**MINUTES OF THE CSB/SJU JOINT FACULTY SENATE MEETING
Tuesday, September 2, 2014
SJU Q264**

The meeting was called to order by chair Terry Check at 4:31 p.m.

1. **ROLL CALL:**  All members were present except Jeffrey Diamond and Jessica Harkins.
2. **ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Terry announced that the presidents, who had hoped to be present today to meet the Senate and participate in the discussion, would not be here due to the funeral of student John Kinney. They look forward to continuing this conversation at a future meeting. During the course of today’s discussion Terry will be sharing comments sent to him by President Hinton.
3. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Vincent Smiles, happy to see this discussion taking place, suggested a question for consideration: To what extent do we have perceptions on these campuses of the Catholic/Benedictine aspect being an enhancement to our liberal arts mission, or does it not go along with that mission? If the former, how does it work itself out, and if the latter, do we see that as a problem we want to address?
4. The certified **MINUTES** from the May 12, 2014 Joint Faculty Senate (JFS) meeting, distributed with the Agenda, were accepted as distributed. Terry noted that Mary Hinton not only read the article attached to the agenda, but also the minutes, commenting that the topic of diversity training had been raised, and that she looks forward to a workshop devoted to that topic this year.
5. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Since time was short and name cards had been distributed, Terry dispensed with introductions.
6. A **DISCUSSION** on liberal learning at CSB/SJU was introduced by Terry, to discuss reactions to the Faculty Workshop keynote address delivered by Dr. Lee Knefelkamp and the article, “’Only Connect…’: The Goals of a Liberal Education” by William Cronon [distributed with the agenda]. Although the presidents were to have been present, due to their attendance at the funeral of student John Kinney, a follow-up conversation with them will be scheduled for a future JFS meeting.

The Common Curriculum Visioning Committee (CCVC) provided discussion questions to guide the conversation**.** Terry noted that this is a follow-up to the recent faculty workshop, and something not fully addressed the last time the curriculum was overhauled. Also, the CCVC will not be working in isolation, and will be involving others. The committee is not a deciding committee; they are a learning committee, and are reviewing the literature to determine best practices. Faculty input is important. He projected the following “discussion rules” on the overhead as part of a set of slides [see *JFS 9-2-14 PP.pptx*, attached to the archival copy of these minutes]:

* This is a conversation about vision, not details. (We are not debating the merits of particular proposals or models.)
* This is not a discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of the Common Curriculum.
* Consensus is not required at this time

Then Terry posed the first of the CCVC’s questions, projected on the screen:

**What points raised in William Cronon’s article or Lee Knefelkamp’s presentation should serve as guiding principles for the CCVC and JFS with respect to general education reform?**

