

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Council**  
**October 1, 2008**  
**Excerpts**

Present: J. Cummins, B. Ferguson, K. Jacobson, C. Lindgren, R. Osgood, M. Schneider, P. Smith, B. Trish

The meeting came to order at 3:30 p.m. in Macy House conference room.

**President's Remarks**

The President thanked David Clay for coping with the extraordinarily difficult financial situation. He went on to say that the College is in reasonably good shape at the moment, but we can't insulate ourselves from the overall economy.

He reminded Council members of the dedication of the Science building this weekend.

**Dean's Remarks**

The Dean noted that the agenda for the next faculty meeting is quite full and includes the Curriculum Committee coming to the faculty for a vote to approve the new Policy Studies Concentration. The reason for the many items on the agenda is because there will not be another meeting until November due to fall break.

The Dean remarked on the fact that the report of the Internationalization Task Force is already bearing fruit. For example, there is work underway aimed at removing obstacles which keep faculty with interest in international activities from participating.

**Council Remarks**

J. Cummins thanked the Dean for her careful crafting of the new preamble to the Task Force report.

M. Schneider mentioned that he has heard from some of the junior faculty with children in daycare. While they are generally appreciative of the effort of the College to extend the hours of daycare provision to enable attendance at faculty meeting, this does not solve the problem of the young children needing to eat.

Schneider asked the President if it would be helpful if faculty members offered to eat meals with Trustees at Grinnell House in order to facilitate communication during a busy period of meetings. The President responded that while it seems a good idea, Trustees often informally conduct business during their meal times.

Marci Sortor joined the meeting at 3:45.

## **Continued Discussion of EKI with Marci Sortor**

The Dean opened the discussion by reminding members that they had asked Marci Sortor to come back to a meeting of Council for a question and answer session on the EKI. K. Jacobson began by reflecting on a statement in Sortor's report to the President that she hoped the EKI would become transformative and not merely additive. Jacobson thought there was a need to begin letting faculty know that, the aim of the EKI as part of the Strategic Plan, when the EKI is "over" it will not really be over, similar to the incorporation of diversity—whether embodied or curricular-- into the College. Jacobson asked Sortor if she plans to report out to the faculty. Sortor recognized that most faculty members do not have the time to read her annual report and acknowledged it might be a good idea for her to deliver a short report at a Faculty Meeting. Jacobson also expressed concern that there are still faculty who feel completely locked into the given departmental curriculum and not able to participate in the EKI. She believes that various models that have been developed to allow for participation be disseminated widely to the faculty to let them know that even though their departmental curriculum is tight they should not think there is no avenue available to them. The Dean noted that even small departments have flexibility to offer EKI courses by being relieved of a tutorial, Math 115, or a Humanities section, which can be taken up by the departments with EKI expansions.

Sortor acknowledged that there is, and probably always will be, tension between departmental curricular need and freeing up faculty for other types of teaching. She thinks that it is time for forward planning. Departments need to methodically rethink their curriculum with a view toward finding ways of integrating other needs and freeing up their faculty for these purposes. She is aware that untenured faculty have expressed frustration at their perceived inability to participate in the EKI at this stage of their careers. Jacobson suggested that some thought be given to whether or not, at the point of a successful full review, these untenured faculty could be encouraged to experiment with/participate in the various interdisciplinary faculty and curricular development activities. The President expressed his interest in encouraging faculty to consider new interdisciplinary course development as a derivative of their scholarly pursuit.

C. Lindgren thought back to the early days of the development of the EKI and the work of the Advisory Board regarding need for oversight. He asked if there is anyone checking to see if people are actually doing what they said—recognizing that part of this is policing, but more importantly there is an opportunity for trouble shooting. He suggested Sortor think about appointing some subset of the Advisory Board to provide interdisciplinary perspective to departments and to push back against departmental tendencies to protect their established curriculum. Sortor noted that she is aware that Council will be discussing its role in departmental reviews and urged them to explicitly consider the EKI as part of any revision to the guidance given to departments for use in the self-study phase of the review process. M. Schneider also noted the need to take stock of what is happening to aid planning. We need to take a look at what students are not taking when they elect instead to take a new EKI course.

Jacobson also expressed concern that every effort be made to nurture the truly interdisciplinary faculty members who find themselves in departmental homes to which they have no natural connection. Sortor agreed that this is an important issue, in part outside of the departmental need

to cover their curriculum. For example, it may be unwise to exclude these faculty members from such departmentally based responsibilities such as advising. Jacobson asked Sortor if she and the Advisory Board could develop a best practices document which would provide a discussion of the ways in which home departments can actively include and mentor these interdisciplinary appointments.

M. Schneider asked Sortor about whether there may be more requests for interdisciplinary appointments than the total number available. Sortor replied that it is too early to tell...but at this point she knows about five curricular initiatives that could produce position proposals in the next few years.

M. Schneider raised a concern expressed by his fellow Council members. Their concern is that the Advisory Board perceives its role as both advocating and facilitating interdisciplinary position requests. Council would like to see balance in this regard. Sortor responded that the Advisory Board is well aware that their role is not in deciding but in providing advice to Council in their deliberations.

### **Overview and Discussion of Executive Council role in Academic Department Reviews**

The President provided an overview of what he would like to see in the process of departmental self-study and external review. He noted that some of these things are already in the guidelines but are not being consistently embraced by the departments. These include:

- A statement of department learning goals for majors and non-majors;
- Sufficiently detailed discussion of curricular planning which would help avoid a disjunction between the statement of direction and future position requests;
- A statement of the connection between the departmental goals and liberal learning;
- A thorough look at personnel in relation to curricular goals;
- A statement of facilities needs in relation to pedagogies;
- A statement regarding departmental curricular goals in relation to interdisciplinarity; and
- A statement regarding departmental curricular goals in relation to diversity.

He thinks that the guidelines need to be re-written to be more practical, including length limits on the various sections.

The Dean asked Council at what point in the process do they want to be involved, what do they want to see at what stage of development and for what purpose? M. Schneider thought Council should be involved at the very early stages of the self-study. K. Jacobson thought it would be important to be involved after the external review team's report is received and before the department responds to their report. The Dean noted that this year the Library, Sociology, and Gender and Women's Studies is undergoing review. B. Trish asked the Dean what happens after the department has responded to the external review. The Dean responded that documents have not always been put to productive use. She believes that there is unrealized potential in these documents and a good outcome of the Council discussion on this subject would be that information that would be useful post-review period be identified and incorporated into the guidelines given to departments before they begin the self-study process. J. Cummins thought

that the Executive Council and the Dean should respond, for the institution, to the department after receiving the response to the review so that there is a formal recognition/record of the current departmental thinking. M. Schneider thought that the self-study, review, and response should be synopsisized for future Council use without requiring members to read through voluminous documents. The Dean warned Council members that, while there are many good ideas being floated, we need to be careful about creating a lot of new work for departments, the Council, and the Dean's Office.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Secretary  
Karen Wiese