

Summary Report from Third Sessions of the Bradley University Campus Conversations Series (BUCCS-3)

The Office of Teaching Excellence and Faculty Development and the Undergraduate Research Committee recently sponsored the third set in a series of conversations for faculty, administrative and professional staff and students. To recap: the intent of these sessions has been to provide an opportunity for members of the Bradley community to share ideas and insights on issues affecting the mission of the university. As such, BUCCS continues to provide a forum for campus-wide dialogue on issues relevant to all sectors of the university.

The process design for BUCCS-3 remained the same as that used in all previous campus conversation series. Participants, working in small groups, exchanged ideas on two questions. The opinions recorded from the most recent conversations (which included 70 participants; 61 returning and 9 new) are summarized below. Note that BUCCS-3 encouraged participants to sketch models of core curricula.*

BUCCS-3: A common theme that emerged from our previous conversations is the need to revisit how our core curriculum supported the development of the ideal graduate.

1. List and describe curricular models, related to general education, theme education or core curricula.

The models articulated and sketched reflected a great diversity in opinions and ranged from traditional, Silo approaches tied to specific colleges/disciplines to integrated experiences that blur the boundaries between disciplines. The following descriptors for the models emerged during the deliberations of several groups: cross disciplinary approaches, requirements for core course material to be integrated into higher level courses, experiential learning, promotion of global perspective, requirements for one core course each semester throughout college years, thematic grouping of courses, skills development focus, and requirements for at least one course from each college. Core competencies that were repeated across several groups included writing, basic math, speaking and critical thinking.

2. Select one of the curricular models from the list generated during Part 1. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the model as you currently understand it. What additional information would you need to determine how this model would support the development of the ideal graduate?

Key questions that arose during this part of the discussion primarily involved pragmatic matters (impact of the Illinois Articulation Agreement, accreditation questions, accommodation of transfer students, budget support, resources needed, changing current student and faculty culture, questions related to guidelines for tenure and promotion) and logistic concerns (class size limitations, timeline for change, plan for integration into entire college experience, placements for service/experiential learning, evaluation and assessment problems, development of the core courses without engaging in “turf” issues).

BUCCS-4 begins next week. The focus of BUCCS-4 will be connecting models that were described in BUCCS-3 to student learning outcomes. Again, there will be three opportunities to participate in BUCCS-4: April 30 (8-10 a.m.), May 2 (12-2 p.m.) and May 4 (3-5 p.m.). All campus conversations will take place in the Garrett Center.

*Those wanting to view the full set of ideas compiled should contact Bob Wolffe rjwolffe@bradley.edu.