**Discussion:**

1. Greg Schroeder: Both the article and the presentation pointed out that discourse about liberal arts education is not original; we are trying to say something original and distinctive, and it’s unlikely that we can say anything distinctive, as useful as that might be. At the workshop, with Jon McGee and Cal Mosley, there was an effort at institutional distinction, but the speaker and article point out that we rarely see anything new. Perhaps we should set aside distinctiveness and marketing for now.
2. Manju Parikh: As I was coming here, a program on the radio said eight of ten college graduates are unemployed. The issue of liberal education and uncertainty of the economy also shows the need for us to defend why liberal arts education is important. It is being questioned a lot. On MPR last week there was a whole program on just this question.
3. Sheila Nelson: I don’t know how we do it, but both the article and talk were on connections, and on moving away from checking off things. How do we make this meaningful? I really liked the qualities given in this article. In our breakout groups during the in-service, the talk about nursing working with sociology, bringing ethics seminars from different disciplines together to make connections – I know that is something FYS is supposed to do, to understand what liberal arts education is about, but am not sure we do that well. That is central as we look at what we will do.
4. Kaarin Johnston: There is a difference between having 100-level courses specifically for general education, versus everything counting toward more specialization, as intro courses to majors. Some are going back to the 60s. I don’t know if we can change it as long as we have all of our lower level courses as prerequisites for upper level courses.
5. Yu Zhang: I learned about disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary. A liberal arts education would give students a solid foundation that isn’t specialized in a particular discipline. Basically, interdisciplinary is everybody’s discipline. Multidisciplinary means you may have a double or triple major, but trans-disciplinary means you have the ability to apply what you learned to a different discipline. This is more of the ideal situation we want for our students.
6. Mary Jepperson: Like Sheila, I really enjoyed Cronon’s ten values. Ten might be a few too many, but if we could narrow it down to what we think a liberally educated student should have, we might get there. In a perfect world we would have those values represented in each course for each major.
7. Jessica O’Reilly: Getting a degree doesn’t mean that students are finished with their education. I want them to be intellectually curious, to know how to pursue inquiry, sustained inquiry; I would hold onto that as a guiding principle.
8. Rachelle Larsen: The connection piece, not only between the dots, but with the community, and that fits into the Catholic and Benedictine piece, is one of our key values that makes us very distinct – a feeling you have when you walk onto campus. How to connect the dots and connect with our students as a Benedictine value.
9. Terry: It sounds like there is a general endorsement of the values Cronon itemizes in his article. Are there any we shouldn’t?
10. Greg: Perhaps they are buzz words, but where does critical thinking fit in? I’m guessing under number 5. I am not sure about the other…
11. Kris Nairn (finishing Greg’s sentence): …vaguely stated comments?
12. Jean Lavigne pointed out that the comments from the faculty workshop were available, and reveal that faculty here are already thinking this way.
13. Terry: They are on the Moodle page, and things will be posted there frequently.
14. Jean: I was struck that most of the things articulated in there are more value-driven.
15. Jeanne Lust: Two years ago, when we had the beginning of the CSB centennial celebration, I learned a lot about the accomplishments of our alums. Many are doing worthwhile things to make the world a better place. Many of these ten things are reflected in them. To be able to listen well, to talk with anyone, how to get things done, have humility…maybe the graduates of every school are doing these kinds of things, I don’t know. How are we producing such people? Is there something we are doing? Or would they have been that way anyway?
16. Greg: To Jeanne’s comment – and I felt this the first time – maybe taking no. 6 as the exception, none of these has anything to do with going to college in the first place; they have to do with being a good integrative human being. If that’s the case, how do we translate this into a statement for why students should come to our college? I’m sure there are people who haven’t gone to college who can do these things. And parents who would say, “Now we don’t have to spend $120,000 to send our kids to CSB and SJU”?
17. Sheila: But they do need to be exposed to the kinds of things we teach to do these things. Look at the lack of a lot of these among today’s politicians. We don’t know how to talk to anyone; class and race divides us. The exposure to discipline makes this broader.
18. Kaarin: Values married to the disciplines is what is important.
19. Phil Kronebusch: I don’t know how to make valuable a discussion of this nature at this level. Are we on board with the Cronon article? Yes, but you could find other lists and say yes to them too, that is what an educated person should do. This discussion can be general, but ultimately turns on choices, and choosing something as more important than others. Of all the valuable things out here, these are the ones so valuable that they must be required. This is productive, but what are we doing there in talking? Sheila is exactly right; we want these things in our students, and in everyone. To talk, to nurture and empower others; but does it progress the discussion of the common curriculum?
20. Mary: As I look at this list of ten, you could marry most of these with a Benedictine value, a part of our curriculum. If we asked people to pick their top three, we would start to see which emerge as being the most important. What do people seem to think are the important priorities for us here in terms of liberally educating students?
21. Rachelle: Is there evidence out there as to what an excellently liberally educated person has? To be the epitome of a liberally educated person? We could choose 16 different articles and qualities, so if we are going to list them, we should use a variety, a multitude. That might get us started on the path.
