

**Notes of the Faculty Forum  
On the Core Curriculum**

**November 20, 2008**

The meeting was called to order by Senate Vice Chairperson Tom Poundstone at 3:00 p.m. on November 20, 2008. Those Senators in attendance were: Chairperson Brother Charles Hilken, Past Chairperson Carla Bossard, Jerry Brunetti, Gerry Capriulo, Zach Flanagin, and Marty Rokeach. Also present were: David Bird, Kara Boatman, Robert Bulman, Vice Provost Jane Camarillo, Kris Chase, Martin Cohen, Carmel Crane, Cathy Davalos, Provost Beth Dobkin, Costanza Dopfel, Charles Hamaker, Allan Hansell, Christa Kell, John Knight, Helga Lenart-Cheng, Annalee Lamoreaux, Bill Lee, Lidia Luquet, Claude R. Malary, Catherine Marachi, Mary McCall, Asbjorn Moseidjord, Michael Nathanson, Dean Frank Murray, Ron Olowin, Marie Pagliarini, Bill Perkins, Chris Ray, Lorien Romito, Norm Springer, Carole Swain, Vice Provost Frances Sweeney, Mary True, Dean Steve Woolpert, and Paul Zarnoth.

Vice Chair Poundstone thanked the members of the Core Curriculum Task Force for their work over the past years researching and addressing the core curriculum. A second forum will be held during community time on December 3, 2008. The CCTF has posed several questions for discussion: what is the advice from faculty, what are the questions from faculty, what are the pros and cons of particular models, and what would the faculty like to see happen?

Chair Brother Charles added that the CCTF will be reviewing the feedback from the faculty discussions over the break, and two models will be offered to the Senate in the spring semester. The Governance Committee as proposed by the CCTF to oversee the core in the future needs careful consideration, i.e. the committee membership, reporting structure, and charge.

Vice Chair Poundstone reported that departments have been meeting on the Core Models and he has received feedback from several departments. He opened the floor for discussion.

Provost Dobkin said she encouraged faculty to consider this as an opportunity to position SMC for an economic turnaround. Anything decided will take at least four years to complete and hopefully at that time there will be more stability in the economic markets. Think about what is best for students, what we know now about student learning, and how we might make the best of what we do well.

Statements and comments:

Senator Flanagin – If advising becomes more labor intensive, do faculty teach less, stop research?

David Bird – Concerned with the primary assumption that a developmental process is what is needed at SMC – a core curriculum set up to mold students morally as well as intellectually. He teaches and tests for content and not moral improvement.

Not opposed to a community fostering certain values, but the job of the academic curriculum is to teach content. He worries about the dissolution of the disciplines.

Annalee Lamoreaux – The development is broad, particularly including changes in the way students think, moving from more simplistic ways of thinking to complex ways of thinking. This can be done in conjunction with content. Provide an environment that invites students to grow and change and think in different ways.

Past Chair Bossard – She teaches content, but chooses locations for Jan Term to make the students think about their values and ways of thinking. She does not, however, want to assess their moral development for credit.

Lidia Luquet – The direct relationship of the teacher with the classroom is very personal, the individual advising is where the power is, we must strengthen that. She said she would like to support the protection of Seminar and emphasize the culture of dialogue between student and teacher.

Provost Dobkin – Will soon begin engaging on an academic planning process. She is waiting to know where there is consensus. It is not the intent of anyone to intrude on the disciplinary expertise of another faculty member.

Allan Hansell - The Department of Biology is in agreement with Goals 1-8, but concerned with #9 and 12. Questioned the definition of community in #10.

Christa Kell – She has come to like the learning goals. Not all courses address all learning goals. Spoke in favor of Seminar model in Model C. The advising task force is looking at the work that would be involved in terms of portfolios. There is a way to look at it outside of the box.

Senator Capriulo – Goals 9 and 12 do not represent core content and learning opportunities. Biology supports Catholic, LaSallian core values. Students should engage in common good and well being enterprises, but do not agree that those enterprises should be part of a general education core requirement.

Annalee Lamoreaux – Responded that it is not the service learning activities themselves, but what the students learn from those activities. She supports the idea of a portfolio because it provides a manner to assess what the students have learned from their activities. Social justice is important to SMC as an institution; if we value it how do we promote it and assess it.

Paul Zarnoth - The core curriculum defines what we are as a college, it helps to decide what we want to be and how we portray ourselves to the community at large. What are the things that set SMC apart? SMC has received recognition for its involvement with social justice issues. It is important that we do not ignore who we are. Social justice should be part of the core curriculum.

Chair Brother Charles - In terms of assessment, how does one “flunk” someone for not getting it relative to the service learning experience? Annalee Lamoreaux responded that it is difficult, but the assessment would address the extent of engagement on the part of the student.

Bill Lee - The models seem to indicate a large effort, and he doesn't see the outcome as being much different for the students. As an economist, he is hesitant to make large changes at this time.

