

Committee #2 — Executive Summary

The group focused initially on two topics: the curriculum and faculty. The composition of the committee reflected all three academic divisions, all faculty ranks, faculty of color, and both men and women. We began our work by reviewing the 2005-07 Strategic Plan Extension to discern what had been accomplished and what initiatives remained undone. We reviewed President White's charge to the group, the College's mission statement, and core values.

Over the eight meetings conversations were expansive. We sought to clarify the big picture and to avoid entrapment in details, although as we reflected together we moved from general principle to particular application and back. Our approach was to clarify essential questions and issues for teaching and learning in the 21st century. Among those questions were: Who are our students? What do they bring with them? How do we want them to leave Wabash to become citizens and learners? What do they need to learn in order to live vital lives? Who are the faculty to teach these students? What skills and training will they need to bring with them to teach? What do faculty need in order to accomplish excellent teaching and remain vital learners? What are the forces shaping the academy and the work place today and tomorrow? What should and must the College do practically to attract and retain the best and the brightest teachers in order to carry out our mission with our students?

The Wabash National Study data, which we have included with this report, provided us initially with a profile of the Wabash student. Unlike most conversations about curriculum where faculty interests and needs prevail, the Wabash student nature and need oriented our discussions. We articulated two premises:

#1: Compared to most students entering other competitive liberal arts colleges Wabash students will

- have grown up with less experience of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity,
- have less awareness of the world beyond our own nation,
- have less interest in reading for pleasure, and
- have less awareness of and interest in the arts.

#2: Nearly all future Wabash graduates will seek to think critically, act responsibly, lead effectively, and live humanely in a technologically complex, racially and ethnically diverse, democratic society in an increasingly interconnected world.

Therefore, a Wabash education should seek

- to increase our students' awareness of the world beyond the United States,
- to increase our students' sensitivity to racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity,
- to develop in our students the virtues and skills of citizenship and community leadership,

- to teach our students enough about science to enable them to be responsible participants in a technologically complex democracy,
- to help our students become intelligent and appreciative audiences of the arts, and
- to foster in our students the sheer joy of learning and reading.

Concern for the education of the whole person directed us away from a too-narrow focus on skills and curricular content/structure.

Guided by these premises we turned to issues related to faculty and teaching. The 2005 Harvard COACHE (Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher Education) and 2007 Faculty Quality of Life Survey results specifically informed discussions about Wabash faculty hiring, retention, development, teaching, and pedagogy. We were similarly concerned with the nature of the faculty role and the real world demands placed upon faculty, thus leading us to give attention to the nature and quality of community life into which Wabash faculty are invited to live and work. The recent Faculty Quality of Life data enabled us to target areas of institutional support that will need attention. Our discussions surfaced specific faculty needs, as it did specific student needs, and we discovered complementarities. The survey data from all three reports follow the thesis statements.

We formulated our initiatives statement with a mix of general and particular items reflecting our own movement of thought. Both an inductive and deductive process, we gathered up different questions, issues, and themes and fashioned the central thesis question: *How will Wabash College provide opportunities for dramatic growth for students of potential through sustained engagement in all aspects of their college experience, and do so in a supportive environment of close, personal relationships?* We identified seven principles as subheadings under which we grouped the key items or concerns surfaced in the eight weeks of conversation. We thought of these “principles” to be questions in their own right to which the more specific subpoints served as concrete answers. Other answers are certainly possible. Over the course of the next weeks and months we expect that the campus community will critique and amend this work that now awaits synthesis with the other three strategic planning groups.

Addendum: Our committee received a proposal from the Environmental Concerns Committee on December 18. That memo has not been discussed by our committee, but is appended to these documents.