22. Ben: The lists of values – I’d read many articles, but not Cronon’s – and I thought, hadn’t I read this before? This is one of the better, more clear and succinct articles, but in terms of the values, it is a reasonable perspective. All colleges adopt it, but our Common Curriculum has nothing to do with it. Many look alike.
23. Terry: In our review of the literature, the committee discovered that schools that have succeeded in implementing general education reform have started with these abstractions. It starts with a set of common assumptions, which leads to the construction of a vision statement, then revising our learning goals, which leads to a framework.
24. Manju: The Cronon article is good, but you want to inculcate inquiry into it. Critical thinking follows that, but it is not mentioned. Unless we train our students in that, we aren’t succeeding. It’s good to have tolerance and all, but I would insist that we start teaching and encouraging open-ended questioning, get them to go beyond the obvious. As a society we don’t ask enough questions, and go back to the same old solutions.
25. Pat Kent: I had a daughter who went to St. Ben’s and a son at St. John’s. They came away with open minds and big hearts, and the education here helped them; however, one has a good job and the other doesn’t. I listened to MPR’s talks, and there is something pounding at the door. We have to make the connection between these big ideas, and the ability to express ourselves and talk with anyone, *and* have a tangible way to make a living. There probably are people who won’t be big donors, but we have to keep reminding ourselves that our curriculum and our identity has to include that.
26. Greg: I want to thank the ad hoc committee for trying to structure the conversation. It is clear that it is difficult to separate the various tasks, figuring out a sequence, what to do next; this is a question about process. It’s good to start where we are and to keep the focus. It’s difficult not to jump to more specific question because we have in mind what we are doing. I want to make sure we open our discussion and include our younger colleagues, not just those who are midcareer and have been here. How do we make sure to involve and foster the more junior faculty for whom this will be important? Also, it’s difficult for those of us involved the last time not to make parallels; we shouldn’t repress what we did before and there are times to talk about the last time around, and some when it’s not good. We don’t want to lose sight of the big questions. Someone said at the Workshop, where are our clickers? – which we used in the very same room, in the Old Gym, when we decided about the common curriculum. Also, how do we talk about what we want to do in the future without being too connected to the last time we went through this?
27. Ben: I’m an MPR listener as well. There is data. The data is simple. A college education is worth half a million to a million dollars over a lifetime but it is difficult to know whether there are differences between a liberal arts and comprehensive degree.  We cannot build our common curriculum around that; there is no one who can break down what common curriculum courses will contribute to that.  It is largely misguided to try to do that.  On the issue that Manju brought up, we know the statistics.  Only 36% of Americans have college degrees, and it’s not mathematically possible for 8 out of 10 of them to be unemployed – that would mean that college graduates account for ALL of the unemployed, and everyone else that age has jobs.  College graduates are more likely to be employed.
28. Rachelle: The concern isn’t necessarily the data, it’s the parents knocking on our door; if their kids don’t have a job, throwing data at them doesn’t help. As we move forward, how can we translate some of these skills into marketable skills, so that they will be successful people and success professionals?
29. Sheila: Is that the job of the common curriculum, or of the majors?
30. Ben: Other than the elite colleges, our graduates’ employment look exactly like liberal arts graduates’ elsewhere. It’s not something we get to influence that much. It’s not a moveable object.
31. Don Fisher: The Cronon article talked about values. Students don’t come as blank slates. They have started. They choose CSB and SJU because it’s consistent with their values. How can we help them along the path of who they are already becoming? And values are great, but employers value skills, another level we haven’t touched on. Values are great, but that’s not up to us, although we can encourage them. And how to live those values in the real world.
32. Kaarin: Back to discipline vs general, any people in education are stuck with the disciplinary perspective, and the world 20 years from now will be disciplines that don’t now exist, and people creating job sets and selling them to corporations. As long as we stay in little boxes and demand certain skills within a discipline (not that that isn’t necessary for some disciplines), it’s counterproductive for 10-20 years from now.
33. Maureen McCarter: One term Cronon used was human freedom. A liberal education is one which results in an individual who sees the world from many perspectives.  If we reduced the world's population to 100 people, only one of those would have a college degree. Instead of focusing so much on jobs, should college be helping students develop a broader global view, especially since those who don't attend college will be affected by the decisions college graduates will make?
34. Derek: The collection of materials from the workshop is rich, and there are large areas of agreement, including the Catholic Benedictine heritage etc. I’d encourage the committee to table the broader conversation and look at those points, and we can do some things differently. We’ve got information to start that discussion. I would urge that as a point of departure. I would love it if someone would do that same exercise with a group of students; part of our task is to move students along that continuum.
35. Terry: The comments are on Moodle. The 87 pages were condensed to 20 pages and finished at the end of last week; it didn’t seem wise to put that on your plates on a Friday before a holiday weekend – a holiday you all had to work.

