Business Task Force Report Discussion

Departments: Math, Music, Psychology, Religious Studies

March 08, 2012

Present: Paul Allen (Math), Naiomi Cameron (Math), Yung-Pin Chen (Math), Brian Deweiler-Bedell (Psychology), Jerusha Detweiler-Bedell (Psychology), David Ellis (Vice President), Jeff Ely (Math), Jim Grant (Incoming Associate Dean), Jane Hunter (Associate Dean), Tuajuanda Jordan (Dean), Rob Kugler (Religious Studies), Susanna Morrill (Religious Studies), Paul Powers (Religious Studies), Gary Reiness (Incoming Associate Dean), Tamara Ko (recorder)

Dean Jordan: I am inviting groups of department to come and talk to us about their concerns and ideas regarding the two circulated documents – business task force report and my presentation to the board.

Associate Dean Hunter: David was on the task force too.

Dean Jordan: David and Jane played a major role in getting Winterim workshop.

Professor J. Detweiler-Bedell: It struck me at yesterday’s faculty meeting; where is the home for this new person? That was a really important question to me, and it’s a very logical question. It seems apparent that the economics department will not be the home; however, people are going to assume that is the home if there isn’t another one because that’s the natural conclusion. I am interested in the thinking process of determining that home.

Dean Jordan: In a simple world at the College, I would envision this as a multi-disciplinary approach. We may have to start at a department or with a center on interdisciplinary studies, and then this person could be housed there. This would mean not impinging on anyone else’s turf and being at the point of enough independence to establish collaborations in a formal way. The program could blend in nicely with a lot of other interdisciplinary programs and serve as a central hub.

Associate Dean Hunter: One possible model would be environmental studies.

Professor Power: I know that there are other schools doing what we’re trying to do. Do we know how they situate their programs?

Dean Jordan: The models are all varied. Some just have centers, some have departments that are called “entrepreneurship” and some of them have had business programs that have a division of entrepreneurship. Figuring out what’s the best way in the context of the College and just doing it that way. In the process, talking to other people who are doing these models and seeing what has been successful and challenging so that we don’t duplicate those errors.

Professor Power: One basic distinction in the housing of this position is if it looks like a curriculum item or something more like 3CE, which is certainly connected to academics but analytically separate. I can imagine a scenario in which both are important.

Dean Jordan: An academic and a co-curricular piece; even if it’s a certificate, it should not be relegated as a 3CE type thing because it should be blended into the regular curriculum. We want it to have some credibility. My experience in this culture is that if it seems like it’s purely 3CE, then it doesn’t seem to have any credence. We want it to be more substantive than that.

Professor Cameron: I was wondering if you could talk about the outcomes of the Winterim workshop [in January]. I know that it happened and the students had a good experience, but curious about what was learned.

Vice President Ellis: I did not develop the coursework; it was Chris Stevens from Gonzaga. What I’ve observed and in talking with the students is that most seemed to have come away from that week with a heightened sense of their own abilities to do things with their education. In that sense, the way that the Winterim workshop is currently structured lines up better as a 3CE co-curricular activity. Because the workshop was for five straight days at eight hours a day, there wasn’t a lot of time for reading and writing but the students spent a lot of time in oral presentations and presenting ideas to the rest of the group, so that was certainly a benefit to the students. They gained confidence in being able to do that. I think those would be the main things I would mention. It was not intended to be a really deeply academically rigorous week because it was one week; I could see doing it that way with a lot of pre-work but it was also the last week of winter break and we didn’t want to present it that way.

Dean Jordan: Were you also asking about evaluations? We did evaluate the course where Julia Unangst took our normal course evaluations and got rid of the questions that did not apply to the workshop. There was no category that listed anything below a 5.6; mid to upper 6s for everything. I will post the evaluation online; a lot of testimonials and the students wrote a lot about how this has impacted their lives. They talked about the aspects of creativity, innovation, and teamwork, and also rated the instructor of the workshop. It might be really beneficial for the group to see those results, so I’ll put them online. I will also put up the syllabus of the workshop.

Professor J. Detweiler-Bedell: Is this someone who would come back every year? I heard from students that they thought he [Chris] was really charismatic and put-together. Unique and meaningful experience; there’s something about the person who’s teaching and delivering that message. Are we going to have his [Chris] buy-in or some vision to bring about this in a more consistent manner?

Dean Jordan: I made no promises to Chris but he has a deep interest; as long as we offer the Winterim workshop again, he’s willing to do it. Most people in entrepreneurship are going to be a bit charismatic, otherwise they’re going to be absolutely failures. I would think that as we think about this and what shape it might be in at the College, the types of faculty and skillsets we’re looking for, we’re going to do a national search for this position. I guarantee you that 95% of those people will be able to sell whatever it is they’re selling.

