Morrissey College of Arts & Science  
Education Policy Committee  
February 25, 2016

1) Preliminary Remarks/Actions

The meeting opened with welcoming remarks; and, the review and approval of the minutes from the EPC meeting of January 28, 2015.

2) Announcements

Noted the intentions of the Social Work School to introduce a minor in Global Public Health, which will draw classes from the A&S curriculum. We will need to consider logistics and implications of programs of study that cross colleges.

3) Discussion of Interim Report from Academic Affairs on Diversity

---- The committee was briefed on an interim report conducted by Academic Affairs, regarding the issue of institutional diversity and ethno-cultural inclusivity. The report is in response to concerns about diversity and inclusiveness recently raised on campus. These voiced concerns have been accompanied by both anecdotal and survey evidence that show that BC’s ethnic minority students (particularly African-American students) do not view the institution as all-welcoming. While racism comes in many forms and transcends the university, the Academic Affairs report has a more specific task. It addresses the subtle guises of institutionally embedded racism that might be found in the A&S educational experience and curriculum.

The report offers suggestions by which A&S faculty might take initiative to consider the issue in the context of their classroom. These include: (1) periodic reexamination and revision of the syllabus to reflect more diverse ethno-cultural experience or perspectives, and to build in more opportunities for diversity-related discussion; (2) enlist outside guest lecturers each semester as a means of diversifying the course substance and themes, as well as the source of intellectual authority; (3) provide resources and support to faculty to facilitate the process of examination and revision of the content and structure of courses; (4) provide internet links to general and field-specific resources that address the issue of diversity and course design.

---- The ensuing discussion focused on (1) the obstacles to implementation of the report’s suggestions, and (2) considerations on how to overcome obstacles and move forward. The obstacles were of two sorts. First, the curriculum suggestions seemed better suited for humanities and social science than for mathematics and natural science, where the technical nature of analysis is indifferent to the cultural experiences of individual students. Second, it was recognized that getting the tenured faculty to re-examine and revise established courses poses challenges;
especially, if it is perceived that the administration is meddling with course content and/or imposing academic mandates from above.

---- The discussion also considered potentially useful approaches for moving forward. First, the administration should encourage and promote a university-wide conversation on institutional racism, diversity and inclusivity. Second, the Core should be used to address the issue, both the conventional disciplinary-focused Core and the newly revised interdisciplinary Core. The latter, in particular, might serve as a vehicle to include mathematics and sciences. Third, it was recognized that several offices on campus (Student Affairs, AHANA, UGBC) could be especially helpful to A&S administration and faculty. A particular concern raised at the meeting several times was the need to have more information regarding the actual manifestations and effects of institutional racism at the university. Four, several suggestions were made to help engage the A&S faculty. These included: mandatory orientation or training for new hires that focuses on inclusivity in the classroom, offering curriculum development grants to tenured faculty, and fostering intra-faculty discussion, initiated through the chairs, and gauging faculty sensibilities, concerns and feedback for the administration to process.

4) Report on the Case of a Student Grade Dispute

The committee heard a report about a dispute between a student and professor over a final grade. The report raised important issues of fairness and transparency in the grading process. A breach in protocol was also noted in that the dispute apparently bypassed the stage in which the chair is supposed to intervene. It was suggested that the grade be changed in this particular case, but not to propose a wider recalculation of grades for the entire class.

In Attendance:

Gregory Kalscheur, SJ (chair)
John Baldwin
Julian Borg
Rory Browne
Thomas Dodman
Kathy Dunn
Claire Dunsford
Gerald Easter
Michael Martin
William Petri
Scott Rizzi
Eve Spangler
Mary Troxell
Eric Weiskott
Celeste Wells