Division 3 Open Meeting Notes

Dec. 3, 2014

Present: Pat Babington, Suman Balasubramanian, Jim Benedix, Dave Berque, Steven Bogaerts, John Caraher, Tim Cope, Dana Dudle, Chet Fornari, Bridget Gourley, Jeff Hansen, David Harvey, Jeff Kenney, Mary Kertzman, Carrie Klaus, Alex Komives, Pascal Lafontant, Jim Mills, Jeane Pope, Selma Poturovic, Pam Propsom, Jackie Roberts, Michael Roberts, Henning Schneider, Maria Schwartzman, Naima Shifa, Brian Wright

Review. Jackie Roberts reviewed our progress thus far, including this semester’s submission of an NSF IUSE grant proposal.

“Big Ideas” course. Michael Roberts updated us on the “Big Ideas” course planning. Twelve faculty members have met and each pitched a different module idea. The next step will be to put them together in a cohesive pilot course. Will meet again during finals week.

TOSLS. Pam Propsom described our administration of the TOSLS (Test of Scientific Literacy Skills) to incoming first-year students this fall. We have data, including student ID, from 380 students. Our students’ average scores were similar to those reported in the literature at other institutions, as was the pattern of responses on individual items. Now we’re working on a way to have seniors take the exam and continuing administration so we can do a pretest-posttest comparison to see if students make gains during their DePauw education.

FY student survey. We reported that Dave Berque also had a brief survey along with the TOSLS asking incoming students how many Science and Math (SM) courses they intended to take while at DePauw and their planned major. Pope—need to keep in mind that not all students completed the survey and assessment, which may skew the results. Berque—marketers helping with admissions indicate that we’ve got more students coming in “knowing” what they’re going to major in. Mills—do a transcript analysis: how many science/math classes are students actually taking by the time they graduate?

How do we get post-test assessment? Gourley—Students are supposed to have their SM distribution requirement completed by junior year… could we target assessment in this year instead? Berque--Make taking the test part of finishing the SM requirement. Caraher--Better with seniors, see what they retain from the education. Benedix—senior year is better so that the results are not after 14 weeks of science, but are a more realistic measure of what is retained.

“First Toast” proposal. One proposal for getting TOSLS post-test data comes from Raj Bellani. He’s proposing a “reunion” of seniors with their First-Year Seminar instructor and classmates as a way to get some exit data (e.g., email contact info). There were concerns about the format/timing of this. Kenney—some students start “toasting” before the last exam. What about having it after graduation practice Friday morning? Timing might not be great for faculty who have to grade and submit grades by Friday morning. (Update—after talking with Raj Bellani, we are tentatively moving this event to dinner of the study day, before final exams start.)

ACS survey. We reported that over 50% of instructors teaching 100-level SM courses (plus 6 FYS and UNIV 101) agreed to give the Attitudes and Conceptions in Science survey as a pretest and posttest in classes this year. We will have student ID numbers and can therefore link their data with TOSLS scores, demographic info, courses taken, etc.

Chairs’ Meeting. We reported on the department Chairs’ Meeting we (Jackie and Pam) attended in October at President Casey’s house. We asked chairs what they would like their majors to get from their SM general education courses. What chairs said seemed to be consistent with what the SM division agreed on—more skill-based than SM “facts.” John Caraher suggested that this indicates these are then *university* goals for SM gen ed rather than just our divisional goals. He also commented that as CAPP chair, there is a lot of interest in revisiting general education requirements anyway.

How do we move forward?

Divisional learning goals? (We plan to meet with science/math department chairs next semester.)

Develop a stronger learning community?

Gain greater buy-in?

Topics for divisional meetings? Have departments host them (get to know your fellow scientists and their interests)?

Topics for Brown Bag lunches?

Potential roadblocks?

Gourley--Fun to learn from each other if we share ways we’ve changed our courses or ways that we’ve approached topics or activities that have improved our teaching and student learning. Dudle—incorporate greater inclusivity in science/math gen ed courses, attract and retain more diverse students in SM, either through methods or content. The potential “M” (multicultural) requirement shouldn’t be someone else’s job. Pope—diversity should be a topic for a divisional meeting. Berque—*Whistling Vivaldi* book will be made available for all departments who are interested. Caraher-- there’s also a podcast Raj Bellani sent that could be a briefer introduction to the topic. Would be good to have Gloria Townsend talk with us about what she’s done in Computer Science.

Pope—extended workshops, more time during the workshop to actually develop activities or an entire syllabus. If they’re offered regularly enough, there will be opportunities for lots of different folks to take them. Gourley—or we could bring someone in for one day, and then bring them back maybe a month later and touch base on what you’ve done in the meantime. Seems like we need to have more long-term involvement and interaction, which would lead to a stronger learning community. (Example of week-long Women’s Studies workshop.) Could have done more follow-up from Ed Prather’s workshop, three weeks later meet again to talk about what we’ve done, collaborate, hold each other accountable.

Roadblocks?

1. Time. In addition, a standing time for meetings might help people to reserve this on the calendar.
2. At some point departments will probably get territorial; for example, Computer Science and Math might not fit as well with some of the “science learning goals.” Need to remember to talk with Jeff Dunn (Philosophy—Logic) and Lydia Marshall (Anthropology—Human Origins) who aren’t in Division 3 but teach courses that count for SM gen ed credit; we have informally, but they will need to be brought more fully into the conversation.