

Note taking template

Academic Planning Summit

January 16, 2015

Title of Session:___Models and ideas for stimulating critical thinking and innovative learning

Faculty Facilitator(s)___Cathy DeCesare

Note taker name_____Alex Katz

Check one:

Morning Breakout 1 **Morning breakout 2**

Afternoon breakout **Afternoon breakout 2**

Ideas proposed/ recs:

Hopkins...Big ideas are significant, relevant, immediately actionable, need to be broadly knowledgeable

More important to ask right questions than find right answers

No departs = no silos = no walls = no boundaries = new models

Model to stimulate critical thinking and innovative learning? Is it practical? How would this manifest with different school missions?

- Grand challenge courses, want to expand? There was extensive discussion about GCH classes, as a means to increase critical thinking in the classroom. It was discussed in conjunction with the new general education program. Specifically the increase in the number of GCH classes at all levels and the new requirement for all to take a GCH. Also, it was discussed the increase in team taught GCH across departments and indeed colleges as a way to increase interdisciplinary focus to address some of these “big issues” across the country and globe. The issue of feasibility/ recognition for department/ colleges discussed as well.
- The general consensus was that we don’t need to outsource, just train our professors to teach critical thinking.
- One idea was to have more summits like this. Have faculty discussions more than once per year and have follow up conversations as well.
- Idea = reexamine curriculum across the university at every level, and make sure there is a defined program that gets more challenging by senior year.
- Everything we are discussing is doable in classrooms – don’t need to outsource. A re-occurring theme.

- We need to focus on quality, not quantity in the classroom, and reexamine what we are asking them to do ... students spend so much time preparing for exams, often information is in and out. Critical thinking doesn't sufficiently develop.

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Notable Issues, Questions, Challenges:

- No evidence to support the problem they are trying to solve
- Expectation to engage is critical—how to engage students?
- Ask right questions vs know right answer. Key issue Students often don't understand how the material applies to them. Can't see the big picture.
- Model that supports this is ignored...what's the economic support? Who is paying these professors in the floating university?
- What do the students do? How do they physically engage?
- Adapt or adopt model at URI?
- Discussed critical learning in classrooms - How do we get there because students aren't engaging now?
- k – 12 right answers vs questions
- Students set own goals in floating university....might not work depend on students' motivation and abilities.
- First year students coming in with black and white mentality- learned from K-12. Takes time to develop, transition to new way of thinking.
- Idea = reexamine curriculum and make sure gets more challenging by senior year
- All these things are doable in classrooms – don't need to outsource
- New gen ed curriculum is a concern.
- Are requirements hindering us?
- Big names mean a great course...faulty assumption
- Being lectured at is for people who engage themselves
- Kids spending 15 hours a week engaging but not using time effectively...reading doesn't get done if not being graded because of work overload and conflicting responsibilities, home, work, school.
- Universities or access?
- Think about Obama's free com college...impact on 4 year institutions
- Provost doesn't recognize interdisciplinary teaching- challenge re: load for classes taught interdisciplinary across college. How is credit awarded?
- Brown created institutes – could this apply to URI? Institutes foster interdisciplinary and innovative. Need funding and Time to establish. Could just have diff professors' guest lecture in other classes? Again—time and credit allocation?
- Online schools - students have to be self-motivated- MOOCS decline— Hopkins idea for big thinkers – intriguing but practical?
- No silos = no departments but would no departments mean chaos? How about no colleges instead of no departments- to alleviate one level of bureaucracy?
- How can innovative courses be designed to enable students to see details and big pic?

- How do we decide big thinkers? Consensus Hopkins selection of thinkers problematic, elite-white male focus- only one female and diversity lacking.
- Partner with elite/ ivy institutions?

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_____ **Afternoon breakout** _____ **Afternoon breakout 2**

- What business does a private enterprise have in developing courses?
- How will democratizing access change how we measure education?
- How would this work with all these models work with diff missions of diff institutions?
- Hopkins doesn't address learner side at all, key issue.
- Doesn't teach/stimulate critical thinking in college students- big question, how to engage students?
- Only one woman and one minority pictured- why Hopkins model Floating U problematic and elite oriented.
- Is this the next generation's encyclopedia?
- What role will faculty play?
- Big ideas important, but has to go further – details needed to develop critical thinking.
- Economics?
- Need to consider different ways to access information, less privileged people might not have access or understand the technology. How do we provide access for all? State University.
- Floating schools are privileged (Harvard, Yale, Bard)
- Can we adapt it and use it in our classes? Yes, via GCH classes- expanded number and at introductory and upper levels.
- Use it as first year survey course? One hour a week? Could help them branch out- use to start conversations about big issues/ global/ national and then students/teachers work in conjunction to arrive at possible solutions.
- Using real life problems important, how can we make it interdisciplinary within our institution?
- Who do faculty identify with more? People from same discipline from other universities versus other disciplines within home institution? How do we facilitate increased collaboration? Time and money and schedules of collaborating with people from within the university and from other universities can be an issue.

- Look at integrating critical thinking within the curriculum at all levels and all majors. Could we start teaching problem solving freshman year, and work it up to senior year when they should start really thinking interdisciplinary.
- Getting students engaged outside of class is challenging.
- Getting students to ask questions vs getting answers, even at the graduate level, is a struggle to get them to think in terms of questions – but it is because they are taught to only look for the right answer for the tests.
- How do we transition from a 20th century model (Lecture) to 21st century teacher?
- Transition away from straight white male education – need to adapt
- Impact of free college?
- Students not doing readings
- Profs now were engaged when they were students
- No culture of learning at URI, how do we change this? The challenge is how to introduce and promote critical thinking in the class, and at the same time encourage or expect students to do the necessary work that is required in order to obtain fundamental knowledge.