

**Academic Planning Summit**  
**January 30, 2009**  
**Facilitators: Dean Libutti, Annemarie Vaccaro**

**Session: # 1   Session Name: How can undergraduate and graduate education best prepare students for the world of the future?**

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Four main themes emerged from this session. The four themes are outlined below. Within those themes challenges and recommendations are included. Detailed notes from Session 1 are included after the themes.

**Theme 1: Communication & Information**

- Throughout the session, it became quite clear that faculty and staff do not have a complete understanding of the programs & services at URI
  - Many of the recommendations made by faculty were similar to programs and services already in existence at URI (such as study abroad opportunities, NSE, etc.)
- The recommendation is to better advertise “what is” so that we can build upon the university strengths as we move forward

**Theme 2: Student Learning Outcomes**

- In general, the group agreed that students need to move beyond the comprehension of “facts” to critical thinking. We need to teach students how to understand complex tasks and problems, and provide them with necessary tools.
  - No agreement on how to achieve this goal, but some ideas included: moving beyond traditional textbooks and re-vamping the general education curriculum
- Development outside of the classroom in student life activate education. URI must tie both curriculum & extra-curriculum together.
  - We must integrate social responsibility and citizenship into campus life- inside & outside the classroom
- The group talked about a number of other student learning outcomes or objectives that URI should focus on. They included:
  - Acquire vast geographical knowledge (i.e. how to read a map)
  - Need to make sure students have capabilities to adjust to change
  - Make sure students have sound foundation in past and present before they can think about future, understand where we’ve been and where we are going
  - Student need to know themselves first, then understand world around them

### **Theme 3: Achieving Global Learning**

- Faculty agreed that students needed to be prepared for an ever changing global world. Some of the suggestions for meeting this goal included:
  - Replace General Education with Global Education
  - Stress the importance of diversity, experiential learning and international education and reward faculty for infusing these into their courses
  - Make Study/ Learning Abroad an opportunity for all students. This means making sure the experience is rich with learning, ensuring curriculum fits student graduation plans, and making it financially accessible to all
  - Recognize and support very strong language instruction as it supports global learning and helps student employability in a global world
  - Increase # of international students and opportunities for them to interact with domestic students
- Faculty argued that if URI values globalization, more support should be offered to faculty who want to research abroad or take students abroad. If we want students to be global we need to support faculty too.

### **Theme 4: Align vision with policy and reward structures**

- While many faculty were excited about the prospect of more connected, interdisciplinary and global learning, they were concerned that the traditional departmental structures and tenure/ reward system would deter many faculty from involvement

**\*\*Detailed notes follow**

### **Complete Notes from Session1:**

- Students live in a tsunami of information, assess the quality of education received, ensure they collect diverse information
- Opinions of graduate and undergraduate students
- Small freshman interdisciplinary seminars, team taught, library component, global perspective, bridge disciplines, 4 credits
- Maintain diversity in student body and new hires
- Funding for travel of graduate students and upper division undergrads
- Facilitate team teaching
- Need to make sure students have capabilities to adjust to change
- Students should focus on their own strengths and weaknesses, make decisions about what to do with their time based on this
- Instill notion of inevitability of change, student are use to having decisions made for them (parents, teachers, etc). Need to take over control of themselves
- Students need to understand the constraints imagination and innovation that exist. Understand how it works, not just free forming
- Encourage faculty exchange to enhance international experiences
- Set up a center for experiential learning, use travel or international experiences for credit courses, use independent study format, 4 credit courses
- Replace bachelor of general studies with bachelor of global studies
- Encourage double major with a language major
- Students will remain at URI if interesting and compelling things are happening,
- Changes to “core” courses within freshman and sophomore curriculum
- Ask students why they chose URI, their particular major, etc.
- Importance of critical thinking, deemphasize memorization, eliminate text books, look at learning outcomes to create curriculum
- Use original ideas, URI is a research university, make research a priority
- Importance of diversity, experiential learning, and international education
- Deal with proficiency, intentional with writing, speaking, communication, technology, should be a part of all courses
- Make sure that every student has opportunity to express knowledge, how they so chose
- Travel and international experiences are good, but most students cannot afford it, and do not have access to it, no money or quality control across the board
- Advantages here are not spread out across disciplines (ex: URI students can double major and graduate within 4-5 years, remarkable compared to other universities) often students are not aware of possibilities available to them here
- Aware of factors (timing, housing, money, etc) that face students when making decisions about studying abroad; Find real money for students to have experiences they need; Need more resources for students
- General education goal: developing global perspective, meet this though outlined goals, objectives, various learning styles should be included in diversity learning
- Take advantage of what we have on campus, integrate international students in the classroom and their experience

