmore.edu/academics/CEPP/index.html>.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Nathan, Chair
August 3, 2009