Division III Open Meeting

April 10, 2014

Present: Pat Babington, Suman Balasubramanian, Lynn Bedard, John Caraher, Tim Cope, Sharon Crary, Bridget Gourley, Jacob Hale, Jeff Hansen, David Harvey, Wade Hazel, Rich Martoglio, Jim Mills, Jeane Pope, Pam Propsom, Dave Roberts, Jackie Roberts, Michael Roberts, Naima Shifa, Christina Wagner, Brian Wright

Jackie welcomed people and described the process taken to get to this point: survey of DPU SM faculty in the fall, first Division III Open Meeting discussion, formation of the Working Group and three meetings, “voting” on scientific literacy skills by departments.

First task of the evening was to elaborate on or “custom fit” the TOSLS (Test of Scientific Literacy Skills by Gormally et al.) skills to those of individual disciplines/departments. Reporting out:

--Faculty largely accepted these skills, but individual tables reworded them or combined some of them (the specifics will be in another document)

--Question about whether these skills would be met in an SM course or a Q course

--Didn’t address the issue of whether these could be done in every SM department

--Additional skill/idea/issue: How do scientists study things that can’t be seen, either because they happened a long time ago or because they’re so small?

--Maybe students can’t actually *master* these skills in two courses, but maybe we can get them to *recognize how important or valuable* these skills are

--How valuable is the experience of acquiring the data oneself rather than just interpreting the data that someone else has collected?

How could these skills be addressed or implemented in DePauw’s SM curriculum?

--Embedding these things into our introductory courses?

--University-wide course for all students or team-taught gen ed course for non-majors?

--Basic science skills-base course

--“Great ideas” course, modules to team-teach a course. Or theme-based (e.g., Climate Change, Global Health). Advantages: Transfer of skills might be more likely, knowledge might be less “context dependent”. Might be more interesting to students. Expose them to a greater variety of ideas than they’d get in two disciplinary courses. Would force us to collaborate and get us out of our silos. Could be fun for faculty! Disadvantages: Faculty don’t get to know the students as well, only have them for 3 weeks. Logistics could be a challenge. Conclusion: There seemed to be some excitement about the idea of this type of course and some stayed after to discuss, although the attraction wasn’t universal for all faculty. We could certainly pilot test this. At the same time we could pursue another track of revising our intro courses to integrate these skills.

We would like to continue to have future divisional meetings, learning more about each others’ disciplines.

Talk with other divisions (AH, SS) about what they think their majors should get from their SM gen ed courses.

Final announcements

--Scientific literacy assessment of incoming first-year students and a sample of seniors starting this year (using the TOSLS)

--Mark your calendars for May 28 DePauw workshop with Ed Prather, astrophysicist and science education expert from University of Arizona

--Jackie and Pam received a Faculty Fellowship to continue this science and math gen ed reform effort