

Educational Policy and Governance (EPAG) Committee Meeting Minutes

November 23, 2009

Present: Kendrick Brown, Pete Ferderer, Terri Fishel, Chen Gu, Terry Krier, Carelton Macy, David Martyn (chair), Jayne Niemi, Patrick Schmidt, Robert Strickling, Tom Varberg, Eric Wiertelak

1. Meeting with Lorne Robinson Dean of Admissions

Introductions were followed by a discussion with Lorne. After thanking us for the invitation, he addressed the questions that had been shared with him.

- **Challenges:** There are two challenges facing admissions – demographics and financial aid. The number of high school seniors will be declining, with the biggest rate of decline in the upper Midwest from which 40% of our students currently come. Biggest growth area is the Sunbelt which presents a challenge for us as far as the climate. Financial aid is a challenge because the aim is to keep the discount rate down and still meet other goals. Our tuition increases by 4 to 5% each year, but family incomes do not. Net tuition went up, but so did the discount rate.
- **Interaction between faculty and admissions:** Lorne reported they get information from the academic updates which they send out to every prospective student. Academic updates are important and consistent across departments. He also has periodic meetings with staff, they invite people to meet with tour guides and Mac alumni make up half the admissions staff.
- **Requirements for admission:** Lorne stated that the goal was to enroll the students faculty want to teach. He mentioned that Pomona had 8-10 faculty who read every application. He stated that admission priorities include athletics and that it is a factor when weighing the selection of a student in that a student with athletic talents will be selected over a student with higher academic achievement. We may be wait-listing a student who doesn't have a talent in athletics.
- **Academic interests:** they pay attention and the three most popular majors that show up on applications correlate with the three largest departments – international studies, political science, and languages. English, economics, biology and history are also among the top choices. Many applicants are seeking the breadth and balance that Macalester offers. In terms of yield rates – of the 14 areas, theater had the highest with 34% this year compared to 19% last year. The question was raised as to whether there was an increase in interest in practical majors. Lorne stated that international students typically choose to major in economics or math. The question was raised as to whether we would accept more international students as numbers of domestic students decrease. Currently they aim for 13-15% which is about 60. We had 73 this year, 47 last year. The question as to whether we would see more students from China as their economy grows, and Lorne reported we did see an increase in students from China who did not request financial aid.
- **Expanding on breadth and balance:** Lorne shared that other institutions feel like an art or science school and some sell themselves on a particular focus. Macalester has an advantage of not focusing on sciences or arts, but is balanced across the divisions and that balance works in our favor. Carleton has a reputation for being more “hard core

academic” compared to Mac. He feels Mac is better than the current ranking of 29 in *USNews*, but we’re competing with schools that have more prestige such as Carleton, Grinnell, Vassar, Swarthmore, Middlebury, Oberlin – those institutions carry more prestige than we do. His focus is how we are unique which is essentially internationalism and liberal arts in a city. We are still likely to be the least well known.

- Comments by student members: Lack of requirements is appealing.
- Other: The process is not gender blind. Question was raised as to imbalances at other colleges and how administrations are responding. Lorne’s view was that the “window” is in how admissions folks present their institutions during recruiting. Sarah Lawrence has a 4:1 student/faculty ratio, but their emphasis is in the fine arts. It is a means of strengthening their “niche”, not imbalance.

The conversation ended about 35 minutes after the start. Lorne invited anyone to contact him if interested in continuing the conversation.

2. Approval of Minutes – couple of typos from Pete. Approved. Tom Varberg wanted to correct that he was aware of the discussion about biology and biochemistry moving to a concentration.
3. Chair for next year will be Tom Varberg – nominated by acclamation.
4. CDP
David will request extra time in the December faculty meeting to ensure faculty are involved in the process and feedback. He will not ask for time in the Chairs meeting. Three questions were raised for discussion:

1. Does the draft document (including grayed-out parts) provide a suitable framework for everything we want to get into the CDP? Or are there crucial elements that could not find a place in this framework?

It was suggested that the table on majors from the Academic Excellence report on majors be updated and added to the CDP. David agreed with the suggestion. It was also suggested that programs that are distinctive be recognized. Everything else was o.k.

2. How to solve the logical problem in the handbook language discussed last week:

Answer is B) Data and information on the three needs bears directly on allocations decisions by informing the corresponding allocations criteria. (See the arrow-side of last week’s hand-out.)

3. Minimalism, Maximalism, or Medium-ism?

A) Minimalism: The CDP consists only of the black-type parts of the draft CDP. Information and data on the 3 needs goes to a website database or another document, but is not part of the CDP itself.

B) Maximalism: The CDP contains data and information on all of the three needs (e.g. in the sections of the draft CDP currently in gray type).

C) Medium-ism: The CDP contains the (currently gray-type) sections on the three needs, but only to describe the kinds of data that should be consulted and how it should be taken into account in allocations decisions (and/or in selecting the curricular opportunities). The data itself would go into a web-based data repository or another document.

In the course of discussion the following were proposed:

- the document should clearly articulate the five guiding principles
- terminology – change “opportunities” to “expansion or growth”
- identify what disciplines are offered at every liberal arts college
- include Pete’s analysis found in his report on student demand
- include the report of majors completed in the four divisions in a five year period
- include a section on where we could shrink based on the data

Time ran out without reaching a conclusion on the final question.

Adjourned at 5:03

Submitted by Terri