Professor Kugler: How does this fit into the long-term plans for defining CAS going forward? Does it have a place? What’s the relationship?

Dean Jordan: Depends on how we define it. Thinking about the work of the strategic group for CAS – part of it has been to define what it means to be a liberally educated person. Entrepreneurship fits right into those characteristics especially when we talk about being problem-solvers and thinking critically and analytically. Being able to integrate a variety of information and coming up with your own type of solution to a problem. All of those things could be woven into entrepreneurship and it would fit perfectly. When we talk about being able to think broadly and considering diverse opinions and thought, that’s also part of entrepreneurship and being able to communicate that. From my point of view, entrepreneurship is there. We talk about how we prepare our students to use their skillsets to go out and do something that is potentially impactful. Not necessarily to be leaders but to do something that will make a difference, then entrepreneurship will be able to help them put together something and develop those things. Part of the work of strategic group four is to recruit, retain, and graduate a diverse population of students, and this will help us do that.

Professor Ely: Has anyone thought concretely about what a curriculum would look like if we went so far as to have a major?

Dean Jordan: I would say I have thought about it. I don’t think I should talk about what the curriculum should contain because there are very discipline-specific tracts that it could take and the faculty should determine that. I’m not even sure if the College wants a major in entrepreneurship because that would be taking us down a very specific kind of road and not sure if that would work here.

Associate Dean Hunter: One of the things that this model can do is to help students think about the transition between the theory they’re learning here and the practice of being able to survive later on. There is conceivably momentum for the entire curriculum. If you’re an art major and would really like to have a livelihood, how are you going to be able to do that? Teaching, gallery, or selling your paintings – those are all small businesses. This is a way of putting legs under the major and figuring out how to carry the things students believe in into a world that is beyond our walls. I’m less thrilled about having a separate major and more excited about the role this kind of thinking could provide for our students.

Professor Ely: The only two entrepreneurs I know have very specific domains of knowledge and then figured out how to run a business and gain those skills.

Dean Jordan: When I made the presentation to the board, I started talking about a certificate in entrepreneurship and then went up to a minor thinking it could cut across all the majors. However, I could not bring myself to say that we are going to have a major in anything, as it doesn’t seem appropriate have a major here right now. This is simply a set of ideas as we go along; piloting here to see what happens. We had the Winterim, so what is the next step? If the certificate works, then what? If it doesn’t, then what? We can have something available to students who are interested.

Professor Ely: When I came here 20 years ago, there was no computer science department. Quite honestly, the fact that there seems to be no department here that is enthusiastic about this [entrepreneurship] concerns me. Computer science couldn’t have survived without the support of the math department.

Dean Jordan: We have another model in environmental studies and that is growing, which started with one faculty member and now we’re up to three and it’s on a very good trajectory. Not sure what is the right way to start something here; seems like we just need to start slowly.

Professor Reiness: Another model would be gender studies; a minor for 20 odd years and cross disciplinary. One of the things that I would like to see in a program like this deal with is helping students improve their personal efficacy and ability to lead other people, and work in groups. Seems that one of the things required in the world and academia is working with people from different backgrounds and value systems. You have to be able to function together and get something done. We should pay some attention to that as well; a real value added for our students.

Professor J. Detweiler-Bedell: I really liked what Gary said; Julio de Paula had presented a report on the quality traits of top business CEO leaders. In the top three, teamwork was number two. It’s been absent from the description and is such an important part of being an entrepreneur I think it would resonate with our students – the leadership, the teamwork, and has an additional sell to it. The one way in which this so far is different from environmental studies and gender studies though, is that it hasn’t seem like any members of our faculty has been given opportunities to endorse this. Maybe there are some who would but don’t feel comfortable with it. The main concern I have comes back to the idea of a home; the success of this would be best if it could cross all disciplines and yet we don’t have anyone on the ground to take charge. My worry is that the train has already left the station.

Dean Jordan: I absolutely agree that there have to be faculty who want to do this. It would have made my life much easier if there had been faculty onboard already doing something when I first arrived here. However, there were no faculty members screaming to say, I want to do this and out in the open about this. This report has been there for awhile and has not been disseminated yet. Apparently there has been something going on with the board for years and not communicated to the faculty. What I only heard was not business and not in the Economics department. Where do you get the faculty buy-in when there’s this clock that has been ticking for a long time and getting louder? My goal is to walk this line; how to satisfy the board and at the same time, get the faculty to know that we need to do something. How to get faculty buy-in is to present something, talk about it, see if there is momentum and those who are interested can then lead the charge. Better to get everyone on the same page so we know what’s out there and who said what. Let them read it and then talk about it. From these conversations, we can see with whom it’s resonating and then give it to them and let them take over. Until I’ve heard from all voices that want to speak, it’s going to be a little bit crazy. I understand that people are nervous about the process. There needs to be a group of people working together but in the open so that people can understand and feel confident. We are not taking anything from you to move this forward and it is not changing the concept of liberal arts education; it is adding another dimension and outlook to the students.

