

Provost Report to the Faculty

December 2013

Provost Challenge Grants

I am pleased to announce the recipients of the 2013-14 Provost Challenge Grants. Our faculty are engaged in many activities that enhance student learning, advance knowledge and improve people's lives – from research and creative activities to curriculum development, pedagogical enhancement, student-faculty research, and service learning, among others. Because on-campus support for these activities is limited, the Provost Challenge Grants (PCGs) are intended to encourage faculty to pursue external grant funding by supporting them in developing their research/creative activity, teaching and service agendas to a point where a funding proposal to an external agency is viable. This year's winners are:

Andrea Frank, Department of Art: "feed back- a think tank/symposium."

Julie Gorlewski & Eve Tuck, Department of Secondary Education & Department of Educational Studies: "New York Indigenous Teacher Academy."

Cyrus Mulready, Department of English: "The Shakespeare Folios Project."

David Richardson, Department of Biology: "Understanding lake ecosystem response to a changing world: a research, education, and outreach strategy to examine reversibility of environmental shifts."

Please join me in congratulating these colleagues on their achievement!

Seamless Transfer Update

As I noted in my October report, SUNY's Seamless Transfer initiative was developed to facilitate the mobility of students within SUNY and thus improve retention and graduation rates across the entire system. As part of this initiative 38 "transfer paths" were developed with the input of over 400 faculty throughout the SUNY system. The transfer paths outline the core coursework that is recommended for students to complete during their first years of study for a major in a given discipline. As you would expect, the paths vary by discipline, and each was developed by discipline-based faculty panels from both state-operated campuses and community colleges. Some paths are quite prescriptive, listing specific courses and identifying common course descriptors; others are more general content areas or categories, leaving each campus

with flexibility about the specific courses and sequencing needed to ensure that students master the desired content. Together with the 30 credit SUNY GER (General Education Requirement), the transfer paths are designed to provide students with the academic content and skills necessary to ensure them junior status after two years. The goal here is prevent the far-too-frequent scenario of transfer students reaching their final semester only to discover they are ineligible for graduation because of a requirement missed early on.

Of the 38 transfer paths currently in place, 22 align with programs we offer at New Paltz. Faculty representatives of all 22 programs have agreed to join disciplinary colleagues from other SUNY campuses in online discussions (via SUNY Learning Commons) of the transfer paths, with the goal of refining and strengthening them. In addition, faculty representatives of three other programs will discuss possible development of transfer paths for their majors. The core coursework identified in these disciplines must meet degree requirements at all SUNY campuses offering majors in the discipline. If students complete this coursework successfully, they will be well positioned to finish their degree with an additional two years of study as transfers to New Paltz.

Towards a Designed Curriculum

The curriculum is at the heart of any college or university. Yet effectively managing the curriculum is a complex task. A well planned curriculum should align all courses to program goals and the mission of the school and college; incorporate a rational course sequence; provide for continuous assessment and quality improvements; and align with available resources, both budgetary and personnel. In reality however most curricula are the result of accretion and not planning, as Robert Zemsky points out in his book *Checklist for Change: Making American Higher Education a Sustainable Enterprise*:

Most curricula have, as the faculty is fond of pointing out, evolved. Changes have been made slowly and largely piecemeal, often reflecting pressures that emerge and then recede with almost no one taking full account of what time and happenstance have wrought. Not surprisingly, then, no one owns the curriculum; instead, it becomes what each individual member of the faculty has inherited upon taking up his or her position... (p. 168).

There is a clear cost to both faculty and students in this approach. Faculty can see their workload rise significantly if a program keeps adding courses to the catalogue without careful programmatic alignment. As a course is added, it must be taught, and faculty will either teach more, increasing their workload or departments will seek to hire

additional adjuncts, straining budgets and increasing our reliance on part-time faculty to deliver coursework. The impact on students can be just as nefarious. A poorly designed curriculum, where course sequencing is missing or unclear, can result in delayed graduation. Moreover, students are ill-served if instead of experiencing the curriculum holistically, with the various classes and activities within a curriculum linked to a program's mission and goals, they experience it as disconnected pieces.

