

QEP Topic Conversations: School of Arts Department Chairs (05.05.09)

- Writing Across the Curriculum. Mention was made of a \$90K grant at Fairview Middle School, and the possibility of collaborating with them in some sort of WAC program/effort.
- Building on this possible opportunity at Fairview, emphasis was placed on the need to use technology in the classroom as effectively as possible; connecting students with technology and with each other. A partnership with Fairview holds much promise in this direction.
- Discussion then turned to the importance of advising, and the need for a better system and/or clearer protocol; we need to systematize our advising. These relationships are key for the future of our students and for their long-term success; i.e., “developmental” vs. “class” advisor models. Another participant strongly agreed with this recommendation as a possible focus for the QEP or, at the very least, as a part of a larger plan or topic.
- Yet another participant agreed with the importance of advising, and of our being able to follow-up on our students to find out where they are. To this end, there would seem to be a clear need to automate the system – esp. with the new GER requirements; updates would be immediate. Building on this point, one participant observed that good advising aids tremendously with retention at other institutions that do this well; it obviously helps with forging and maintaining strong relationships with our students. There was general agreement that we need to provide better training, direction, and assistance for our advisors.
- Discussion shifted to the poor reading and writing skills our students often possess upon arriving at CBU, not to mention being deficient with respect to ethics, passion, and intellectual curiosity. This is seen not only at the undergraduate level, but also among many of our graduate students whose writing skills are deficient. As well, our students often possess inadequate research skills. Unfortunately, we often fail to hold our students accountable for their writing; students will often perform much better if they are held accountable.
- It was suggested that some sort of First Year Experience program may address some of these issues, perhaps tied to the Freshman Orientation program that is already in place.
- Importance of giving CBU ownership in relation to the larger Memphis community. Seen was the need to elevate the importance of CBU within the community, providing more resources to our students (e.g., gaining confidence, enhancing writing skills). This is clearly consistent with our mission as a Lasallian university.
- Mention was made of the need to re-visit IDS and what was best about it; we need to talk about what was lost when it was eliminated, and how to retrieve what was most valuable and useful. We might think of tying service learning to whatever might “replace” IDS at some point down the road. Within such an initiative, perhaps give classes social and/or ethical problems to solve together; this would obviously provide everyone with the opportunity to learn about each other – both students and faculty.

- Finally, one participant introduced the topic of on-line instruction, and suggested that, although it may make CBU more profitable, it may not necessarily transform the learning culture in a possible way. Indeed, we could potentially lose more than we gain, especially in terms of the critical relationships that are often established, both between students themselves and between students and their professors. This is clearly tied to CBU's mission, as we are not corporeal beings by accident or as an afterthought.

(Participants: M. Carriere, T. Vogel, T. Burke, S. Grice, J. Travis, P. Hought, N. Palmer)