Working Group Meeting Notes

5/2/14

Present: John Caraher, Bridget Gourley, Wade Hazel, Jeane Pope, Pam Propsom, Michael Roberts, Naima Shifa, Khadija Stewart

Get departmental responses to the "Big Ideas" course. Pam summarized Brian Wright’s response from Kinesiology. His department was interested, but can’t see possibility of their participating in the near future due to staffing. Jeane reported Geo—kind of lukewarm, waiting on more details. John said Physics hasn’t met to discuss this yet. Bridget reported Chem’s response, which was a sense that it might be interesting. Some concerns about faculty rotating through course and not getting to know students. Ideas for themes: development and refinement of models in science, intermolecular forces, generating hypotheses based on a given set of observations, alternate energy, disease states, periodic table, receptors, evolution, synthetic biology, DNA, size and quantity, what is life. Michael reported Psych; ideas included consciousness, kind of a lukewarm response. Some interest in all students having a “common experience,” although that might be harder to pull off. Naima said Math hasn’t met yet, not sure of interest, perhaps based on staffing (but she personally likes it). Khadija reported that CS liked the idea, open to it, book *The Seven Algorithms that Changed the World*. Hesitant about implementation.

Jeane said a concern might be that this is a “trial,” but a trial for what? Maybe have a group of 5 people who are really excited about it developing one version of the course and running it in two years. See how it goes; if successful, try to get others interested. Might be hard given that these five people are probably going to be doing this with no compensation, as an overload. Don’t want Science and Math division to be taken advantage of. How can we work with the administration to get appropriate compensation, think long-term sustainability? Can we just have one course (with one group of students)—what would that tell us? We might need to have 5 sections taught.

Online modules that might facilitate student success. Possibilities for grants there. Michael has talked to some GLCA schools about this and there’s some interest.

We would need to have a workshop with people from other institutions who may have done something like this prior to our developing this course. If you have ideas for people from other institutions who might have done something like this, send the names to us. Evergreen College (integrated lab), Harvey Mudd, Stockton College. Wade suggested Lynda Delph in Bio (Honors College at IU). Pam will look at the table we created when researching other colleges’ general education requirements and see if there’s a gen ed sci course. Might we be able to have one open session to which we would invite faculty from other divisions?

Need to get on Chairs’ Meeting agenda. If other people know what we’re trying to do, they may be more receptive, trying to make more acceptable courses for their majors. Jackie and Pam will contact Harry Brown.

Responses to Bert Holmes visit last week. Some questions about his model of having students commit to one lab for two years, which might lead to greater publishing productivity, but is it the best thing for students? Maybe developing a set of ideas to submit to Howard Hughes: here’s what we’re doing for first-year students, here’s what we’re doing for majors, etc. As Bert pointed out, reviewers are now science education specialists rather than traditional scientists, so we need to get someone with education and assessment specialization on board right away. Jackie and Pam are interested in writing an IUSE grant, ASAP, but need to get an assessment person on board, Feb. 2015. Figure out who the program officers are and see if there really is a deadline that would increase success of application. Encourage DePauw folks to get their NSF Biosketches in and volunteer to be reviewers. Fold in Teaching Postdocs, how these would help us revise Intro courses and create Big Ideas course, online modules, develop materials that we could share with other schools.

Direction/preferences on how to continue with the department liaisons. We will continue to meet into the fall, early in the semester so we can plan for the semester. Maybe the Monday before classes start, or even the Monday before that? Or maybe the Friday afternoon of the first week of classes. Wade will be on sabbatical leave, but he suggested Chet might be interested in participating. Maybe less frequent checks. First-year students will now do majority of registration when they get on campus in the fall, so that might take up a lot of faculty time.

Ask people to keep track of what they’re doing differently to record progress. Just ask people if they’ve developed learning goals, implemented any change in instruction, etc.