- In defining global, think through what that means, interaction between different backgrounds, integration of different backgrounds, this could be done within the US
- Use technology on campus to bring international perspective into the classroom
- Multicultural center is underused, not enough events that general student population is attending, what can we do
- Reverse decision to close art gallery, faculty is volunteering efforts
- We need a broader approach exposing students to new thought; equip them with the ability to synthesize experiences
- Students need to think about and be exposed to sustainability, complexity, chaos, changing futures; these topics could be in a symposium or futures institution key vital exposure early on as a second semester freshman year experience or a sophomore year experience-discussing tied to discipline; continue it later on as well to prepare to leave comfort zones of URI and knowledge base
- New ways to provide reward for interdisciplinary action; evaluate what is rewarded
- Build on existing successful patterns, like Living Learning Communities, and move beyond discipline to tackle these key issues
- Many undergraduates-need to expand beyond their parochial background expose to world cultures, ecological, economic, religion, environmental issues to translate to rest of courses (early on)
- Increase # of international students and opportunities for them.
- Recognize very strong language instruction, helps student employability; NSSE URI highest score is language experience of students; need to celebrate and even do more
- Many students seem to have the idea that college is a passport to a career; we need to demonstrate a clear, visible commitment to life on campus; relationship to university (faculty staff etc) should be known
- Should implement more community speaker series that involve interchanging relationships with the university and the community
- We fail to give faculty incentives to make structures need to be adjusted to for specific rewards to campus life provide incentives; we need to actually value what we say we value
- Development outside of the classroom in student life that activates education that tie both together is essential
- There is a need for flexibility because of global change; There are two ways: training and education: Training in the field and general education structure provides variety; But the problem is the introduction to variety of fields prepare department dominated general education structure for students
- It costs more to educate RI students than out of state; this leads to a shift in student population; we need to commit to RI as a state-need diversity of student population
- The more educated RI students who graduate, they will contribute back to the state and support university in the long run; they live next door to the legislators and can serve as the best lobbyists to support the university.

- Need to maintain land grant to best serve students
- We fail to see link between research and RI; RI provides many opportunities for research
- We have the ability to trace from a person from kindergarten–PhD longitudinal studies; need the support from involvement of URI faculty to support the state (Example: Kent county YMCA Halloween party sleep researcher from Brown gathering for sleep study of elementary students- BROWN is the emphasis instead of URI)
- Need more supportive research in RI and it can lead to bigger things in state and unless some incentive is created-won't happen; we don't sufficiently support what we say our vision is
- Need to deemphasize memorization; perhaps by eliminating textbooks in some areas; we need to look at learning outcomes as a way prescribing defining curriculum as guiding ideas; encourage faculty to write own textbooks based on own research to provide pertinent curriculum (incentive); produce more original ideas would need to be a major commitment of the university and faculty and would require much time to develop experiences and instructional directions to substitute textbooks so don't defeat the purpose of elimination
- It is not feasible for some disciplines like math and sciences; maybe sociology; textbooks drive the curriculum. Need to think about if this is this the best way to teach the critical thinking we want students to be capable of; perhaps want to eliminate rote learning, not textbooks.
- Research-based teaching should be a priority to encourage critical thinking
- Understand the importance of changing environments
- Focus on access to information and teach the discovery of knowledge; be learner based
- Experiential learning can enhance understanding and knowledge of diversity internationalization; make international education a priority to student and faculty
- Proficiency in basic areas and skills; make intentional efforts on writing, communication, speaking, technology; make them a priority as part of all courses
- There are certain constants that don't change such as basic math, written communication, second language proficiency; these skills will serve students for a long time; we need to improve those areas and focus on basic skills in all disciplines and continue to build life long learners
- Have graduate students engage in core basic research; acknowledge, celebrate and prioritize international teaching and learning
- There are 35% students with international experience; the message needs to get out; a halo effect can be generated from student experiences
- Students graduating will need to retool themselves for career; they need more than just skills; they need to be confident that they can think and learn for themselves as well as enjoy learning
- Survey graduates-ask what did you wish you learned/acquired skills? What would have helped you while you were in college? This is done by disciplines sometimes, but needs to be done at a broader university level not just department

level; then see if this feedback has been applied and/or incorporated into the current curriculum; National data can help too.

