March 1, 2012

Dear Tuajuanda,

I hope you don't mind my sending my thoughts along on the Business Task force in advance of next week's meetings, as I am unable to attend my department's meeting because I'll be teaching E&D at that time.

I find the idea of combining the liberal arts mission with a focus on entrepreneurship really interesting. If done well, there is potential for it to be quite innovative and, to my mind, in synch with the LC ethos on making a difference in the world. Like many of us, I'm sure, I can't see yet what form this would take. Implementation needs to be really well thought out, but if it is, I think it could be really exciting for LC.

Some thoughts I have, in no particular order:

1) in your PPT, you put leadership, creativity, and innovation under co-curricular. While I agree that these skills can be addressed by co-curricular activities, I think they can also be developed in our courses. I regularly have my students give presentations, both long and short, which is linked to leadership. I try to give them many opportunities to think and work creatively in reaction to the texts we read. It's tricky, but the elements are definitely there in the curriculum.

2) In thinking about this, I'm wondering if we couldn't link the entrepreneurship curriculum to our existing curriculum, perhaps by having 2 tracks: one with a humanistic focus, and one with a quantitative or scientific focus. This may allow for easier doubling up of the certificate / minor with other majors. Both tracks would have the development of business expertise as a focus, but the scientific track could lead to careers in scientific innovation, the humanistic track to careers more in line with human endeavors (teaching, humanitarian ventures, human services, human-services types of internet ventures).

3) To sell this to our colleagues with a more exclusive vision of the liberal arts mission, I think it'll be important to emphasize that what we're talking about is building a program which helps our students develop the skills needed to bridge the gap between their beautiful liberal arts education (which we don't want to change!) and the enactment of that education in the "real world." Over and over, we tell our students that their degrees in languages, literature, philosophy, history, etc. WILL translate into real world skills and jobs, and that is true. But we leave them to figure out how to do that, and the process of learning those real world skills, and of convincing employers that they have them, often takes them years of trial and error. All we're talking about here, to my mind, is ***adding***to their skill set--giving them concrete knowledge that will help them translate their beautiful education into a personally and financially rewarding career. We're not talking about replacing what we do so well with something else--only supplementing. If the time comes when we do develop a major, we will be ready to do it well because we'll have experience.

What we're talking about here is very new and innovative, and it will be hard to implement successfully. But I do think it has the potential for LC doing something that, as far as I know, no one else is doing, and is very much needed. At the end of their 4 years here, many students feel a bit left in the lurch as far as careers are concerned. The entrepreneurship proposal has the potential for remedying that for interested students.

Please let me know if I can help.

Warm wishes,

Molly