Christa Kell - As a parent, former student, and an educator she would appreciate the learning outcomes of what she could expect her student to get at the end of a four year education. In her opinion behavioral objectives are needed to know if the goal is achieved.

Provost Dobkin - The students have changed over the years, but she is not sure if the curriculum has adjusted to meet the new students. Increasingly institutions are being asked to show what they do. That is the assessment question. Students need to know before coming to SMC what will be expected of them. All faculty are unique with their own strengths. Part of this is recognizing what strengths we have in the community, being able to clarify that in terms of expectations, being able to define what a successful SMC student should look like and showing how to deliver it.

David Bird - What problems do we have that these changes help to solve? Does not understand why goal #12, "Well Being" needs to be part of the core curriculum? Does not understand why all of the student experience needs to be expressed in the curriculum?

Marie Pagliarini – Uncomfortable with the definition of goals 9 thru 12, it is too restrictive.

Kara Boatman - Perhaps what is broken is lack of communication about our current curriculum. A real question from parents and students is whether the student is qualified for employment upon graduation. She said she didn't see anything in the documents that would address this question. Currently, resources are scarce for the college and for students. Not sure that imposing more requirements on the students will serve them well. Some students may have the maturity to engage in a portfolio exercise on their own, in reflective conversations with their peers, professors and advisors. Others may need the activity of compiling a portfolio. Suspicious of a system that imposes exactly the same requirements for very time-consuming activities on all students.

Paul Zarnoth – The world is progressing, the students are changing, other colleges are advancing their curriculum and if we do not we will fall further and further behind. Maintaining the status quo is incredibly dangerous.

Senator Flanagin – do we have consensus of 1-8? Do we want behavioral objectives as part of the list? Do we want an integrative experience? Do we want it to extend through the four years and be a portfolio process? Do we want it to be a capstone class? Do we believe 5-8 can be achieved by someone without a graduate degree in the subject?

David Bird – He asked about the reason behind the creation of the CCTF. Christa Kell answered that our constituents want to know what it is that we do, and we

need a vehicle by which to measure it to prove that we do what we say we do. The portfolio gives the students the ability to own their own education. Each student's portfolio will look very different.

Senator Capriulo – The original charge was to look at what we are doing and report on the findings. We never got that; we got a new set of learning goals and models to address that. We never were asked the question, how well do we address the learning outcomes now? What we have now are three models that do not include an assessment of what we are currently doing. There are many ways of assessing once the subject of the assessment is known. He is asking the questions to make it the best it could possibly be, although there are different views on how to make that happen. There are elements of truth in all three models. He suggested that a bit of Models A, B and C be applied to what we do now, as opposed to throwing out what is currently done.

Dean Woolpert – It is a good idea to look at our general education requirements. General Education goals are currently listed in the catalog but not many faculty could tell you what they are and we do not know whether we are any good at it. The Senate heard the report from the CCTF on the recommended outcomes and affirmed them. The CCTF then issued a report on where we do well with regard to the goals and where we do not do well. We do know what the problems are. Models were then developed to address the solutions. It is now the task to adopt a policy through the elected faculty representatives and the community. Once adopted, a group will be delegated to implement and assess its progress. It is not the time for the full range of specifics and details to be readdressed. The current faculty committees have experience in educational policy assessment through the Program Review Committee, the Undergraduate and Graduate Educational Policies Committees, and the Academic Senate.

Past Chair Bossard - Goal #9, “Common Good” is an organizing principle, not a learning goal.

Kris Chase – Don't adopt a curriculum aimed at assessment of the learning goals. The core curriculum should stand on its own. If there is a problem of assessing our learning goals with our current curriculum, it might be that the way we are assessing is wrong. We want many things for our students but there are limited resources.

Costanza Dopfel – Suggested to recirculate the document from the CCTF referred to by Dean Woolpert assessing where we are doing well and where we need improvement. It would also be helpful to know what other institutions are doing.

Provost Dobkin – We are trying to define the student experience, what our students could expect.

Senator Capriulo – Many faculty have a fear of assessment, what is it and who is judging? Difficult to agree on the definition of justice, virtue, and common good. Who will decide what is counted? He suggested that a full faculty vote be taken.

David Bird – He likes the list of 12 learning goals. But, assessing how much value is given to each item is difficult.

Senator Rokeach – Have to respect interdisciplinary expertise, just because something outside of the discipline is introduced in a class does not mean the student should be given academic credit in the other discipline.

Provost Dobkin – Completely respects and values disciplinary expertise and would never presume to judge – it has to be owned by the faculty.

Claude Malary – Must distinguish between the disciplines – there are some disciplines where expertise is crucial.

Vice Chair Poundstone – All faculty have a passion to serve the students well, even though there are differing opinions as to how to achieve that. More conversation is needed. An online survey will be conducted posing specific questions.

Senator Capriulo suggested that a list of formal questions be designed for the next faculty forum.