

CEPP Meeting, December 16, 2003

Present: M. Arnush (scribe in lieu of PR), M. Fair, H. Foley, F. Gonzalez, C. Joseph, N. Merrill, P. Oles, R. Rodriguez, P. Rubio (scribe at the next CEPP meeting), G. Thompson (chair)

1. Minutes of 12/5 approved.
2. Retreat: 1/30. Time and place TBA.
3. AAC&U: RR, MA, GT, CJ and Associate Dean Sarah Goodwin are attending the January meetings to work through the ViSta in the context of campus politics via a case study. Topic: "How do you move forward with curriculum change at a time of fiscal constraints?"
4. Spring agenda:
 - CEPP has promised to bring the ViSta to the faculty on 2/6; GT will revise over break, but CEPP will also consider the two fall semester subcommittee reports at the January retreat
 - Honors, from Jon Ramsey and Sarah Goodwin, to be circulated via email over the winter break
 - Affiliation with Schenectady County Community College: potential transfer students
 - John Brueggeman and Jeff Segrave have developed a strategy for the relationship between the curriculum and athletic program that John will share with CEPP
 - IA major: will not go to CEPP but the Curriculum Committee
5. Subcommittees for S'04:
 - What is the purpose of subcommittees: Is it the same as the first two subcommittees – to provide feedback on specific issues of implementation in the ViSta – or does it get at some of the fundamental values and principles in less obvious ways? Should we be explicit in the charge, or give less direction here than in the F'03 subcommittees? Will we be straitjacketing CEPP by crafting subcommittees that accommodate colleagues with specific agendas, or are we providing an opportunity to avoid disenfranchising faculty and thus give the faculty ownership of the ViSta? The subcommittees can explore the core of the ViSta and make connections not yet fully articulated, e.g., between critical thinking and citizenship.
 - Assessment
Discussion ensued about the goal of this subcommittee, and what would be the framework for discussion. Our goal is to launch a consideration of how can assessment be used most effectively in support of the ViSta. GT will revise the charge and share with CEPP.
 - Critical Thinking and Content
Revised charge:
"Skidmore faculty members have come increasingly to question the complementary relationship between how students think and the ideas with which they think. The situation is akin to that of a swimmer: one

may know how to swim, but without water, the ability resides only in the abstract.

“The question of the relationship between critical thinking and content is not abstract. Every discipline wrestles with balancing the task of training students how to grapple with the intellectual problems that confront them, while at the same time familiarizing them with the terminology, the history and the concepts of their subject. Creative thought matters; but we only know what a student is thinking through their work with a specific subject matter.

“How well are our core requirements, majors and courses balancing these tasks? Are our students learning how to think independently and creatively? Are they sufficiently conversant with the broad subject matter of their discipline(s)?

“The subcommittee will consist of ...

1. Three faculty members, one of whom will be a member of the CEPP and will chair.

2. One representative of the administration (Ray Rodrigues).

3. One student representative.

4. The subcommittee will confer with different members of the community to obtain relevant informed opinions.

“This subcommittee will make recommendations to CEPP for consideration by April 16.”

6. Subcommittee on Study Abroad and Diversity: final report presented to CEPP via email on 12/15 and summarized by MA and PR. The discussions within the Subcommittee on Study Abroad and Diversity were vigorous and heated, and the subcommittee designed a report that seeks to strengthen and enhance diversity across the curriculum. The report will receive consideration at the January '04 retreat.

7. First-Year Experience: meeting concurrently with this CEPP meeting. The subcommittee is in the final stages of crafting a first-year course that is an improvement over LS1 (see item 9 below).

8. CJ on the campaign: what do we do with the ViSta viz. the upcoming campaign? CJ expressed some concern about the Office of Advancement's lack of enthusiasm for the ViSta, and asked whether we need to design "sound bytes" to excite potential donors and the administrators of the campaign. There will be, most likely, a broader vision articulated by the President that will shape the institutional needs on the largest scale for the campaign; the academic vision will play a role in the campaign's goals but not an exclusive one. The proposals in the SADS report, e.g., are modest in terms of costs, but can be scaled if we choose to seek a more elevated level of support for diversity. CJ suggests that we invite Michael Casey in early February to discuss with CEPP these and related issues.

9. HF: the subcommittee on the FYE will meet two more times this week, is reaching some unanimity on portfolios and advising/mentoring, and is still considering the collapse of LS1 and LS2 into one first-year seminar. The

success of a first-year course(s) will depend upon the willingness of the faculty to deliver it. A discussion ensued about the type(s) of first-year seminars that the faculty will be willing to offer (newly designed courses, pre-existing courses including especially those in the LS2 curriculum, etc.). The goal of the seminar is to excite and challenge first-year students with exploration of novel ideas, and for faculty to design courses that speak to that engagement.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Arnush