

## **MINI WORKSHOP – FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE: 17 FEBRUARY 2005**

### **REPORT OF MEETING**

**Attendees:** Leads: Bernie Bauer and Bob Belton; Jan Cioe, Peter Arthur, Stan Chung, Phil Beckmann, Laura Neame, Michael Ross, Rob Johnson, Cindy Bourne, Terry D., Bob Lalonde, Michael Treschow, Jennifer Sigalet, Patricia Lasserre, Kelly Ross

#### **1) 17 FEBRUARY MEETING DIALOGUE – “WHAT DO WE WANT TO GET OUT OF THIS”?**

- Bernie distinguished ‘a Common First Year’ with ‘a First Year Experience’. Students are reluctant to be told to take certain courses at university; they find ‘categories of course’ that are open to them to be more useful; there needs to be flexibility planned into the system
- Jan: What are the problems with current models? What are the impediments to students being successful at learning; how do we get out of their way?
- Bob would like to see courses that are mutually complimentary to each other and address core competencies such as literacy; what do we want students to be able to do?
- Stan added in with the role of the university compared with what we want a university to be and what are the gaps? How can the potential opportunities to engage students in global citizenship be utilized? Bernie and Bob Belton inquired how this would be done within a first year experience.
- Mike Ross added that within student recruitment their team tells students the story of being engaged in a global experience through a) the different nationalities of students on campus; b) the course content; c) the opportunity to join an exchange program. Laura supplied an example of Drury University that currently offers a global studies program for first year students.
- Cindy, at the South Campus, is working with self-directed study to engage students in projects; she marries student affairs with academics.
- Consideration of the ‘whole student’ is important to Rob. He believes in the local citizen and personal responsibilities around health and fitness; this is very important in a first year experience.
- Jan added that there are ways to encourage people and that they won’t do what you tell them to unless incentives are used to encourage action. We need to find ways to connect students to the project as a way to encourage them to action.
- Achieving the end should include embedded theory, which can be a ‘trick’ to get students to do things. The core to action is attitude and competence in a rich stimulating environment.
- Students from high school don’t often know what is available to them i.e. lingo used or courses offered at university, and they might miss something based on this, which builds a case for self-directed learning. He thinks that university is “voyage of self discovery”, which could be taught through cohort learning with different teachers to increase exposure to disciplines.
- Michael T - finds UBC Vancouver’s motto of Tuum Est -- “It’s up to you” fascinating. In the first year experience kids are told to do things but they should

- understand these things fit into the big picture including the culture of the university and its history; Bernie added that students can't always connect the dots or "see the forest for the trees".
- Bob B - to deliberately make something so that students can find their path; "they should be given the widest possible skills".
  - Bernie - by making something faculty has to be engaged also. The objective is to construct a framework on how to move forward.
  - Patricia – in order to change attitudes or to do more is to create a habit. Seeing the big picture is created through life therefore developing seminars around disciplines such as math and sociology will all students to see themselves. Students should be encouraged to attend as many seminars as possible to see a wide variety of disciplines.
  - **Bernie – Are the things we teach relevant?**
  - Jan – "If you create innovation for innovation sake it is a disservice to all". A common first year is a bad idea and we fail in our attempt to encourage the students to learn.
  - Cindy – students have to get something out of the learning and incentives are a motivator for mandatory exercises.
  - Kelly provided an example of service learning from the OUC business program
  - Bob B – considering what we are doing wrong and what are we doing right at the university are good indicators of what objectives to set. For instance, science majors don't understand the humanities and visa versa, which maybe wrong.
  - Terry – from his best practices research there are four drivers or principles of first year programs:
    - Developing basic knowledge as a foundation
    - Needing to develop generic skills for other learning and in life
    - Engaging students in some way to attract them to learning
    - Opportunities for students to explore their options
  - **Bernie – should there be a fifth or sixth driver that we want to add to these; do we agree with these four drivers?**
  - Jan – allow students to do since doing well is very engaging
  - Michael T – getting 'know how' skills right from the very beginning, right from the first year is important. They need concrete skills; this is what universities used to be "a guild of scholars".
  - Bernie – "skills, identity, and purpose" are important then? The identity being the broader UBC O identity: sustainability and global citizenship.
  - Stan – linking students emotional life to their studies is engaging
  - Cindy – Service learning is starting to come up in the first year; the learning is linked to incentives i.e. 10% of grade for volunteering etc.
  - Bernie – What do students want? (directed at Mike R)
  - Mike R – told the story of his university experience at UBC : six years to complete an Interdisciplinary degree with a major in Economics and Asian Studies; two Arts Co-op terms; one exchange to Perth, Australia

- Jennifer agreed that as a parent she is attracted to the Arts One model at UBC Vancouver; the exploration and stimulation of the student learning environment attracts parents to it.
- Jan – how do we provide the opportunity for students to be their best? How do we use cross-discipline learning so that students are more adept to change?
- Bernie – would a pass/fail first or second year model for a subset of courses work so that students can “shop around”?
- Bob L – “sounds good in theory” but his experience shows that some students are simply not motivated enough for this model. Some students require carrots and some unfortunately require sticks.
- Cindy – a pass/fail model seems contradictory to the process needed to get into university; they are used to being competitive and needing high grades to get into university.
- Stan – how do we put together the skills, career experiences, and personal reflection so that students can articulate their ‘dream’?
- Bob B suggested that we look at Terry’s report and consider the disadvantages outlined in the report. This should create a priority list of what we can live with or not and determine what is not important.

2) **NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY MARCH 3<sup>RD</sup> 7:30-9:00 AM**

- Terry will present his report and the group will consider the disadvantages outlined