

CEPP Minutes

February 1, 2002

Present: Sandy Baum (Chair), John Brueggeman, Pat Fehling, Doug Humphrey, Mike Meguerdichian, Linda Simon, Frank Gonzalez, Chuck Joseph, Sue Bender, Ann Henderson, Janet Sorensen.

The meeting began with Sue Bender presenting information about a Freeman Foundation grant recently received by the college. The grant will be used for a new study abroad opportunity involving field studies in Beijing, China. Sue distributed the handout "Enhancing Asian Studies at Skidmore College: Field Studies Program in Beijing, China." Sue said that this Skidmore owned study abroad experience would parallel our India study abroad program. The China program will be distinguished by a heavy social sciences/anthropological twist, emphasizing field studies. A lively program in the arts, particularly the ethnic arts, will also be a hallmark of the experience. There will be a cross-disciplinary aspect as well as an exchange aspect to the program. Delegates will visit back and forth as the program is being established. This proposal will come to CEPP formally in six months. CEPP will then bring the program to the faculty for approval, for it is the role of CEPP to introduce new study abroad programs.

Sandy – Is this a one time grant? There seems to be very good funding now, but what about the life of the program?

Sue – We don't anticipate funding being a problem. Study Abroad programs regularly turn a profit. There will be a lot of money going into this program initially, but once things are up and running, we believe it will be self-sustaining.

John – What about safety?

Sue – We are involved in a national organization of study abroad programs that provides excellent security information. There are a number of different ways we can keep informed.

Sue went on to describe the recent situation with students involved in the India program during the Fall 2001 term, when situations related to the 9/11 terrorist activity were determined to put students in jeopardy. She related how effectively that situation had been assessed and handled, using both international organizations and on-site faculty.

Chuck: Many thanks to Sue for her extra work on this project.

The focus of the meeting then turned to a presentation that Chuck lead, with the support of Sue and Ann. Chuck said that we are ready to begin looking at how to determine which areas need faculty lines. Ann has been looking at registration and student enrollment patterns and has been working with Sue and Chuck to begin to create criteria to support decision making in assigning new faculty lines. Chuck distributed a document called "Criteria For Addition of New Faculty Lines", and reminded us that at this stage,

the information contained in the document and our conversations needed to remain confidential. Ann reviewed the information in the document, explaining the Academic Priorities section, and the Points of Intersection table, as well as the Lower and Upper Division Tables, and the Independent Studies Table. There were five academic priorities listed: 1) The addition of resources to meet student program requirements, 2) Alleviating enrollment pressures created by curricular improvements, 3) Giving credit for academic activities where close student/faculty interactions are the norm – e.g. independent studies, individual research projects, collaborative research, internships, etc. 4) Reducing class size of 100 level courses or those sections identified as particularly appropriate for first and second year students, 5) Supporting new programs and the goals of the strategic plan.

After Ann's thorough presentation, Chuck opened up larger discussion.

Chuck – What is the student perspective?

Mike – We worry about depth vs. breadth, and want Skidmore to establish priorities so that we don't keep introducing new programs at the possible expense of existing programs.

Chuck – Are we losing students because of lack of availability of classes?

Ann – It is one of the reasons.

John stated his strong concern that the cultural diversity requirement was listed as an example in academic priority #2 of curricular improvements, reinforcing that it was not CEPP's original intent that new lines would be added to make the requirement function.

Sue responded to John's concern, explaining that faculty would be hired to fill many roles, not just to relieve pressures of departmental enrollment demands, but also to serve interdisciplinary needs, etc.

John reiterated that current faculty teaching existing courses should be strongly encouraged to convert the courses to meet the cultural diversity requirement, and that existing resources be the primary way that the needs be met.

Sandy pointed out that the Dean's Office must be given freedom to use judgement and make decisions, that the criteria can't tie the hands of the administration during the decision making process.

A short discussion followed about the fact that different departments load their faculty in different ways, so some comparisons are very hard to make. Linda pointed out that many departments use adjuncts for covering the existing schedule. Chuck agreed that more information is needed about adjunct hires.

A more specific discussion of the "Points of Intersection" Data Chart followed.

Pat – how do you determine what gets an X?

Ann – 75% to 80% use is how we determined the enrollment column. That is typically where we start to feel tight on campus.

John – I want to register my concern about putting so prominently the cultural diversity requirement, given the original intent of the requirement.

Sandy – The same applies to new programs.

Sue – Except you have to recognize that new programs do increase pressures on departments.

Ann – Is it better to include the Cultural Diversity requirement with general diversity requirements?

John – Yes.

Sue – We need to balance that with the reality of student choice/use patterns.

Chuck – This information is going to Academic Staff next. Each chair will make a case for the needs represented in their department.

General discussion followed about whether the criteria should be discussed with the faculty (for example whether or not the “Xs” should be left on the chart. Frank was concerned that faculty need to know more specific criteria in order to make effective requests for lines and to plan effectively for future developments in their departments. After extended discussion, it was evident that the criteria were too complex, and that further discussion with the larger group of faculty would create contentious arguments with no positive resolution. The general consensus was therefore to avoid such a long and fruitless discussion.

Summary Comments:

-Enrollment needs are certainly a major issue. Addressing these needs will help “stop the bleeding”. But once we have done that, what is our vision, or what best reflects our goals? The other categories of academic priorities beyond enrollment document our larger imagination/vision of what we would like to do as an institution.

-Chuck wants to use the government structure and CEPP to create a transparent process leading up to the fact that he has to ultimately make the decision on what areas get lines.

Sandy gave a reminder that we want to give Chuck and Jon Ramsey CEPP’s approval to go ahead with the Classroom protocols document. We need to give our approval at the next CEPP meeting.