

Minutes of the meeting of the University Council on Teaching
February 10, 2005

Council members present were Bill Petri, Chris Hepburn, Sue Barrett, Fred Yen, Larry Ludlow, Jim Gips, Ellen Winner, and Mary Joe Hughes. They were joined by Joe Burns, Associate Academic Vice-President for Undergraduate Programs, and later by Academic Vice-President Jack Neuhauser.

The first order of business was the formation of a committee to review the TAM and TAME grants. That committee will consist of Chris Hepburn, Larry Ludlow, and Bill Petri.

Next we heard a report from Joe Burns about the Strategic Planning proposals for strengthening undergraduate education at Boston College. He presented the proposal as a response to the question of how a research university can use its specialized strengths to help provide undergraduates with an integrated and well-rounded liberal arts education. The proposed response will be the establishment of a Center for Liberal Arts Education. (Its name is still subject to discussion, perhaps a Center for Jesuit Liberal Learning?) This center will oversee a range of initiatives designed to promote a lively undergraduate intellectual life, more jointly taught courses, an integrated core curriculum, and more ethics offerings across the curriculum. Its programs and mandates will include

1. continual re-evaluation and development of the core
2. a program for engaging various forms of diversity (eg. ethnic, international, immersion trips) with the subject matter of the classroom
3. implementing post-tenure faculty seminars to promote faculty engagement with liberal arts learning
4. overseeing the distribution of 18 new permanent faculty slots at the senior level for those working in interdisciplinary, core, policy and ethical issues across disciplines
5. providing assistance to interdisciplinary programs
6. facilitating the integration of experiential learning with academic programs or subject matter, along the PULSE model
7. promoting independent and scholarly work by talented undergraduates

Joe Burns also discussed other initiatives already underway, including an expanded Academic Development Center, an Academic Advising Center facilitating advising by selected faculty of freshman and sophomores, and a University (Student) Center integrating residential and academic life. The latter might be a place that houses and integrates some of the programs above.

He concluded with three other initiatives still under active consideration. These include experimenting with undergraduate colleges in a newly renovated 66 Commonwealth Ave. and in the freshman dorms, a Center for Ethics in Business and the Professions designed to promote ethical discourse across the disciplines, and an

Integrated Media Center pulling together the technology of TV, film, and radio production.

Our discussion of these proposals was brief and will be continued. Topics raised include the need for non-science majors to be literate in science and statistics; the possibility of writing across the curriculum in the core rather than in writing courses; the desirability of core course for non-majors introducing students to the key ideas in a discipline, and encouragement and space for science professors who sponsor or encourage undergraduate research. We also briefly discussed the desirability of a briefer description of the purpose of the Center for Liberal Education, and the need for its personnel to circulate in and out of the Center in most cases after a fixed term.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Joe Hughes