Division III Brown Bag Discussion Notes (2/4/14)

Present: Howard Brooks, John Caraher, Sharon Crary, Bridget Gourley, Pam Propsom, Jackie Roberts, Michael Roberts, Christina Wagner

There was lower turn out than at the open division meeting, so we thought it was worthwhile to consider why. Was this meeting too soon after the division meeting, at a bad time, does this indicate a lack of interest?

Divisional Learning Goals. Jackie and Pam’s intent is to have the smaller working group develop a draft of general education learning goals for science and math, but then to share this with individual departments so that we can have a dialogue, back and forth revision, and get buy in from departments. We don’t need to reinvent the wheel; we’ve got examples from other institutions, but we’ve also got to make them our own. Rather than talking about what these courses might be, we’d like to focus first on developing the learning goals and then work backwards to develop the courses. Of course we have to take practicality issues into consideration throughout the process (e.g., the university is not going to hire 10 new science faculty to teach some science and math gen ed course).

Should the science and math gen ed learning goals apply to science and math majors as well? People liked the idea of talking with faculty outside the sciences about what it is they believe their majors should get from their science and math gen ed courses. Suggestions were to consider affective and attitudinal goals as well (e.g., developing an enthusiasm for science).

Maybe instead of starting with “learning goals”, we should ask the broader question of “What are the outcomes we want for our graduates?” so we don’t get bogged down in detail, and then work from there. For example, do we want *producers* of science or *consumers* of science? Civic scientific literacy? We noted that there were a lot of “Q” things on the survey faculty completed; how much will our science and math goals overlap with Q?

Teaching postdocs. Jackie mentioned that one idea for the future would be to hire teaching postdocs who specialize in science education, to help faculty revise their courses. Someone questioned whether a “postdoc” would come here if there were no senior specialist to work with. Maybe these would be Teaching Fellows or Teaching Specialists instead. Could we link with IU or Purdue? Could the position be a home for someone on sabbatical, and maybe that would draw a postdoc?

Next step: Get all science and math departments to identify someone who will serve as their department representative on the learning group so the work can begin. We already have some reps on board.