

March 17, 2008

Memorandum to the Faculty

From: Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP) & Curriculum Committee (CC)

Subject: CAP & CC sponsored plan for initiating a comprehensive curriculum review to be conducted in conjunction with Bryn Mawr College's Middle States Review.

This memorandum is intended to inform the faculty of the CAP & CC plan for initiating a comprehensive curriculum review. This plan has incorporated faculty comments received at our February 13, 2008 General Faculty Meeting, as well as subsequent comments received via electronic communications.

Background:

Taskforce on Balancing Mission and Resources

In communications to the faculty, the Taskforce has identified the College curriculum as one of the potential solutions to addressing the current structural gap in the College's operating budget (draft Structural Gap document dated 1/25/08), and the Taskforce has recommended "reviewing and reorganizing the curriculum to enhance undergraduate education and promote curricular vitality." The Taskforce has pointed out that the College's curriculum, the nature and structure of the departments and programs that support the curriculum, and the corresponding size and composition of the faculty required to deliver the curriculum, taken together, represent one of the core components of the College's operating budget. In this regard, the Taskforce has observed that the curriculum is an important factor in determining the resources available for achieving goals like competitive faculty salaries and a four course teaching load. The Taskforce has also suggested that a curriculum review represents an "opportunity to innovate and to realign curriculum with changes in knowledge and the interests of contemporary students."

Middle States Review

The College will undergo re-accreditation review by the Middle States Commission in 2009-2010. The preparatory phase of this review is already underway. This review provides a unique and timely opportunity for the College to examine its curriculum. It is important to carry out this type of comprehensive review at regular intervals to maintain the vibrancy and health of any institution. This was last done twenty-five years ago, so a comprehensive review now is both timely and necessary.

The Middle States Review occurs at the same time as a Presidential transition and with a new College governance system that has successfully taken hold. This is an ideal opportunity for the faculty to exercise its special responsibility for the curriculum and its commitment to the

continued and future success of the College as a select liberal arts college for women, that also provides graduate and professional education within a liberal arts setting.

Goal:

CAP and the CC have responded to the recommendation of the Taskforce and the opportunity presented by the Middle States Review by establishing a *Joint Curriculum Work Group* to examine the College's undergraduate curriculum and to provide recommendations for changes in the overall curriculum. While the initial focus is the curriculum, it is intended that this review will also inform related organizational and staffing discussions and decisions.

Plan:

CAP and CC have intersecting responsibilities for leadership in establishing academic priorities and ensuring a comprehensive and well functioning curriculum. With these responsibilities in mind, CAP and CC have established, under their joint auspices, a work group charged with reviewing the College's curriculum and providing recommendations required for Bryn Mawr to achieve and sustain its stated mission as a highly select, small, liberal arts undergraduate college for women. It is expected that these recommendations will also address the nature and structure of the departments and programs required to support the curriculum, as well as the size and composition of the faculty required to deliver the curriculum.

This faculty-sponsored initiative will be carried out in partnership with the College Provost and the Dean of the Undergraduate College and with the involvement of student representatives. A representative of CAP and a representative of the CC will provide joint oversight and will have the capacity to engage the services of additional faculty and (with the support of the Provost) administrative staff as required to address specific issues. CAP and the CC expect the full cooperation and support of all department and program chairs, as well as support (as required) from our Haverford and Swarthmore Bi-Co and Tri-Co counterparts.

The *Joint Curriculum Work Group* consists of six faculty members associated with the major areas of the curriculum, along with the Provost, the Undergraduate Dean, and two student members. Steve Salkever from CAP and Ignacio Gallup-Diaz from the CC will jointly provide oversight for this work group. CAP and the CC asked the Provost to generate a list of faculty available for this service—with a requirement that participating faculty members not be scheduled for leave (or other absence) during AY 2008-2009. The CAP and CC representatives and the Provost jointly selected faculty members from this list with an eye to achieving diversity in disciplinary perspective and in length of service to the College. The selected faculty are a diverse group who will bring knowledge, interest, and enthusiasm to this important task. The faculty members who have agreed to serve are: **Arts:** Linda Caruso-Haviland; **GSSWSR:** Cynthia Bisman; **Humanities:** Radcliffe Edmonds; **Languages:** Rosi Song; **Math & Sciences:** Tamara Davis; and **Social Sciences:** Michael Rock. Two Students will be named later. **The**

Provost: Kim Cassidy and the **Undergraduate Dean:** Karen Tidmarsh will serve as Administration members of this work group.

The *Joint Curriculum Work Group* will begin its task in May 2008 and it is expected that the review process will continue into AY 2009-2010, corresponding with the *Middle States Review* period. CAP and the CC will provide the faculty with periodic updates as this initiative moves forward.

Thank you for your support.

Ignacio Gallup-Diaz, Chair of the CC

Jim Martin, Chair of CAP