

### QEP Topic Conversations: School of Science (03.31.09)

- The need for some kind of “first year experience” program was suggested, as there does not seem to be any unified way of helping our students – especially in-coming freshmen.
- One on-going problem has to do with the ever-increasing use of adjunct faculty, and with their coming and going with such frequency; this poses certain logistical problems.
- Perhaps we were too quick in abandoning IDS or, at the very least, some commitment to inter-disciplinarity; this is most definitely worth pursuing, though there is a clear need to be realistic with the availability and commitment of resources.
- With respect to a “first year experience” course/program, perhaps use mid-term grades as one measurement of the need for addressing the problem of basic study skills among new and incoming students; especially since CBU attracts many students who are quite bright.
- Mention was made of the need for workshops for study skills in/through Freshman Orientation. In response, the question was posed: How many have voluntarily attended these workshops in the past?
- Discussion returned to the importance of retrieving the best of what was IDS, and this in connection to a real need on everyone’s part to break the “silo mentality.” Tied to this concern is the fact that, although many of our students demonstrate strong skills in their courses tied to their major, studies show that students will change jobs many times in the course of their lives.
- The observation was made that, oftentimes, the “light bulb” doesn’t go on in students’ minds until relatively late in their academic careers; i.e., connections between the disciplines and the importance of being exposed to the various disciplines.
- The importance of giving “instantaneous” feedback to our students was emphasized, and this in connection both to student success in the classroom and retention. It was noted that this is part of “caring for the student(s).”
- Also emphasized was the importance of preparing for what happens post-college: namely, how essential it is for CBU graduates to be able to integrate knowledge.
- Discussion then turned to the importance of teaching good communication skills. The pervasive problem among our students – i.e., of a lack of said skills – can be seen in, for example, rambling, disconnected sentences. Tied to this is, again, the importance of placing an emphasis on integration; our students seem much more adept at re-gurgitation than integration. One way of addressing this may be having students read articles and simply explain what they mean.
- Discussion once again turned to the importance of developing some kind of “first year experience” program, perhaps linked to the current Freshman Orientation. As a part of such a program, incoming students might be required to read articles, various kinds of literature, and current events. Perhaps have mixed groups with the stronger students assisting their weaker peers. For this to be effective, there would need to be clarity with respect to the specific roles of individuals and groups.

- The importance of faculty members being in touch with their advisees – and those in their majors – was emphasized, and especially with freshman majors. It was suggested that some Schools do a better job of this than others, and that Admissions had expressed frustration that some Schools were not helping their freshman majors as much as they could and should.

(Participants: J. Holmes, A. Yanushka, M. Fitzgerald, J. Varriano, D. Merat)