

SEPC Meeting Minutes 2007-2008

9/13/07

- List of DRs:
 - CCT—Colin Glanovsky
 - Dance—Madeline Best and Eric Conroe
 - Drama—Jen Funk and Eli Phillips
 - Foreign Language—Sunny Cyr and Kyle Whelan
 - Literature—Rose Melia
 - Music—Michael Chinworth and Annie Schwartz
 - Science and Math—Glen Heinrich-Wallace and Katie VanMunster
 - Social Science—Adam Freed and Cathy McGath
 - Visual Arts—Ethan Knechel and Jami Marshall-Lively
- Head: Adam Freed; Secretary: Cathy McGath
- SEPC will meet at 12:05pm (instead of noon) every Thursday in Dickinson 117
- Ideas for this year (by discipline):
 - CCT—get rid of all of the misinformation surrounding the CCT
 - Dance—more open showings that are interdisciplinary; work on Dance Workshop
 - Drama—interested in welcoming freshmen
 - Foreign Language—have language tutors again, have foreign film screenings, bring in guest speakers (translation, language theory, etc.)
 - Music—Tishman Listening Room (listening sessions weekly determined by Michael)
 - Science & Math—coordinate the “required” math courses to create a logical progression
 - Visual Arts—organize the different arts organizations into an umbrella group for better information dissemination and collaboration; get the cork board outside of the Pod designated for VA info; work on improving SILO
- Ideas for this year (across disciplines):
 - Synthesize the basic “requirements” or “guidelines” for studying in a discipline. i.e. what defines advanced work
 - We should bring this up with CPC
 - This information should be given at Plan Meetings, put on the wiki, etc.
 - What is the difference between theses and senior projects?
 - Compile a list of questions to ask your Plan Committee
- News:
 - According to Wendy Hirsch—anyone can take stats at SVC, talk to her about how
 - Class Reps will be elected after Add/Drop (this is from the Dean’s Office)
- Need to elect Lit Rep and Freshman-at-Large
- How is the curriculum scheduled? Who determines what times each class is?

9/27/07

- Changes to the By-Laws:
 - Establish quorum as 2/3 of the body (approved)

- Freshman-at-Large can become Secretary his/her sophomore year (approved).
Actual wording: Any student who has served on the SEPC body for one full academic year can be the Secretary.
- Elections:
 - Caitlin Hussey is elected as second CCT DR (ran unopposed)
 - Hanju Roe is elected as second Lit DR (ran unopposed)
- Issues:
 - DRs should talk about SEPC in Coffee Hour (especially regarding Class Reps)
 - Have a SEPC Fact-of-the-Week in Coffee Hour minutes?
 - DRs should send direct emails to CRs to tell them of their duties
 - Create a Plan Reminder sheet (What should everyone know about the Plan?)—
DRs should email suggestions to Cathy
- News:
 - There's been some talk about interdisciplinary field trips to NYC for the general student body—find something for every discipline and share
 - The Dean's Office determines the times of every class in the curriculum. The faculty input their desire and the Dean's Office organizes all of it.

10/4/07

- Notes:
 - Cathy to make posters advertising for Freshman-at-Large spot
 - DRs still haven't sent Cathy ideas for Plan Reminder Sheet; wait for input from DRs
 - Adam to find out if we have a budget

10/11/07

- Election for Freshman-at-Large: George James is elected (Emily Thomas, Emma, and Coco also ran)
- Issues:
 - Discipline concentration guidelines:
 - Should all disciplines be combined in one pamphlet? Should they be printed separately?
 - They should be distributed at Plan Meetings at least.
 - They should be given to all faculty.
 - Encourage students to seek this information.
 - Put Plan Reminder sheet in Coffee Hour minutes and mailboxes of all sophomores and transfers
 - Have table about SEPC in downstairs commons
 - Work on collecting CR forms
- Notes:
 - Cathy to email DRs CR information form and Plan Reminder sheet to get suggestions

10/18/07

- News:

