

Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Council
November 19, 2008
Excerpts

Present: J. Cummins, B. Ferguson, K. Jacobson, M. Schneider, P. Smith, B. Trish

The meeting came to order at 3:30 p.m. in Macy House conference room. The minutes of 11/12/08 were approved.

Richard Fyffe, Librarian of the College, entered the meeting at 3:40 p.m. at the request of the Council to discuss the Library Self Study.

Library Self Study

Richard Fyffe began this discussion with some background to the study. When Dean Swartz asked the Libraries to begin this process last year, it was agreed that they would not use the guidelines given to the regular teaching departments. He emphasized that the Executive Summary document that Council members had received is still a draft. He noted that while this has been a highly participatory process, there are issues which have promoted disagreement and some of those may not be resolved. Finally, there is summative work that will bring additional clarity to the Self Study, but that will wait until they get feedback from the community. He asked for comment from Council members.

J. Cummins asked if the recommendations stand without an agent. Fyffe replied that each recommendation represents the work of various committees. K. Jacobson asked about the strategy to get community feedback. Fyffe noted that the draft had been shared with the Library SEPC, all members of the writing teams, the Instructional Support Committee earlier today and now with Council. The next step will be to revise the document according to the feedback he has received, post it on the Library website for campus comment, and send it out to the external review team. K. Jacobson asked about the need to address assessment. Fyffe replied that the teams were asked to identify what data we have now and what we will need in the future.

The Dean noted that she had been asked to represent President Osgood's thinking in this session. The President wonders whether there is going to be the point in this process when the Libraries step back and take a broad look forward in considering such big questions as "Will the Library be in one place on campus?" Fyffe replied that he and Dean Swartz had agreed that questions of facilities would not be a part of this self study, and would defer to the coming updating of the campus plan. M. Schneider urged Fyffe to make these large questions a focus of future thinking, such as "What should the role of librarians be as teachers?" (one of the eight sections of the Self Study is on Information Literacy). The Dean noted that a careful reading of this draft reveals that the disagreements that Fyffe asserted exist are buried in this document. She believes that these issues should be laid bare for the external review team to consider. On another point, Schneider noted that the Libraries have a history of little collaboration with other programs and institutions and asked why. Fyffe responded that, unlike other states such as Ohio, the State of Iowa has not chosen to develop an extensive library and information services infrastructure which led to the formation of informal collaborations. Further, at the same time as other independent consortia

were forming, Grinnell was not aggressive in pursuing the opportunities as other colleges or universities. As we try to join consortia now, we find the membership fairly closed.

B. Ferguson asked about collection development, paper and electronic, specifically concerning how our collection compares with our peers. Fyffe responded that, on a volume basis, we are above average...but suggested that volume-counts alone are not a useful gauge of the quality of the collection. He added that, in this self study, the Librarians tried to probe this issue by looking at indicators such as circulation rate and rate of borrowing from other institutions and found that, per capita, we are within the norm in relation to our designated list of peers. He acknowledged that there is a perception that people do not have access to what they need, but the reason for this requires further investigation and discussion. As for our electronic holdings compared to peers, this is more difficult to establish because definitions and methods of counting vary somewhat from institution to institution. We appear to fall in the mid-range of our peers but we note in the self-study that this requires further investigation. The Dean noted that the President has an interest in hearing the Libraries' vision of where we should go with regard to special collections and archives. For instance, should we be assembling collections that would be of interest to persons outside of Grinnell? Fyffe offered that, while the self study does not answer this question in its section on Special Collections, he believes we should be putting more effort into increasing the use of what we already have. The Dean noted that those two things are not antithetical to each other. Perhaps we could celebrate what we have on the way to where we are going. Fyffe suggested tension exists between becoming a collections "star" and being a servant to inquiry-based learning. The Dean suggested that this be added to his list as a question for the external review team. Finally, M. Schneider asked if e-reserves is an issue or not. Fyffe responded that he believes it is not, but welcomes information to the contrary.

Richard Fyffe asked Council if they have identified areas which were not addressed in this draft self study. Council members responded that they would have liked to find more information about physical space needs and options, staffing, and the relationship between electronic and print collections. Fyffe left the meeting at 4:20 p.m.

President's Remarks

The President was travelling.

Dean's Remarks

The Dean made no remarks.

Council Remarks

K. Jacobson asked for an update on consideration of a position proposal brought by the Chemistry Department. The Dean discussed progress to date.

Promotion to Professor

The Dean reminded Council of those Associate Professors who have come forward for consideration of promotion to full professor. There was discussion.

Formation of Review Committees—Interdisciplinary Appointments

The Dean sought consultation with Council regarding the formation of review committees for faculty teaching a substantial number of non-departmental courses. Factors she is taking into consideration are the composition of the search committee, members of the relevant concentration, and who in the home department is closest to what they do. Then, she pairs that information with the review and leave schedules, hoping to appoint a committee that will be as stable a possible over time to tenure. There was discussion.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Secretary
Karen Wiese