Minutes for EPC meeting
January 28, 2016

Attendees:
Dean Greg Kalscheur, Chair
Michael Martin, Clare Dunsford, Eve Spangler, Mary Troxell, Bill Petri, Julian Borg,
Scott Rizzi, John Baldwin, Thomas Dodman, Rory Browne, Rudolph Hon, Eric Weiskott,
Celeste Wells, Gerald Easter

Meeting began at 4:00 PM

No announcements.
Introductions, including Eric Weiskott to replace Amy Boesky (on leave) throughout
Spring semester.
Minutes from last meeting (November 19, 2015) approved with minor wording changes.

Greg began by outlining two key concerns for the committee this semester: 1. Addressing questions of diversity and inclusiveness; and 2. Surveying the proliferation of one-credit practicum opportunities.

1. Diversity and Inclusiveness:

Following the Deans’ meeting over winter break, at which students expressed concern about diversity at BC, Provost David Quigley wants all schools to look into this issue. The concerns range widely, from the perception of a Eurocentric curriculum to what happens in the classroom around questions of race/gender/class (eg students addressing one another in a disrespectful, even discriminatory way), and how non-representative student and faculty bodies can address these (in relation to events happening outside of the classroom, across the country). The EPC has been tasked with exploring the issue and coming up with proposals by May. The question is how to go about this?

Celeste asked whether we should attend only to curriculum issues, or hires as well? Greg suggested focusing on the former (though latter are obviously connected) as part of initial exploratory goal. How can we get both faculty and student feedback on this issue? Convene a discussion session? Identify some A&S structure that could harbor this?

Geri noted that Political Science has a student representative body that can be consulted on such matters. Celeste suggested looking at other ways of accessing student opinion as well: the McNair program, AHANA mentoring program. From her experience students are eager to be heard on questions of curriculum. Greg cautioned that, as the EPC, we must attend those facets of this issue that impact academic experience itself. Bill, Clare, and Rory all suggested reaching out to Ines Maturana Sendoya (AHANA), who has extensive experience and data on the experience of minority students at BC. Bill also suggested looking into instructions for faculty on how to handle difficult situations in the classroom. Eve added that the Centre for Teaching Excellence has a speaker series next
year on this precise issue, and proposed getting together with 22 departmental chairs to get feedback/sensitize them to the issue.

Kathy raised the question of how exactly do we define the problem at hand (in order to decide how best to measure and report on it). Greg noted that one of the easiest ways to do so would be by looking at hiring, but added that it is also a highly problematic measure (and one that cannot be fixed immediately anyway, despite ad hoc measures to recruit a more diverse faculty). Greg went on to quote a student who expressed frustration at having to read Plato’s Republic several times while never getting the chance to broach Asian philosophers. He added that students in Pulse have expressed frustration at how little fellows students in the class have “changed” (if at all), despite being exposed to a range of readings and sensitized to the question of diversity. Julian insisted on the need to consult faculty directly—both those who teach about race explicitly and those who don’t (but perhaps should?). Celeste suggested that all talk to one or two chairs and some faculty and report back to the committee.

Following the discussion Greg proposed the following: that the Academic Affairs subcommittee start thinking about how to structure a conversation about diversity and inclusiveness with a number of interlocutors, including Ines Maturana Sendoya (who could perhaps come to give a presentation to the committee), and report back at the following EPC meeting, on February 25th.

Other areas to look into and that we brought up by various people, include:
- UGBC;
- Core syllabi (including cultural diversity component: should it be diversity “in the world,” or “in the USA”?) (Mary & Greg)
- what can we learn about endemic racism today form the women’s movement of the 1970s? (Kathy)
- how to we get at what students today need to engage with people who are not like them? (Julian)
- thinking about how to work with diversity, in a constructive manner (Mary)
- thinking about using “inclusive syllabi” (Eric)

2. One-credit practica:

Greg noted that students now have a range of opportunities to follow one-credit practica. Some of these are internal to departments and programs (and should be left aside); but there also is a whole range of ones that are not connected to departments, including:
- various internships
- Cross Currents seminars
- Debate practicum
- mock trial practicum
- Career Exploration for the Humanities and Social Science Students (Career Center)
- Options through Education First Year Success Seminar
- Office of International Programs Seminar (Nick Gozik)
These practicum opportunities have proliferated in a haphazard way since before the introduction of the credit system, and without any oversight. The overarching issues in regard are: 1. Surveying exactly how many these are and what they do; and 2. Asking whether students should be allowed only to take so many for credit?

Celeste asked whether there is any evidence of students abusing the system. Clare and Martin suggested there is. But Bill noted that since these are pass/fail only and don’t count towards either the Core of GPA, there is no real problem at students wanting to take as many as they like. Greg agreed we may not want to cap these, but that we should still gather information on them so as to get a better idea of what they do. For Bill the risk is that these opportunities proliferate as a form of service, and that a clear academic purpose should be the discriminating factor. Greg agreed that this is where we must push back a little, since students are, ultimately, getting academic credit for these. Clare suggested that think about establishing clearer academic expectations.

Greg proposed that the Honors subcommittee shelf its ongoing work on the Honors graduation ceremony until further notice, and take on an exploratory round of consultations about these one-credit practicum opportunities instead.

The meeting adjourned at 5:25 PM

Next EPC meetings:
Thu February 25, 4 PM
Thu April 7, 4 PM
Mon May 9, 9 AM

Thomas Dodman