Vice President Ellis: From the board’s perspective, they’ve been talking about this for a few years. I don’t think the train has left the station.

Professor Grant: We’re trying to decide what mode of transportation we want.

Vice President Ellis: It can be whatever we make it.

Professor J. Detweiler-Bedell: But it has to be something, yes?

Vice President Ellis: The entrepreneurship concept that Tuajuanda presented to the board really resonated with them.

Professor Power: As someone who doesn’t have a really strong interest invested, I think a lot of us have perceived this as something from the board and we’re defending ourselves from this push. I became a lot more comfortable with this concept once I realized that the world is pushing this as opposed to the board, and that many other schools are reacting to that same push. I think understanding that would help my colleagues and me. Like it or not, this is the world that we live in and other schools and people we respect are doing this already. Perhaps as a criticism, I really don’t like the new course that just got approved – Personal Finance Skills?

Professor Kugler: Along those lines, I’ve been thinking about this a lot with respect to the board but there’s an opportunity for us. A lot of them are really great folks and some of them do get liberal arts and a lot of them don’t, and this is an opportunity for them to understand. It also important for board members to understand the larger picture of entrepreneurship but I think we can get there – that responsibility has to fall on David and Tuajuanda. We have some new members who will be really good on this, and some will eventually get there, and some will never be there.

Dean Jordan: I appreciate that comment. At some point, I have to remind the faculty that they don’t need to march to the board – their voice is stronger when it comes from me.

Vice President Ellis: Paul’s point really hit home for me. I’ve been hearing from the board about this for awhile and it hasn’t really gone anywhere. During the process of what we as the task force looked into, we discovered that a lot of our peer institutions are already doing things in this area and that led us to be pushing for this entrepreneurship track because it seems like something we could be doing very well here. I totally agree with the framing of it; the board is very interested but I certainly don’t want it to feel like it’s being crammed down your throats.

Professor B. Detweiler-Bedell: We can bring back alumni and learn from them. I think leadership and teamwork can be part of the curricula, and it should be. Social psychologists do organizational behavior – I would be excited to be a part of this that you’re describing. I hope you get more faculty willing to take that jump now.

Dean Jordan: This is another good showing of the departments; we’ve only had one meeting where one department showed up.

Professor Grant: Too bad that Paul’s not here but the new econ course is a real academic course. You all should read the course description. I would like you to all talk about, whether the model of AES would be a possible idea for this kind of program. I don’t know much about that here but it does take students from all sorts of backgrounds and then brings them up to a level of credit. Is there something we can learn from that?

Professor Ely: I’m going to argue against that. If we’re going to do this, we need to start with a charismatic person who is tenure-track. If you want buy-in, this person needs to be a tenure-track individual.

Professor J. Detweiler-Bedell: I’m sensitive to the idea of people within faculty buying in exclusively; would agree with Jeff that this position somehow needs to be integrated with the CAS.

Professor Grant: I’ve also heard that this colleague questions the idea of certificate; something that LC has not done in the past. What does that do? Does that change the nature of the college?

Professor Cameron: I don’t know what a certificate is.

Professor J. Detweiler-Bedell: What schools do that?

Professor B. Detweiler-Bedell: Why not just go for a minor?

Dean Jordan: There are some liberal arts colleges that give certificates (Oberlin? St. Olaf and a California school). These are real excellent programs that give certificates in entrepreneurship. The reason to start there as opposed to a minor is to test and tweak, build the program before it morphs into a minor.

Professor Kugler: Show up on transcripts? Record for potential employers.

Associate Dean Hunter: We gave students something for participating in the Winterim and it was noted on transcripts. I think it has PR value; it’s proof showing that you’ve taken some courses.

Professor Allen: I know with accreditation agencies, majors/minor have to satisfy big parameters. Is there a sense out there of what counts for certificate programs?

Vice President Ellis: Certificate programs have come under some scrutiny by accrediting agencies but the scrutiny and concern has come from for-profit institutions offering certificate programs in different professional programs; curriculum is not really preparing students to do what the certificate claims. Our accreditor would not regulate the certificate program; we can decide what the components would be and which students have earned it.