

Student Life Committee Minutes April 20, 2010

Attending: Bruce Mann, Mike Segawa, Lisa Ferrari, Alison Tracy-Hale, Geoff Proehl, Aislinn Melchior, Jan Leuchtenberger, Christian Brink.

The minutes from the last meeting were approved with minor changes.

The Chair told the Committee that he would put together a final report for the committee and circulate it to the members for comment before sending it in to the Faculty Senate.

The Chair asked Mike Segawa to lead a discussion on information literacy and academic integrity.

Segawa pointed out that many students are in a more stable place after choosing a major but that first- and second-year students may need more guidance in these areas, and there may be a need for that guidance outside of the classroom, not just in it. Therefore SLC may be a place to discuss how to provide that guidance.

One possible source of that guidance could be Residence Life and peer advisors.

Committee members asked about any move to add something about this to Prelude. There has not been such a move for a number of reasons: training for this is generally thought to be more effective if taught in the context of a class assignment; the Prelude committee is reluctant to insert anything that would interfere with the “welcoming tone” of the program; it would be difficult to generalize training for all students when issues of information literacy and academic integrity are often discipline-specific.

One member suggested that just because it doesn't fit into Prelude now, doesn't mean Prelude couldn't be changed to fit it. Another suggested that, rather than teaching the nuts and bolts practices related to information literacy and academic integrity, there could be a discussion of the ethical framework with peer advisors.

Discussion returned to the benefits of embedding work with these issues into the Core. Many said that the issues are so complex that trying to address them in one assignment or one module is too daunting, but also that faculty feel they don't want to devote too much time to the issues at the expense of other parts of the class.

Another issue with putting it into the Core is faculty views on whether or not they are responsible for teaching writing. Some feel that the move to Writing Across the Curriculum emphasized the need to concentrate on writing in the seminars but that faculty teaching them did not necessarily have to teach students HOW to write.

Other faculty feel that teaching writing and issues of information literacy and academic integrity ARE the responsibility of faculty teaching the seminars. If the point of the Scholarly and Creative Inquiry seminar is to teach scholarly inquiry, isn't it the professors' responsibility to teach the students how to find answers?

Critical thinking and assessing the value of sources have always been part of a university education but technology has brought the ability to cut and paste information, which has added a new temptation and potential for violations of academic integrity.

In view of this, what steps is Student Affairs taking, or what steps could it take, to deal with the moral culture on campus?

Perhaps a peer-sponsored discussion about not cheating as a quality of a Puget Sound student as part of a discussion of campus culture in the first week could be useful. It could be helpful for first-year students who are not yet majors and need an incentive not to cut corners. This kind of discussion could be organized by the peer advisors – students whom the first-year students can look up to and to whom they have a sense of accountability.

Mike Segawa said he would like to pursue this option and other ways that cultural messages from peers could help first-year students know when to ask questions.

The meeting was adjourned at 5 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Jan Leuchtenberger