

**Strategic Planning: Academic Planning Working Group Meeting**  
**19 August 2014, 10:30 am – 12 noon**  
**Hammond 314**

**Members attending:** Randall Grometstein (chair), Jeannette McMenemy, Cathy Canney, Chris Picone, Michael Turk, Linda LeBlanc, Jeff Godin

**Guests attending:** Brian Bercier, Jane Fiske, Paul Weizer, Liz Gordon, and someone from IT?

1. We accepted the minutes from July 8 meeting.
2. We briefly discussed an article from *Atlantic Monthly* posted to Blackboard about a startup called Minerva.
  - How do we define ourselves as a learning institution? Are we only about providing content?
- 3A. We had a broad ranging discussion **about student skills and general education requirements**
  - Do we want to continue the “banquet model” for Gen Ed (LA&S) skills? Most of us were educated under a model like that.
  - Some present called for alternative models that would **improve cohesion and efficiencies**. This sub-committee might suggest, for example:
    - **Reduce** the number of courses that fulfill LA&S requirements (However, it was also noted that some areas like LAB sciences are almost always fulfilled by a single course (Life Science). So in those cases we need *more* options on the books.)
    - Focus on demonstrating **competencies** rather than the number of hours in a classroom in a specific department/cluster.
    - Increase support for **team-taught courses** and **interdisciplinary** approaches that accomplish the two items above. (And get us out of our “silos.”)
    - Examine how internships, independent research (esp. summer) and other **experiential learning** might help students demonstrate specific competencies
  - No one called for abandoning the LA&S program as it now stands
- 3B. There was much discussion about **competency-based education (CBE)**.
  - Competency-based education is a common thread in all higher-education literature today, so we cannot ignore it in this strategic plan.
  - CBE goes beyond time students attend classes, and it goes beyond assessment of skills. **CBE requires faculty to demonstrate that students have “mastered” specific skills before moving on to the next topic or before passing the course.**
  - We already have run this model with the Basic Math modules for two years. And it is the traditional way to teach music and computer sciences.
  - CBE could reduce redundancies of students re-studying content they already covered in other courses, and CBE might reduce time to complete the degree for some students.
  - There was some concern that focusing on CBE could require a radical shift away from the current “buffet style” of the LA&S program. And is education simply a mastery of competencies?

- Demonstrating competency or mastery of some skills (e.g., critical thinking, citizenship) is much harder than people realize, and might not be realistic in a typical class setting.
- Jane Fiske had posted an article on CBE to the SP Blackboard site (that article has since been posted on the site for this subcommittee under Course Documents–Methods of Instruction, Skills, Knowledge.)
- CBE is not a panacea, but it is now part of the national landscape. All universities are facing the same declining demographics. So we need to do something to make us stand out. Why come to FSU? Maybe we can say that we take flexible approaches to learning. These are options to explore to see **what makes us stand out**.

3C. So what are the precise competencies that faculty must teach and students must master?

We need to refine and distill a **shorter list of skills/competencies** that we are supposed to be teaching, especially for the LA&S program. We have one list five Goals for the LA&S program approved through governance in 2007-2008 (e.g., ethical reasoning, aesthetic appreciation). Since then we have added new skills with the 2012 NEASC report (e.g., reading, information literacy), and now others are emerging as employer needs (e.g., team building, attitude, technological literacy). Which of these can we really expect all students to master via a liberal arts education?

4. Summary statements for the Thursday SP meeting

- We defined the charge of this committee earlier this summer.
- We agreed to retain some version of LAS. We are not sure what it would look like, but we will need to revisit the 2007-08 proposal.
- We will look at potential “efficiencies” (team-taught classes, interdisciplinary classes, internships, independent research) to reach some of the goals of CBE and general education skills.
- We are NOT all on the same page regarding how much emphasis to put on CBE.

5. For the **next meeting** on Sept. 4 we will continue to address the first two questions of our charge:

1. *How do we strategically plan so our students are armed for the future? (What skills do they need for grad schools, employers, technology literacy, etc.? We can address LA&S here)*
2. *How do we improve admission, retention, and completion? Curricula, online learning, scheduling, competency-based assessments, demographics; learning methods (incorporating students and faculty), delivery methods?*

Specific tasks:

- We need to start to master the data available (e.g., demographics, retention rates, etc.) **The Factbook** on the SP website has much of the data we need. Ask Anthony if we need something specific.
- Randall G. will report on *Checklist for Change*, especially the section on CBE.
- Linda L. will report on delivery methods
- Chris P. will compile the various lists of skills and competencies that have been tossed

around. This will include a summary of skills requested from employers in an AACU survey recently sent by Chris Cratsley.

- We are encouraged to read *Checklist for Change*. Five copies are available with Academic Affairs. It discusses competency based education and many other trends in higher education.

Submitted by Chris Picone. If anyone who missed the meetings wants a more detailed (but less organized) transcript of the conversation, please send a note to [cpicone@fitchburgstate.edu](mailto:cpicone@fitchburgstate.edu).

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