

COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC POLICY

Minutes of Meeting #16, Academic Year 2015-2016

February 23, 2016

Present: L. Brady; L. Capogna; J. Doyle (Chair); F. Egan; J. Hanlan; A. Heinricher; J. Rulfs

Guest: Kristin Wobbe

Associate Dean Wobbe joined CAP, at Professor Doyle's invitation, to discuss the future of the Great Problems Seminars. The GPS plays a role in complementing the "More in Four" element of the strategic plan. The current year is the 9th year the GPS has been offered. Next year a tenth anniversary celebration is planned. Approximately 250 students per year arrive as first year students with significant amounts of Advance Placement credit. This allows sufficient room in a student's schedule for participation in the GPS program. Dean Wobbe distributed a handout outlining the history and outcomes of the GPS program. In 2008, the GPS enrolled 11% of WPI's total first year enrollment of 805 students. This year 29% of our total first year enrollment of 1093 students will be enrolled. The only disappointment has been that students are reluctant to enroll in Spring offerings since they are eager to begin enrollment in their major courses. Dean Wobbe pointed out that Project Presentation Day is an essential element in the success of the GPS program. Students feel pressure to shine at their presentations which are public, publicized, and widely recognized. Dean Heinricher pointed out that the Great Problems Seminar program was an essential part of WPI winning the prestigious Gordon Prize. Additionally it was noted that IQP Center Directors and Advisors see a direct relationship between GPS experience and the quality of work that students undertake in their IQPs.

Dean Heinricher pointed out that the GPS program began, in part, as a result of criticisms of the quality of first year education made by NEASC. Professor Doyle asked what the GPS program would look like 5 years from now. The response was that it would play a role in the strategic plan's "Major and a Mission" pillar. Dean Wobbe indicated that there were no plans to seek required GPS participation by all students, however Dean Heinricher indicated that he could foresee a required First Year Project Experience (FYPE).

It was concluded that there are no academic policy issues regarding the GPS program for consideration by CAP at this time.

Respectfully submitted,

James P. Hanlan