Lilly Fellows Network Exchange Program Workshop
Sacred Heart University – April 15-18, 2012

Rough Set of Notes from Three of the Table # 2 Discussion Sessions on Tuesday, April 17

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SHU Faculty Leaders: June-Ann Greeley (Theology/Religious Studies), Joe Wesney (Physics)

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9:30 – 10:45 ***Faculty Resistance, Faculty Buy-In***

Problems?

- "Liberal Arts" vs. Engineering or Business or some other academic or vocational focus
- Resistance often relates to an "Us vs. Them" mentality of members of the faculty and leadership
- Or "Us vs. Them" related to faculty vs. administration ➔ mandates and support distribution issues
- "The Credit Crunch" - We don't have time or academic "space" for these add-on core courses
- "Credit Sprawl" – We already have too many courses outside of the academic major focus.
- Workload questions/issues for the Gen. Ed. faculty not wanting to take on more or broader responsibility. Also issues of insecurity outside of their academic specialty comfort zone.
- Issues of job security – Will the new core offerings reduce faculty allocations to our programs?
- Drawing faculty attention away from their specialty and research time/focus.
- Meeting the content provision needs for the Academic Majors – There are licensure issues, MCATS, professional accreditation requirements that must be met.
- Service department courses vs. Gen. Ed. courses – how do they fit in to this core?
- The "core" is perceived to be a diversion from what is important.
- Questions of faculty commitment in recognition for tenure consideration.
- The problem of rank/status – senior faculty vs. junior faculty vs. adjunct faculty.
- "Freshman Seminar" should be for senior faculty only – must avoid use of adjuncts.
- We would have more investment from senior faculty if their role was recognized as being significant.
- Senior faculty would be better able to guide freshman and junior students into their proper majors.
- Credit sprawl is cumbersome – you can't keep doing more.
- There is a need for examples of excellence and success as models of a workable core curriculum.
- A resistance to change by faculty – change demands investment of energy, time and "pain".
- Interdisciplinary studies represent a threat to academic "purity".
- There is an "urban legend" of the importance of the number of credits needed for a successful academic major or minor.
- Parents' and students' expectations for "vocational" preparation for a career, limits their expectation, demand, or desire for "extras" unrelated to their career focus.

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Faculty Resistance, Faculty Buy-In **(continued)**

Suggested Solutions?

- Have broad representation of the entire faculty involved in the planning and development phase.
- Especially involve those who might be resistant or obstinate with regard to change.
- Seek to overcome the "us vs. them" phobia, or reality.
- Try to overcome the "silo mentality", and the associated fear factors of challenge to security.
- See if a means for faculty recognition and credit toward advancement can be incorporated into service to the core commitment.
- Seek to enable the faculty to feel more comfortable outside of their area(s) of specialty and expertise.
- Help faculty to see the opportunity for their personal professional growth.
- Examine the benefits of interdisciplinary scholarship and teaching to their own academic perspective.
- Enable buy-in by the new, junior faculty, so that they can realize the benefit of this as "critical", cutting-edge work for academic advancement.
- Recruit "champions" to the faculty. Support those who are "champions", and those making significant contributions to the development and delivery of the core.
- Don't allow the building of a "fact pumping" model of curriculum.
- Build a case for the value of the investment of time, energy and intellectual vigor.
- A well-crafted curriculum may require a year or more to engineer. Help faculty and administration leaders to understand, and support this.
- Enable faculty to critically review the current curriculum/practices and help them see what might be considered as "broken" or in need of significant improvement.
- Attempt to preempt political entanglements by: visiting faculty group meetings within their silos; conduct specific, relevant, topic-focused discussion groups, perhaps with position papers produced; once problems are recognized by a broad representation of the faculty buy-in should follow.
- Have faculty define what all students need as "skill set" and "attitude set" to be academically successful across their academic careers, both in general, and specifically in their majors/minors.
- Help parents and students see the importance of the core curriculum experience regardless of career plans. Clarify the perception of what is needed to be a well-rounded scholar, as well as a trained specialist in some specific career area.
- Make the case for the distinction between vocational training experiences, and the "liberal arts and sciences". Focus on the broad-spectrum aspects of their academic growth as well-educated people.
- Work toward enabling both faculty and students to see the value of the structural development and sequential nature of some course experiences WITHOUT needless overlap and time wasted on rehash of the prior course's content. This is perceived as a waste of time and effort, and is often associated with students' "boredom" in some academic programs.
- For all involved, appeal to a well-defined "sense of mission" associated with the core's development and implementation. This should enhance not only faculty and administration buy-in, but ultimately to student buy-in and growth as well.
- Recruit students to contribute to the development of the core curriculum by identifying their "wants" and "likes" for faculty consideration.
- Find ways of promoting cross-disciplinary dialog. Find a means for the "Two Cultures" to communicate and where appropriate share a common focus. (The "Two Cultures" can be defined in terms of multiple pairings within most colleges and universities, as well as in society as a whole.)

