

University Core Development Committee
April 15, 2003
Gasson 105 1:30 p.m.

Minutes

In attendance were Chair Richard Cobb-Stevens, Patrick Byrne (Philosophy), Marilyn Cochrane-Smith (Education), Tim Duket (A&S Honors), Clare Dunsford (A&S Associate Dean), Maggie Kearney (Nursing), Dennis Sardella (Chemistry), and Sandra Waddock (Management).

At this meeting, the committee met with 24 undergraduates who had completed most of their core requirements. The students were chosen randomly from the list of juniors and seniors. An effort was made to include students from all of the schools in the university. Each student was invited to present his or her impressions of the core and of the various courses they had taken. The conversation was frank and animated.

The following themes surfaced again and again:

1. The most worthwhile aspect of the core experience is that exposes students to areas of study that they might not have chosen, and that they found both interesting and thought procoking. Several students mentioned that they changed major or minor areas of concentration as a result of a particular core course that influenced them profoundly.
2. Students generally prefer classes having fewer than 30 participants, because in such smaller classes there is more of a chance to get to know the professor and to have more sustained dialogue. There were a few complaints about the class size in some of the science courses.
3. Classes taught by teaching fellows are often as successful as those taught by more senior faculty.

The Honors Program and the Perspectives Program received high praise from the students who had participated in these programs.

Submitted by Richard Cobb-Stevens