

## **Transformational Change Working Group**

Monday, February 23, 2009

9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

427A Waterman

PRESENT: Bob Taylor, David Barrington, Patty Corcoran, Lynne Bond, Jim Burgmeier, Richard Galbraith, Michael Gurdon, Susan Harrington, Clinton Jaspersen, Stephanie Kaza, Chris Lucier, Kathy Manning, Eleanor Miller, Beth Mintz, David Neiweem, Rodney Parsons, Julia Russell, Mara Saule, Sondra Solomon, Annie Stevens, Steele Taylor, Thomas Vogelmann, and Beth Walsh (Staff Council President, observer)

ABSENT: Sha Bradley, Domenico Grasso, Sharon Henry, and Sherwood Smith

STAFF PRESENT: Gary Derr, Catherine Symans

Minutes from the Feb. 9<sup>th</sup> and Feb. 16<sup>th</sup> meetings were distributed and approved.

Chair Bob Taylor reported that the McGuire report is now posted on the Transform website.

As agreed upon at the last meeting, the group broke up into six smaller groups (see attached) to define terms, issues and ideas with regard to the following six issues/goals:

1. A common curricular core for all undergraduates
2. Undergraduate engagement, e.g., 1<sup>st</sup> year experience, advising center, and some sort of senior experience
3. Financial sustainability, including the strategic allocation of resources to address student capacity issues, etc.
4. Research and graduate programs
5. Interdisciplinarity
6. Administrative efficiency

After 45 minutes, the groups reported back to the larger group for the remainder of the meeting:

### Group 1 – Common Undergraduate Core Curriculum (Bond, Taylor, Burgmeier)

The group discussed the following points:

- What are potential contributions and reasonable goals of a core curriculum?
- What are the main challenges in developing a core curriculum?
- What are the different ways to think about common core curriculum and different forms of learning, e.g., service learning, community service, learning communities, that might be employed?

There are a lot of ways to think about a core curriculum.

Goals:

1. Ensuring core competencies
2. Having a shared experience with students which helps students connect & relate with on another integrating their learning experiences.
3. Providing a foundation that makes them better informed.

Some potential challenges:

- Some programs may worry that a common core curriculum will constrain all the courses that they require.
- Need to consider transfer students.
- Delay admissions to some programs after year 2 – we might end up with students who are stranded and not able to get into certain programs.
- Possibility of actually exacerbating redundancies.

NOTE: a more detailed set of comments from this group is attached below.

#### Group 2 – Undergraduate Engagement (Barrington, Manning, Stevens, Corcoran)

The group discussed:

- Advising
- First-year experience
- Retention.

There is an real wealth of information about these matters in surveys and report available to us, e.g., the Kuh report.

Goals include:

- Develop a strategy for advising
- Testing different models of advising across the university

Suggested exploring common first-year experiences and the possible connection to a UVM core curriculum. First year-experience and advising must be both social and academic in nature.

#### Group 3 – Research and Graduate Education (Galbraith, Vogelmann, Jaspersen, Solomon)

Issues:

- Tuition reimbursement for graduate students
- Admission
- GTA/GTF allocations – how they are made
- Dissertation – 20 credits – why should students be paying for this?
- Graduate experience – difficulty of producing a strong sense of community in this smaller study body.
- Academic review process – we have not been good about taking these reviews seriously
- Core facilities that support research, e.g., the library, scientific facilities, etc., need to be identified and cultivated
- Need for more support and personnel relating to grant writing and administration
- Strategic planning – has not historically guided resource allocation
- We could do a better job of helping fund research programs
- Hiring faculty specifically for research
- VP for Research & Dean of Grad Studies – we need to have a strong Vice President & Graduate Dean, with real resources and authority

#### Group 4 – Financial Sustainability (Saule, Russell, Gurdon, Lucier)

The group discussed the following two questions:

- What is it we're trying to sustain?
- What is the timeframe in getting to transformation and then sustaining it?

Goal:

- Financial sustainability

Assumptions in strategic financial plan:

- No increases in the budget, but there may be short term costs to any reorganization
- Financial aid staying competitive but market dependent
- Administrative efficiency and what that might yield
- Strategic Financial Plan – look at how it would be influenced by any reorganization

#### Group 5 – Interdisciplinarity (Harrington, Neiweem, Mintz)

Goal:

- One test for any model – students should have easy access to any minor or major across schools and colleges

Problem:

- Faculty aren't trained interdisciplinarily

Barriers:

- Joint appointments are not well supported

There are several UVM experiments in interdisciplinarity that we might be able to learn from -- e.g., Rubenstein School, the Environmental Studies Program, and the Honors College. Need clearer definition of "interdisciplinarity."