- Adam had meeting with APC
 - They liked the Plan Reminder sheet
 - They agreed to give a copy of a blank Plan Evaluation sheet to all students (the sheet used for the minutes of Plan Meeting)
 - They plan to work on improving faculty advising (on the faculty end)
 - The time when students are asked to leave the Plan Meeting is when the members of the Plan Committee agree what to write for the minutes.
 - Distinguish between Plan Proposal meetings and Plan Confirmation meetings (looking at advanced work, depth and breadth)
- Issues:
 - Try to get meeting with APC to discuss Plan more in-depth
 - From George—freshman have concerns with a few classes, they weren't aware they needed prior knowledge from some classes
 - Ethan—maybe there should be more clarity about what the freshmen should expect in their college classes
 - SEPC version of Peer Mentors?
 - Encourage students to use their faculty advisors
- Notes:
 - Downstairs commons: Wed—Colin, Adam, Hanju; Fri—Ethan, Madeline, Eric
 - To go in Coffee Hour minutes: encourage people to check in with their teachers, since it is midterm

10/25/07

- Notes:
 - Remind faculty to turn in CR sheets
 - Put Plan Reminder sheets in Coffee Hour minutes and mailboxes
 - Remind people to sit in downstairs commons
 - To go in Coffee Hour minutes: encourage people to check in with their teachers
- News:
 - Sam Rich, Eva, and Ethan are trying to put together a guide on how to get things done at Bennington

11/1/07

- Notes:
 - Adam to ask Dean's Office to send memo to faculty asking them to turn in CR sheets (important to have pressure from on high)
 - In the spring—advertise CRs better, distribute CR sheets later so that faculty don't lose them
- Issues:
 - CR sheets:
 - Need a set in stone time period for distributing, filling out, and collecting CR sheets
 - Change the language on CR to identify date they need to be turned in
 - Put on the sheets that they should be turned into program coordinators only
 - Need to make a list/timeline of what SEPC does/needs to do every year

11/8/07

- Issues:
 - Plans (what to consider if your meeting isn't going well):
 - Clear up any miscommunication
 - Don't get frazzled
 - Redirect the conversation if it is getting irrelevant
 - It's *your* meeting, but you still need to listen to suggestions
 - Advising:
 - Are set advising times working?
 - Although it's a "universal" hour, things are still scheduled
 - Can SEPC work with advisors in a more regular way?
 - The Curriculum:
 - One of the reasons it was late this year—new process, someone in the Dean's Office is gone
 - Our requests with the curriculum (to bring up to CPC):
 - Have it out before the 1st Plan Meeting (and have registration after the last Plan Meeting)
 - Make it is complete as possible. If there are spaces where the Dean's Office knows classes will be available (incoming professor, etc.), identify this in the space...let students know.
 - April Bernard:
 - Adam will talk to FPRC about the way she tried to hold midterm meeting with one of her classes—she wouldn't leave the class to allow them time to have a midterm discussion among themselves.

11/27/07

- News:
 - From APC:
 - Talked about advising and the Plan Process inconsistencies. They suggested that each discipline highlight guidelines for advanced work: not a template, but something to allow them to speak with one voice throughout the faculty.
 - The college fired Richard in the bookstore—College needs to consider what happens to students when they fire staff like that.
- Issues:
 - Attendance:
 - This is the 4th meeting Kyle has missed, what should we do about attendance issues? Talk to Sunny to see if Kyle has been active in the discipline.
 - Addition to by-laws? Ideas—Head should have conversation with DR after two missed meetings; serious conversation after 3 (deciding whether or not the DR should stay); tell the DR in question to come to the next meeting, if s/he comes s/he can explain self, if not, body can decide without them whether or not to give them a vote of no confidence. If they miss more than 4 meetings?
 - CR forms—have a timeline

- Notes:
 - Need to elect a new Dance Rep for the beginning of next term (Madeline is graduating)

2/21/08

- Election for Dance Rep: Emma Morehouse is elected (Asher Woodworth ran, too)
- Issues:
 - George—he wonders how Bennington can get more teachers.
 - Lit Faculty—they seem to be under the impression that they can say who can and can't be a DR. They are pressuring Hanju to resign, because he is on academic probation. They by-laws on the wiki do not say that you have to be in good academic standing to be a DR.