- Travel international experiences are not affordable – could utilize access to international libraries/museums more
- Quality control of international programs need to be improve
- Centennial scholars exchange to cost of living less than what they are paying here need to get that info out
- Connect international experiences back to learning and classroom when students return from study abroad
- For out of state students, it can be cheaper to go abroad; tuition and fees same sometimes
- If it is too expensive for student then too expensive for university
- One advantage URI has is the structure to double major and still finish within 4-5 years. Students don't have to choose between majors
- There are many role models and influences on campus for students to clear up misinformation and misunderstandings
- Start early on in college career with what we have now; adding/developing global perspective; this should be mandatory-not optional
- Social responsibility and citizenship is lacking –needs to be integrated much greater in campus life
- For faculty who advise students; we need to reward that which we value
- Take advantage of what is on campus now; Bring international students into classrooms, integrate their experience into class; don't waste resources
- The future depends on graduate education; need to protect programs from being cut; Interdisciplinary work –combine to make a grad program; need goals for that
- Defining global perspectives; think through what that means; interact with different backgrounds
- NSE-Exchange with other universities-into urban environments in particular; Diffuse some of the expense issues; opportunities for lower tuition other places
- Double majors; take advantage of the breadth of exposure while you are here  
Example of two departments forming and publishing a four year plan for students and what they need to know in order to accomplish 2 degrees within 4 years ahead of time
- How do we share celebrate and utilize what we have; we don't realize what we have here
- What do we need to build upon and expand? We may have some structures in place that we can build upon.
- Broaden base of undergraduate experience by: Building on resources here and combining experiences; involve graduate students more with undergraduate students which will benefit both; increase communication with all types of students-from out of state/international-broader backgrounds
- Preparing students to be flexible to what they may encounter, but can be vague and have no idea what they will be asked to do-
- Comment about eliminating textbooks...rather, eliminate rote learning and use texts as supplemental, not to form curriculum.

- Do we ask students, out in the real world, what do you wish you have learned, or had been done? Done at departmental level, not university level.
- How do we improve communication within the community?
- Investment in RI students ultimately contributes back to the state and the university
- Intercultural global and diversity international experiences and understanding need to be emphasized; what does “global” mean?
- Earlier exposure to global view; early and often
- Involve graduate students with undergraduate students
- Create more exchange opportunities for faculty and students
- Create more opportunities for experiential learning
- Critical thinking and evaluate what we want students to learn
- Be careful of overworked students-think about the conversation, what is the intellectual excitement that brings the students to campus, focus on experience, provide vibrant learning environment here
- Foundation of interdisciplinary global ideas
- Know our students
- Help connect the campus community; there are many good things happening that are not getting out to faculty and students as much as it needs to be- Communication need to be improved
- Helping students to start understanding themselves upon entering the university
- Students and faculty have the responsibility to cultivate the environment so students know they can make a difference
- Branding-do more than we have resources for; have a lot more than we think we do
- Exposing students to alumni is a valuable way to give perspective of global world
- Reward collaboration and interdisciplinary work, create structures for faculty incentives
- Utilize and enhance structures that are in place
- Integrate social responsibility and citizenship into campus life
- Information literacy, critical thinking
- Explore intellectual excitement that brings a student to this campus
- Prepare students to be flexible to situations they may encounter
- As soon as students get here, help them begin to understand themselves
- Faculty cultivate environment where students believe they can make a difference
- Help students to synthesize experiences while in college
- Sustainability needs to be a focus; future symposiums, community speaker series
- Work with community and the state to help support the university
- Affect changes among students and faculty
- Find new ways to provide reward for interdisciplinary action;
- Build on existing successful patterns, like Living Learning Communities, and move beyond discipline to tackle these key issues
- Increase the number of international students and opportunities for them.