In addition to the challenges outlined above, we are facing increased external pressures that force us to re-examine how we organize program curriculums. The new seamless transfer policy requires that we develop transfer paths, articulating how our courses are sequenced to allow students to graduate on time. The 2016 Middle States five year review will require us to speak to improvements in our assessment processes since the last review, and having a curriculum that aligns all courses to program goals and the mission of the school and college, will represent a significant advance in meeting Middle States targets. Finally, during scheduled program reviews and accreditation visits, reviewers are increasingly interested in a clear demonstration of the relationship between a program's curriculum and its learning goals and outcomes.

An important first step for us to guarantee we have a well-designed curriculum is for departments and programs to have a conversation about their curricular goals and the outcomes they want for their students. The sum of courses must add up to a clear vision of what we envision our students achieving after their program of study. A second step is to engage in curricular mapping for each program. Again, quoting Zemsky:

A well-designed curriculum is a map telling the student the particular skills and competencies that must be mastered and in what order. Like any good map that helps the wanderer navigate an unfamiliar forest, a curricular map's basic component ought to be a series of "learning pathways" that guide the student from one experience to another in such a way that the student becomes familiar with the terrain without getting lost.

As the name implies, this process requires mapping out program goals for students graduating in the program and establishing the connection between program goals and course student learning outcomes, based on course sequencing. Attached to the email of this report is a sample curricular map from the SUNY-New Paltz Department of Chemistry. Another excellent example of curriculum mapping, from the University of Hawaii-Manoa can be found at:

<http://manoa.hawaii.edu/assessment/howto/mapping.htm>

To move us in this direction, I am asking that all departments/programs develop and submit curricular maps by the end of the spring semester. A final step is that faculty take the initiative to limit the urge to add new courses without first establishing their place in the curricular map and their link to student learning outcomes. Courses that are determined to no longer be relevant or have not been offered in eight years or more should be removed from the course catalogue to prevent curricular glut. I have full confidence that our faculty, who are charged with ensuring the quality and integrity of the curriculum, can undertake the tasks necessary to make these much needed improvements.

Comprehensive Internationalization

Last week I attended a workshop at the SUNY Global Center in NYC, along with Bruce Sillner, Dean of International Programs; Christian Wilwohl, Study Abroad Coordinator; Mary Christiansen, Chair of the Department of Languages and Literatures; and Jonathan Schwartz, Director of the Asian Studies Program. Focused on advancing *SUNY and the Globe*, one of Chancellor Zimpher's Six Big Ideas, the workshop provided a very useful template for planning specific projects to strengthen internationalization on campuses. As I have noted before, our campus is fortunate to have very strong international programs. Nonetheless, there are important gaps that prevent us from capitalizing on what should be one of our campuses most important strengths.

Although 15 percent of our students participate in a study abroad experience, which is above the national average, we lag behind some of our major SUNY competitors. SUNY Geneseo, Binghamton and Buffalo all have participation rates of about 40 percent. Study abroad is a high impact practice that is especially attractive to the high performing students we are competing to attract to our campus.

Those of us who attended the workshop will be meeting soon to brainstorm on how to advance a comprehensive internationalization agenda on campus. An important piece to this will be the formation of a task force to examine our current efforts, explore ways we can more effectively infuse internationalization across our curriculum, and find ways to highlight our efforts.

Digital Measures/Activity Insight

As many of you may remember, last year we explored ways to move away from the current paper-based Annual Report to a digital report. That effort arose from the repeated complaints I heard from faculty about the cumbersome and time-consuming nature of the current system. In addition to providing a more user-friendly electronic form that allows faculty to update their information on an ongoing basis, Activity

Insight will automatically populate faculty CV's with the report information, aggregate key data across the department, school and campus in a way that will enhance our ability to make data driven decisions, and gather and aggregate information for accreditation agencies such as ABET, AACSB, MSCHE, NCATE, and others. Needless to say, having a paperless system for all these processes will also make the campus greener by saving numerous trees, as well as contributing to a campus strategic goal of improving internal processes and institutional capacities.

We have held a number of presentations and webinars for the campus community during 2013. As a result of feedback, we also asked several faculty who raised important questions to help pilot the software this fall. In all of these venues, the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Activity Insight has been in use in the School of Business for several years, assisting them in generating reports that were critical in achieving and now maintaining AACSB accreditation. My hope is that we can have the system in place across all of our schools this spring.

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to wish everyone a safe and restful winter break. I hope you are able take the time to celebrate the year gone by in the company of friends and family.

Best Regards;

Philip Mauceri
Provost & Vice President of Academic Affairs