2/28/08

- News:
 - Rose resigned. Need a new Lit Rep.
- Issues:
 - Re-vamping the midterm conversation (from faculty and student sides): We need to get feedback from the faculty. How?
 - Create an evaluation for all faculty to feel out
 - Want it to be professional, create open communication
 - Ask faculty to evaluate the professionalism & appropriateness of the feedback they receive. Do you feel like you're getting constructive feedback?
 - What do the faculty view as SEPC's role? What do you think we are doing/should do?
 - Is there a way we can serve the process better? Is there a way we can improve the relationship between students and faculty?
 - We can distribute a letter at midterm and end-of-term for faculty to respond to.
 - IT department—is there anything SEPC can do?
 - What's the progress of the New Initiative? Invite Ken, Dana, and Susan to talk

3/6/08

- Issues:
 - Lit Rep—April talked to Cathy and Adam in the hallway of the barn saying that Hanju couldn't be a rep and that they had told two lit students to come to SEPC for the Lit Rep position. It seemed as if the Lit faculty were under the impression that they could "appoint" reps. Is this a problem?
 - There is a distinction between recommending and appointing.
 - Faculty can recommend that a student be a DR, but they should encourage everyone to run for DR positions. That way faculty can feel engaged, too.
 - Ethan—could/should there be a dual approval step? DR approved by students and faculty?

- Jen—no, but we can ask faculty if they have concerns or need to bring something to light about a particular student.
- Election for Lit Rep—Michael Cahoon is elected (had heard from the position from April, but had thought about the position before). Josh also showed up, but he's a freshman.

3/13/08

- Notes:
 - Get copies of any papers that go out at midterm.
- News:
 - Visual Arts faculty meeting—Liz Coleman came in to talk about Design Labs (there was some eye-rolling). Apparently, she's going to all discipline meetings
 - There is no more Senior Book for Lit students—it has become the Interrobang. This was not publicized. Lit reps should talk to Chris Miller (?)
- Issues:
 - Create agenda for meeting with CPC:
 - What are the ways in which the midterm evaluation has been useful (& not) in changing the direction of the course?
 - Has the midterm been more useful in the past than it is now?
 - Could the midterm be more structured? How?
 - Students feel like they should be listened to, and faculty feel like the students are being bossy.
 - What is the view of DR responsibilities and their relationships to the faculty? When have DRs been most helpful?
 - What is CPC's agenda...

3/27/08

- Issues:
 - The Midterm—addressing it from our side:
 - All about the way students present it. Saying something like “This is what we need” or “this is what would help us learn” NOT “This isn't working; you should/shouldn't do x”
 - We need to better articulate what the CR is and what s/he does.
 - Really, the whole class should be able to approach a faculty member, but CR needs to know that s/he is the liaison between students and faculty.
 - CR needs to understand how to lead and report discussion.
 - DRs need to make more of an effort to connect with CRs
 - We should communicate to the student body better about what the midterm is.
 - When a CR is elected, faculty could tell them they have to go to a preset meeting with DR
 - Ideas for re-vamping the SEPC process:
 - Have four meetings per term: one at 3 weeks, one at midterm, and one at 10 weeks. 3 weeks—w/teacher, getting everyone on the same page, elucidating course objectives. This is a casual conversation. Midterm—regular midterm structure; meeting w/o teacher, maybe build in reflection

w/students and teacher after separate discussion. 10 weeks—w/teacher, making sure midterm comments have been addressed. End of term—same as now. Let the teacher decide how conversations at 3 and 10 weeks will go.

- Are these too many changes at once?
- Does this take too much time away from class?
- Put these ideas and questions for feedback in letter to faculty.
- Get rid of making the faculty member leave for election of CR.

4/3/08

- Issues:
 - Closed letter to faculty with proposed changes and explanations.
 - By-Laws—Is academic probation an issue for DRs?
 - The by-laws on the wiki do not say that a DR must be in good academic standing. The Dean's Office seems to be under the impression that the by-laws had changed and it now said that they have to be in good academic standing. A few years ago, SEPC decided to change the by-laws to say that CRs had to be in good academic standing, and the Dean's Office thought that the conversation about this would naturally carry over to apply to DRs as well. They were unsure if this addition was left out purposely or accidentally.
 - Need to reconcile the two versions of the by-laws.
 - Does it really matter if DR is on academic probation? No, as long as they are still fulfilling their duties. Positive point—DR can speak to what it means to be on Academic Concern or Probation.
 - Scheduling of Plan Days. How come everything seems to happen on Wednesdays? There are numerous classes that meet only once a week on Wednesday mornings, yet multiple classes can't be held because of Plan Days and Long Weekend. Cathy to ask Wendy why this is and if there is a way to change it.