Terry posed a second question:

**“Connecting” was a theme in both Cronon’s article and Knefelkamp’s presentation. In terms of our general education curriculum, are there ways we can make better connections?**

Terry also relayed another comment from Mary Hinton: “I support the movement away from ‘lists’ that Cronon proposes and agree it's the connections between courses and experiences that enliven the liberal arts.  (This section of the paper beautifully reinforces Lee's comments/talk.). How can/does our common curriculum intentionally make those connections and how do we facilitate students' making those connections for themselves?”

**Discussion:**

1. Anne Sinko: I’m not particularly well versed in our Common Curriculum, but in the Math department our students have extreme freedom in their choices, which can be a wonderful thing, but makes it difficult for me to make connections. Freedom of choice is more important? Or should they all get the same information, coming out of FYS? That seems to be a failing. I can’t make a lot of connections; I have to go back to what they’ve learned in high school. I don’t know where that line is, but it needs to be part of the discussion.
2. Greg: Getting away from the discipline, in the absence of any real coherence in the Common Curriculum, is there any coherence? I suspect we strive for this; we have capstones, right? That is supposed to provide coherence, but where else is there anything?
3. Rachelle: I was having the same difficulty with students having the freedom to pick and choose, how do they have the foundation to build on when they get to their discipline? You should be able to build on those. It would be challenging to teach a common curriculum that says you have to connect all the dots.
4. Jessica: We want to inspire the students to choose their projects and passions and build skills and do all the connecting themselves. This is some of the most fun teaching in the upper division, when you have students from different backgrounds and disciplines. I really love the experiential package, where students have an opportunity making connections to the real world.
5. Mary: In Cronon’s list of ten, I see five as skills, five as values. The skills are that they can read and understand, write clearly, solve a variety of puzzles, understand how to get things done, and make connections. The others are values. You need one approach for skills and one for values.
6. Jeanne: That is how I was thinking about this. That is what it feels like to me. Certain things are the way we’d like a person to interact with others, and to think about themselves, and those don’t fit with a discipline; so I can imagine courses that aren’t attached to a discipline and are more activity based. And then there are the others where you practice critical thinking, develop your ability to write, etc. that could be in a discipline. The connecting one – I’m not thinking so much of integrating things with one or another discipline; it’s being in touch with the rest of humanity, and helping to lift up the lives of the rest of humanity.
7. Ben: Regarding skills values, and knowledge, Anne started with knowledge. Right now we have a curriculum to create knowledge. From your perspective, would it help if it had common skills and values?
8. Anne: There is the continuum of students having complete freedom, to having to take this specific course, just to connect the dots. There is a continuum here, and I am not sure where we want to fall. Right now we seem to be closer to the end of having a lot of freedom. The continuum needs to be part of the discussion, especially since connection is a clear theme for us.
9. Terry: It’s a clear theme, but it isn’t necessarily one we have to embrace. We are trying to get a sense from the faculty in terms of what they want, a sense of purpose for our general education curriculum.
10. Emily Esch: I’ve been here nine years and have never had a discussion about liberal arts. It feels like we’ve been going very slow, but from all of the readings, it’s best not to push change too quickly. The committee has had to stop itself several times from putting things down. We’ve been thinking and talking about this a lot.

Terry: Mary Hinton had additional questions: “In what ways can CSB/SJU (continue to?) create an environment wherein we support a liberal education within and outside of the classroom? Can we extend the goals of the common curriculum beyond the classroom? If so, how?”

**Discussion:**

1. Sheila: The experiential learning comes to mind first. Study abroad, campus ministry trips with a lot of reflection; I think we were doing that with Alternative Break Experiences. One thing I really enjoy about our campuses is that faculty are encouraged and invited to participate in those kinds of things and bring the connections we try to make in the classroom to outside the classroom. Companions on a Journey, spirituality offerings, etc. – there are lots of opportunities for faculty to engage students outside the classroom that make those connections easier. Maybe we should be talking more with staff.
2. Terry thanked everyone for their participation in the important task of reforming our general education. He also noted that the JFS would be having its share of motions to pass in the coming year.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Peggy Roske*