

Strategic Planning Committee
Academic Values Working Group
Hammond 314, 25 August 2014

Members: Rob Pijewski, Meg Hoey, René Reeves, Annette Sullivan

Guests: Anthony Wilcox, Jane Fiske, Paul Weizer, Jannette McMenemy, Karen Frank Mays, Ashley Walters

Meeting called to order at 1:10 PM

1. The Working Group's new charge was handed out (as posted on Blackboard and the SPC website). One goal of the new charge is to help faculty keep pace with the increasing demands on higher education. Another is to initiate a discussion of the role of LA&S in FSU's educational mission. Do we need to reconsider our current LA&S curriculum? Is our current LA&S curriculum the best way to achieve our LA&S goals? For example, do we need to revise the Global Diversity component of our LA&S curriculum? Should courses like Nutrition have a Global Diversity component?
2. A committee member recounted conversations with a student from the Netherlands who was enrolled in a Dutch LA&S institution. The Dutch student noted that LA&S institutions are rare in the Netherlands, and believed they should be more common. The committee member concluded that it was a good thing that US post-secondary educational institutions tend to include LA&S in their curricula.
3. Question: what is the academic value of LA&S education? Members and guests were asked to list out the values that they associated with LA&S. There was broad overlap on developing skills or abilities.
4. Question: if skill building is a central academic value, how do we ensure we are doing it, and how do we ensure we are doing it across the curriculum? It was agreed that in the LA&S context the notion of "skills" should not be construed only in a narrowly professional way, but more broadly to include language, STEM, and ethical abilities. Although this is a laudable goal, it can be difficult to achieve. For example, do non-Math majors who barely pass an introductory college-level math class really gain competency in mathematics?
5. Question: is it enough to provide students with the opportunity to acquire the multiple LA&S skills while allowing for the possibility that if they have no interest in them they will do poorly and arguably fail to achieve competency, or must FSU guarantee that every student will achieve competency in all LA&S skills?
6. Question: do the intro courses that many students take to fulfill much of FSU's current LA&S curriculum actually build skills? Do they ensure that students become skilled in their respective discipline, or does this kind of skill building only happen in upper-level electives? Discussed the difficulty of defining critical thinking, measuring critical thinking, and then establishing causality between a particular curriculum and the development of critical thinking skills.
7. It was noted that the SPC's Academic Planning Working Group has also been discussing a review of FSU's LA&S curriculum to see if the LA&S curriculum matches FSU's

academic values. Perhaps the Academic Values Working Group should add its voice to this call?

8. It was also noted that the working chairs of the SPC met and agreed on the following points: 1) the need to improve student retention; 2) the need to review our current programs to see if new programs are needed or if existing programs need to be improved
9. Two readings were suggested: *Checklist for Change* by Robert Zemsky and *Global Achievement Gap* by Tony Wagner. Zemsky's book is germane to the issue of curriculum development. Do we tend to haphazardly add courses and expand our curriculum, or do we review and revise our curriculum with intentionality with an eye toward curricular cohesiveness? When do we subtract courses or contract our curriculum? Wagner's book argues for the need to train students with skills for jobs that don't yet exist. It also argues that these are the same skills necessary for active, responsible citizenship. Wagner focuses on seven skills in particular: critical thinking and problem solving; collaboration across networks and leading by influence; agility and adaptability; initiative and entrepreneurship; effective oral and written communication; assessing and analyzing information; curiosity and imagination.
10. It was noted that the PARCC initiative dovetails with our discussion, both in the focus on skill development broadly but also in identifying which skills are most important. PARCC's mission is to integrate these goals in the post-secondary education system so that post-secondary educational institutions continue what is established in the K-12 system.
11. Question: meetings occur now among secondary and post-secondary faculty, but is the goal of these meetings to further the integration discussed in item 10? Yes, PARCC's goals are often reflected in these meetings.
12. Question: what does our discussion of how the LA&S curriculum achieves our academic values mean for the faculty and faculty workloads? This question merits further discussion.
13. Question: what is FSU's brand? How do we hook students? Look at the other State University websites and how they pitch their respective institutions. Does FSU do this as effectively? Perhaps if we expanded our community linkages with more service-learning type experiences for students this would allow us to create a more appealing brand? Discussed how FSU's brand has evolved over the years. Are FSU's achievements getting sufficient attention? Are they effectively marketed?
14. Conclusions: basic agreement on the academic value of LA&S, on understanding LA&S as contributing to skill development broadly speaking, and on the need to review how our LA&S curriculum is doing. Is our LA&S curriculum doing what we want?