4/17/08

- News:
 - Science & Math—next fall there will be these classes called “modules,” which are three week long classes on fundamentals. This is the first time we've heard of anything like this. Still very vague. Will have Susan & Ken talk to this.
 - Response from Wendy about Wednesday scheduling—it's the best they can do (email is attached).
 - Replacing the Senior Book with the Interrobang was a reallocation of funds.
 - Faculty is still talking about outlining guidelines for each discipline.
 - Susan and Ken are coming to speak about the New Initiative and Design Labs at our next meeting.

4/24/08

- News (Susan and Ken here to talk about New Initiative):

- The Design Labs are still being piloted. They will not be required for incoming freshmen next year. Still mostly for first years, but upperclassmen invited, too. It's left up to the faculty to decide how to incorporate upperclassmen.
- There will be 6 DLs next year: 3 in the fall and 3 in the spring. Fall: Mirka & Amy on AIDS; Betsy & Jon Isherwood on the Oceans; Geoff on the relationship between national identity and foreign policy.
- Modules—3 week, 1 credit classes that will meet twice a week. They will be piloted this fall. They are intended to be an intensive series of sessions to offer precise investigation into something. The classes might have an evening attachment. Examples: The Art of the Critique, Seeing & Moving. Students can take one or up to four. Intended mostly for first years, but not exclusive. Intended to help first years enter college.
- DLs—open up perspective, see things broadly, what does it mean to act in the world?
- Logistical issues:
 - Still trying to figure out how SEPC would work for modules, but there would be an end-of-course evaluation.
 - There will still be an add/drop for modules, but we don't know how yet.
- Still evaluating how the DLs went. SEPC forms. Susan had her class do an entirely separate essay for evaluation.
- Susan & Ken ask, how can they communicate all of this to students?
 - Need something that breaks down the mystery. Students can't be surprised.
 - Needs something that invites feedback. Conversation.
 - Talk to House Chairs? Use the wiki?
 - Susan—should faculty come to Coffee Hours? YES!
- Notes:
 - Organize for faculty to come to Coffee Hours to discuss the design labs and modules and New Initiative.

5/1/08

- Issues (the Midterm):
 - CPC's proposal for the midterm:
 - Faculty must hold a midterm, but they decide how it will go.
 - Three main options—1) Faculty remains in the room and there is an open forum discussion. 2) How the midterm is now, i.e. teacher leaves, students discuss, CR reports to teacher. 3) Teacher leaves, students discuss, teacher comes back, CR reports to teacher in front of the teacher so that class can speak up, teacher addresses everything right there in front of the class.
 - It's important to students to have a space for them to talk without the teacher there.
 - It's naïve to assume that students will say everything in front of their teacher no matter how comfortable they may seem. That teacher is still grading them (in some cases determining if they can graduate).
 - Both faculty and students need to feel comfortable in order to make midterm work.

- End-of-term evaluations will be the only outlet if student concerns aren't addressed at midterm.
- Should we just try CPC's proposal?
- Notes:
 - Campus-wide Coffee Hour to discuss the midterm this Sunday (before our meeting with CPC, so that we can have actual student voices).

5/15/08

- Elections: Cathy elected Head and Glen elected Secretary (no one ran against them).
- Issues:
 - Art History *needs* better support.
 - How will SEPC deal with design labs that are inter-disciplinary?
 - (From Foreign Language faculty)—The end-of-term evaluation form doesn't make sense for individual tutorials (mostly theses). Even though form isn't required for a tutorial of less than three students, faculty still wants some kind of written feedback. Want formalized feedback for record, so that administration can see in the rehiring process. New form?
 - There should be more recognition for tutorials. Faculty isn't compensated for tutorials.

5/22/08

- News:
 - DR elections are postponed until next fall, because we didn't get enough submissions to Student Life.
- For next fall:
 - Tutorial evaluations.
 - Talk to Amy Kuzmicki or Charlene next year to see if SEPC has a budget.
 - Talk to person in charge of Pod or Michael Zimmer for making SEPC posters.