

Minutes of CEPP Meeting, November 7, 2003

Present: Michael Arnush, Chuck Joseph, Megan Fair Hugh Foley, Pat Oles, David Peterson, Gordon Thompson (Chair), Patricia Rubio (scribe).

Minutes of October 31st were approved.

The affiliation with Columbia University's Biosphere 2 will be terminated once our student who is presently enrolled in the program has completed his studies.

Reports:

I) Gordon reported on the CRAP (Committee on Retention and Attrition Planning) Meeting.

II) Michael reported on the work of the Diversity/International Studies subcommittee.

The work of the committee has progressed along three tracks:

Diversity in the curriculum

Proposals by John Ramsey regarding the enhancement of pre-departure and re-entry experiences

Cori Filson's proposal regarding changing the structure according to which our students choose programs

The subcommittee will continue to work on connecting these issues to the VISTA document.

Once CEPP receives the report it may want to involve folks who have not been part of the subcommittee discussions

Questions: When do we consult with academic departments?

Which particular programs (Asian Studies, for example?)

III) Hugh reported on the progress of the First Year Experience subcommittee.

The subcommittee will begin to meet in smaller groups today; Hugh has a clear sense that something good will come out of the work of the subcommittee. Terry Diggory has made a proposal—which Hugh distributed to CEPP) that communicates his decision to come on board with an alternative model for LS1. He also reported that discussions on Terry's proposal have been preliminary, although it advances one of CEPP's recommendations to connect the First Semester course with advising. Although the feedback has not been extensive, Kate Leavitt has endorsed it.

Michael raised the issue that faculty may be protective of their classroom time and reject the idea of devoting, even a portion of it, for advising.

Another issue is that Terry's document does not address course content. Although advising and mentoring are important, the structure and objectives of the experience need to be articulated.

Hugh: The advising/mentoring portion could be analogous to a lab.

Gordon, he sees that student-faculty connections are emerging as common themes in both subcommittees.

The committee discussed optimum enrollment ceilings for first year common experience courses. Could we move from 17 to 12? Chuck: we would have to make sure that this is a priority and mover the rest of the pieces in the puzzle. 50 sections means 25% of the faculty involved in this part of the curriculum.

Hugh, he is worried that this piece of VISTA, which is central, may jeopardize the rest of the academic vision.

Michael, the faculty needs to feel passionate and excited about the enterprise, in order to buy into it.

We also discussed possible structures for the course: Overriding topics including both disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives?

The committee then re-visited the topic of uniqueness and external perception of our curriculum. Are there Skidmore characteristics that separate us from other four-year institutions? Is there a need to be unique? Or should we focus on excellence rather than on difference? Maybe the effort of identifying our uniqueness does not help us. One of the untapped resources are curricular connections to SPAC and other summer opportunities. This connection is worth exploring.