#### Group 6 – Administrative Efficiency (Kaza, Miller, Parsons)

The group discussed:

- Current organization of university is the product of historical accident than rational planning
- Would it make sense to make the administrative scale of units more consistent and uniform?
- What is the most rational way of allocating the workforce across the university?
- Org charts from the various units are not easily available
- There will be resistance to any proposed reorganization.
- Key areas of academic redundancy include the life sciences and economics.
- Could do some kind of data gathering around the campus of best practices, e.g., advising

Following the small group reports, members discussed next steps and made the following suggestions:

- Chair Taylor will present to the group an array of various models and structures, some prototypes keeping the above goals and issues in mind.
- Come up with 10 or less "tipping point" issues that drove today's small group discussions, and use these as guides for evaluating various organizational models
- Look at the mechanisms of how we hire faculty which seem to pin us down to union agreements – need creative ways to work flexibly
- Discuss the issue of disciplinary status hierarchs and the difficulty of bringing certain groups and constituencies together to work cooperatively
- Talk about President Fogel's single college model, in comparison with our current organization

Next steps: Gary Derr will gather information about college/school organizations and staff budgets. Chair Taylor will send out “executive summaries” of the key documents posted on the Transformational Change website, along with information relating to other university models. He suggested that group members reread President Fogel’s memo prior to the next meeting. The focus of the next meeting will be the President’s proposal.

**Next meeting:** Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. in the Williams Family Room, Davis Center.

Common undergraduate core curriculum:

[Lynne Bond, Jim Burgmeier, Steele Taylor; Absent: Sherwood Smith]

What forms might core curriculum take? [whatever form, it must have a strong rationale, such as the AACU LEAP framework, that is well articulated to the university community]

1. A common undergraduate core curriculum could be accomplished with or without having all undergraduates being admitted initially into a single undergraduate college
2. A select number of specific courses that all students complete in the first year or two (or over the 4 year curriculum)
3. A common distribution requirement from specific categories of courses in first year or two (or over the 4 year curriculum)
4. A common requirement to engage in one or more particular *forms of learning* rather than particular disciplinary courses *per se*, e.g., “Service-Learning” or “Writing Intensive” courses, or participation in a small learning community that is linked to a “big question”
5. First year courses (or one required course per year) could be designed specifically to achieve goals of liberal education through “high impact” practices identified by the AACU/George Kuh)
6. Rather than focus the “core” in the first year or two, we could opt for a “vertical core” that calls for students to complete a certain category of courses at increasing levels of sophistication over different years (e.g., a requirement to complete a writing-intensive course at each of the 0XX, 1XX, and 2XX levels)

Potential goals and/or contributions of a common undergraduate core curriculum

1. Ensure core competencies (e.g., understanding of non-European culture; physical education, etc.)
2. Shared experience for students helps students connect & relate with one another, integrating their learning experiences
3. Could provide students with a foundation that makes them better informed and prepared select an academic focus (major/minor)
4. Instructors are aware of a common grounding in all students that they (instructors and students) can build upon
5. A single unit and/or core curriculum might be more nimble in responding to advances in higher education (versus the challenge of getting multiple colleges/schools each to revise their curriculum or educational practices)
6. Major/Minor/Professional programs might “admit” students at end of first year based upon 1<sup>st</sup> year academic performance (better information re college performance)
7. Might reduce tendency for individual academic programs to create overlapping “foundation” courses that they wish to require of their students

Challenges of a common undergraduate core curriculum

1. Majors/minors should not require more than a 3-year course sequence (assuming a first year shared curriculum and students delay selection of major until 2<sup>nd</sup> year), which feel constraining to some programs, especially professional programs
2. Need to consider if, how, when transfer students would meet core curriculum
3. Delaying admissions to specific programs until year 2 or beyond may leave some students without admission to a program or leave certain schools/programs with less successful students
4. Might constrain individual academic programs to create “foundation” courses that a better oriented to prepare their students for subsequent academic and career demands (e.g., an Intro Writing or Speaking course that orients toward the discipline) that, in turn, could lead to individual programs creating more redundant courses