

CEPP minutes, March 9

Present: Michael Arnush, Frank Gonzalez (Scribe), Chuck Joseph, Nick Merrill, Ray Rodriguez, Patty Rubio, Lind Simon, Gordon Thompson (Chair)

1. GT reported that IPC will be meeting regularly now. In the context of institutional planning, it was reported that Michael Casey sees the Vision statement as an internal document for an internal audience. GT also reported that CRAP is beginning to wrap up its work, the goal of which has been to identify students we want to retain and strategies for retaining them. We are apparently disproportionately losing Asian women and Spanish men, though the data do not show why. This raised the question of how focused retention efforts should be: should they target all students or focus on particular groups of students? RR suggested that mentoring of different kinds is essential. He also observed that we tend to lose neither the very best students nor the “smart slackers,” but rather those in between. GT said in conclusion that he will ask if CRAP’s report can be shared with CEPP. PR observed at this point that we need to inform our colleagues of the fact that the First Year Experience proposal is one part of a larger whole. This broader context needs to be presented in some way so that the First Year Experience is not seen and judged in isolation. MA suggested that an introduction to the FYE proposal could address this broader context.
2. It was decided that discussion of John Brueggemann’s orientation memo would be postponed until next time.
3. We decided to approve the Quantitative Reasoning proposal, but with the request that the vague language in the proposal regarding the date by which MA100 must be completed be changed to something along the following lines: MA100 is to be completed by the end of the first year, except in the case of transfer students.
4. There was discussion of CEPP’s lunch with LS faculty (at which MA, GT, and FG were present). Faculty asked why LS1 must be changed at this particular point in time. Some also suggested that competing interests were more to blame for the problem with LS1 than apathy or disinterest. Faculty also asked about the relation between the proposal to eliminate LS1 and the proposal regarding mentoring. Which has priority? And are they separable? There was general agreement among the faculty present that, while some shared books and lectures between different first-year seminars would be desirable, shared goals constituted a sufficient common experience. Concerns were expressed about what would happen to current LS 2 courses.
5. There was some discussion of the memo CEPP received from the Expository Writing Committee. LS and MA observed that they tried to address the concerns expressed by the memo in their latest draft of the FYE proposal.

6. We turned now to discussion of this draft.
 - a. MA raised the problem of choice. Is it feasible or must we resort to assigning the students randomly to first year seminars? MA reported having a conversation with the director of a very similar first year program at Trinity College; she said that allowing for choice was difficult but feasible. The suggestion was made that we should try to organize a conversation with her.
 - b. GT asked how the social sciences will fit into the three clusters currently identified in the draft. The apparent difficulties in trying to make them fit led to the suggestion of adding another cluster to be called something like “investigating social interaction.”
 - c. There was some discussion of the possibility of reversing in some cases the 3-credit/ 1-credit course sequence: this would make scheduling courses in the Fall term much easier, but it might be to some extent inconsistent with the goal of a common experience.
 - d. GT suggested the idea of making public lectures, convocations and others kinds of all-college experiences a required part of the first-year seminar by turning it into a 4-credit course. The drawback is that the FYE experience would then total 5 credits for the year and this is perhaps unfeasible.
 - e. FG expressed enthusiasm for the FYE proposal in its current form, singling out for special praise the section on staffing: this section both demands faculty commitment to the program’s delivery and in return is willing to acknowledge the need of substantial resources to make this delivery possible (especially, in this case, the creation of new faculty lines). FG proceeded to express one concern regarding the wording of the goals all first-year seminars are expected to meet: learning how researchers and scholars go about identifying and solving problems in their disciplines seems more appropriate to an upper-level course than to a first-year course. After some discussion, it was decided that this problem could be easily remedied by eliminating the words “scholarly” and “researcher” from the articulation of the goals. On the issue of costs, it was noted that Trinity provides every course with a fund of \$500 in addition to \$300 per faculty, resulting in a budget of \$50,000 per year.