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11:00 – 12:15 ***Curriculum: What do (should) we teach?***

- We should look at the outcomes of studies of "employers" listing of their needs in well-prepared prospective employees.
- Examine the studies of 21st Century expected life needs of this "Millennium Generation".
- Consider the defined University outcomes/expectation specific to each institution. What would be the model of the "ideal scholar" graduating from that institution?
- Consider the Gen. Ed. expectations, professional school/licensure requirements.
- Provide for the development of "critical thinking" skills throughout the curriculum.
- Seek to enhance intellectual curiosity, and foster the sense of personal intellectual satisfaction to be derived from "learning for learning's sake" in order to awaken and satisfy that innate human curiosity.
- Provide skills for the students' movement into a "globalized" future: Languages, cross-cultural awareness and appreciation.
- Exercise caution in using catch words, such as "sustainability", which have been found to be "significant intellectual turn-offs" for some students. Words such as "environmental" and "stewardship" are found to be more acceptable.
- Incorporate topics and activities into the curriculum that will enhance "eloquencia perfecta"(sp?) so as to enable students to progress in their ability to speak and write well. Focus on eloquence in all forms of communication, including effective development and delivery of group presentations.
- Consider language requirements for global communication.
- All students should have at least 2 theology and 1 philosophy course.
- There is a need to have an emphasis on ethics woven throughout the curriculum design.
- Examination and accommodation of the tension between the "societal good" and the "pragmatic career goal" application aspects of ethical sensitivity and training.
- Be clear in defining the institutional identity and academic focus. (e.g., as with SHU's CIT focus)
- Service learning should be integrated throughout the span of the core experience.
- Emphasize the importance of experiential learning.
- Incorporate aspects of leadership training: task coordination; team interaction/projects/problem-solving; importance of vocation ➔ sense of "calling"; outreach and interaction with people.
- Integrate as much multi-cultural content and involvement as would fit naturally in courses without being forced nor contrived. Stress the importance of awareness of cultural diversity, and appropriate responses to others.

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1:45 – 2:30 ***Pedegogy: Engaging Students***

- Consider what it means to teach the "Millennial Student", with their "Tech-Savvy" capabilities. They are often students who have short attention spans, who are easily bored and easily distracted.
- Weigh and emphasize the importance of collaboration in learning.
- Provide a focus for students to strive for academic and personal "authenticity".
- Carryout the design to provide for instruction and learning activities beyond the classroom.
- Consider the tech-savvy students and instructors by utilizing a variety of media, and incorporating electronic communication avenues where appropriate.
- Seek to find ways of actively engaging students in their own learning both in and outside of class.
- Provide instructional techniques that require the students fully assume responsibility for their own learning – no passivity allowed.

Pedegogy: Engaging Students **(continued)**

- Engineer the instruction so as to not have the professor as the primary "source" of learning activty.
- As much as possible have the professor model intellectual curiosity, inquisitiveness and enjoyment of learning by serving as the "guide on the side" rather than the "sage on the stage" for the students.
- Seek to broaden and strengthen the attention spans of the students.
- All in-class activities should require completion of out-of-class preparation in advance of class.
- Students should consider questions and readings based upon links to overarching ideas and big questions which relate to the topics being considered.
- Most in-class activities and out-of-class assignments should provide some reflective opportunity, and written response sent to the professor and possibly other students as well.
- Verities of media should be utilized, and when well-suited recent news announcements, events, current issues should be incorporated, but not contrived nor force-fit into lessons.
- Invite students to contribute relevant news clippings, or e-news releases to the professor and their classmates for possible consideration.
- Students should maintain some sort of journal or portfolio of notes, reflections and assigned work.
- Note-taking during lectures, discussions, labs, and from reading assignments provides an additional avenue of cognitive engagement for the students and should be encouraged. (An incentive for such note-taking/journaling practices would be for the professor to allow at least occasional evaluation format that would allow an "open-notebook/journal" for quizzes, tests, and/or exams.)
- Provide for on-line discussions as much as deemed beneficial and appropriate.
- Have students' written assignments submitted electronically (e.g., email, Black Board, Web-Assign)
- Maintain e-portfolio for each student's self-evaluation over the course of their academic experience.
- As much as practicable professors should provide prompt e-feedback to each student regarding assignments submitted, and/or responses to in-class questions, contributions to discussions, etc. Even a very short response and interaction can give the students with the sense that they are not just a "number". In addition, this gives the professor a better basis for assessment and grade assignments at the time of submission of mid-term and final evaluations.
- The use of "tweets" and "blogs" and "discussion boards" can be valuable as long as they are focused, and provide a means for significant engagement.
- Students should be encouraged to raise meaningful questions. An atmosphere of openness to questions, and a shared sense that even other students and the professors need to seek the answers to questions from time to time. One contributor at the table indicated that he likes to point out to his students that in the grand scheme of things, when compared to what can be known, "We are all equally stupid! Realize that, and ask a question when you need to find out about something."
- Even during in-class lecture or discussion sessions, one of the table contributors indicated that he has set up a "Twitter" account so that his students can "tweet" a question that they have. In this way the flow of the lecture or discussion is not disrupted, and if desired, it enables the student to maintain anonymity. The tweeted question appears on the professor's desk/lectern computer screen as a scrolling message across the bottom. In this way, he can then work in a response when a break in the discussion allows, and when the response best fits into the flow.
- Millennial students need to develop the skills of listening and active engagement in receiving and processing verbal information. One contributor felt that he needed to buck the trend away from instruction by lecture. He has become, as he described it, a "hard core lecturer" often in his classes, in part at least, to train his students to listen intently, and engage their minds in long-term aural reception and processing of information. Not all at the table agreed that they would go so far, but all could understand his point.
- Discussions should be used as a "philosophy laboratory", and scheduled time for them be provided.
- Pedagogy should always be planned to provide for as many learning styles of students as possible and practicable. A rich variety of approaches and modes of instruction should be designed into courses.