

*Task Force for Curriculum and Academic Life  
Meeting Notes*

*Wednesday, April 17, 2002*

Task Force members present include Dr. Robert Atkinson, Dr. Jane Bailey, Dr. Tom Berry, Dr. Mark Borchert, Dr. Theodora Bostick, Dr. Sharon Broscious, Dr. Martin Buoncristiani, Dr. Kelly Cartwright, Dr. Ronnie Cohen, Dr. Robert Colvin, Dr. Kimberly Cowell-Meyers, Dr. Dorothy Doolittle, Dr. Douglas Gordon, Dr. Marcus Griffin, Dr. John Hardie, Dr. Quentin Kidd, Dr. Ashby Kinch, Professor Cheryl Mathews, Dr. Donna Mottilla, Dr. Anne Perkins, Dr. Kip Redick, Dr. Mark Reimer, Dr. Carol Scovotti, Dr. Susan St. Onge, Dr. Charles Stivason, Dr. Lori Underwood, Dr. Andrew Velkey and Dr. Pete Verhoven.

Dr. Gordon began the meeting by discussing the importance of “faculty-designed curriculum” with support from administration. He indicated that this was a common theme among task force members when they met with the Deans prior to being asked to serve. Another common concern among faculty was that although CNU students are admitted with higher standardized achievement scores, they do not appear to be avid readers, nor do they embrace academic challenge. These issues should be on the Task Force agenda.

Dr. Gordon invited faculty to share their thoughts and ideas regarding curriculum and academic life. The following ideas were presented:

- CNU should provide a structure for the curriculum that allows students to get in depth knowledge in 2 to 3 academic areas, instead of a superficial knowledge of many different academic areas. More upper-level experiential, topics, and research courses should be offered. However, faculty should be allowed additional preparation time when teaching these courses – such as allowing the experiential/research/topics course to account for teaching 2 courses. (J. Hardie)
- Faculty must examine how we teach as well as what we teach. (St. Onge)
- The General Education curriculum must be restructured. (Cartwright)
- The CAL Task Force must be open-minded throughout the process with the goal of developing a flexible curriculum. Our current curriculum is rigid, which may not encourage high-ability students to attend CNU. (Kidd)
- Members of the Task Force should visit the Duke University web site and review their “Program 2” which allows an advisor to work with the student to design a curriculum for them. (Redick)
- The group must be careful not to design a curriculum for the “special few”. It is imperative that the group develop a curriculum for all CNU students. (Berry)
- The key to curriculum reform is scholarship, for faculty and students. CNU faculty should help students to become better students and help to instill in them a passion for learning. (Velkey)

- CNU students must become “intentional learners”. Also, we must question the value of a “Spring Fling” activity in the middle of the academic week. (Bailey)
- General Education courses should be restructured to be more exciting and transcend disciplinary distinctions. (Cowell-Meyers)
- CNU currently has a pyramid structure pertaining to general education distribution courses, allowing some awareness of a few basic academic disciplines. (Underwood)
- General Education and Liberal Studies can not just be the focus of the first two years. Students must have these types of courses throughout their four years at CNU. (Mottilla)
- CNU faculty should be exposed to additional professional development pertaining to improved interdisciplinary teaching, breaking barriers with separate colleges. Life is not a “discipline”. This information was provided at the Lilly Conference. More faculty should attend next year’s conference. (Scovotti)
- Although interdisciplinary teaching is important, it is equally important to preserve the value of the academic discipline. (Gordon)
- General Education courses should not just be prerequisites to other courses. (Redick)
- In some cases, General Education courses do not even serve as prerequisites to other courses within the major.(Bostick)
- All college students should be able to handle the first year of any academic discipline. Disciplines should not have special courses for non-majors. (Velkey)
- In some disciplines, it is appropriate to have special courses for non-majors – such as first year Physics courses, which require calculus for majors but do not require calculus for non-majors. (Buoncristiani)
- The first two years should be equally as important as the second two years. Current CNU students view the first two years as something which must be endured instead of an exciting academic experience. (St. Onge)
- Faculty should focus on “modes of teaching”. One possible method might be the incorporation of “tutorial” courses that allow small groups of students to interact with one faculty member for their entire first year of college. (Kinch)
- In order to provide first year students with the training needed to develop study skills and become self-motivated learners – it might be necessary to cap some freshmen classes at 10. (Griffin)
- CNU should be concerned at what students are learning from Standards of Learning tests, which do not promote independent thinking, problem solving or critical thinking. It is a difficult transition from high school to college. (Buoncristiani)
- Current students do not make “connections” well. (St. Onge)
- Changing the format of College 101 currently offered by the Department of English might allow for better instruction in critical thinking and problem solving. (Cartwright)
- In some cases a lack of student maturity may cause attrition. (Mathews)
- We can not penalize students for what they have not yet learned. (St. Onge)
- Students will not learn to make connections from one part of their lives to another without being taught. (Perkins)

