Minutes
Third Work Group meeting March 13, 2008
HSS 301

Attending: Daniel Cano, Guido Davis Del Piccolo, Gordon Dossett, Nancy Grass Hemmert, Georgia Lorenz, Miriam Mohr, Pete Morris; Dawn Murphy, Peggy Kravitz, Tricia Ramos, Bernie Rosenloecher, Toni Trives and Sal Veas. Guests: Elena Kuzmicheva and Joy Marinos-Hervé

Old Business: Study Abroad In response to an email to all faculty, Brandon Lewis received widespread interest in participating in the Latin American Education Program. Within the next month, a schedule for the program should be complete, listing courses, instructors and locations for the program (winter, spring, spring intersession, summer 2009). We should also know if we will be bringing a distinguished visiting professor from Belize for fall, 2008.

After the last meeting, Erica LeBlanc stated that she thought grants might be interested in providing some funding for the South African program, given its service learning component. This is something the college should explore; however because of the short timeline, funding will be difficult receive for winter, 2009. Erica mentioned the Gates foundation as a possible source.

The college may also want to standardize study abroad offerings. Nancy noted that a program this summer travels through three countries in three weeks; other programs remain in one place and provide a more intensive exploration of the local culture. Do we want to make experiential learning essential to new SMC study abroad offerings? Just as in the task force, this group continues to favor intensive experiences, although acknowledging that the study tour approach is better than no abroad experience at all.

Announcements: We have three new members of the work group. Project manager Dawn Murphy has served in the Peace Corps and worked at a tribal clinic. Nancy Grass-Hemmert has taught abroad—most recently in South Africa—and teaches a course on intercultural communication. Peggy Kravitz is an international counselor who worked in USC international education office.

Toni forwarded information on a FIPSE grant calling for proposals to work with institutions in Mexico and Canada. Given its relatively quick deadline of April 11, this grant might be something to plan for next year.

International Students: Janet took notes on a presentation by five international students for staff development day, and sent those notes to group members. “Tips from Student Panel” included 10 points for faculty to consider, most of which were practices that involved international students, helped them learn better, and created contacts with American students. (Included in the 10 were that professors create situations in which students had to give presentations (either by themselves or in groups); that professors use
eCompanion or the blackboard, so that international students can complement hearing key ideas with seeing them written out.) The presentation also included 3 concerns.

Elena Kuzmicheva, one of the student panelists, spoke to the work group. She underscored many of the positive comments in the notes from the staff development day presentation. She elaborated on some of the concerns:

- Housing: with few international students having SMC-affiliated housing, arriving and quickly finding housing is a challenge.
- Fee increase: Students learned late that fees they paid over the summer were not enough; they were not told of the increase.
- Budget cuts: In the past the international counseling office has had international student workers; however, with budget cuts, only work study students may fill new openings. These American students cannot be, in effect, peer mentors. Further, the many international student could use work to offset the increased fees.
- Communication: A survey sought to gather international students’ opinions; however, it was emailed to students with the subject category “International Student Forum”—the name of a student organization. Some students mistakenly deleted it, and others became confused or believed that the survey didn’t reflect student concerns. Further, administrators in the office were had few hours to meet with students.

She offered these possible solutions:

- Jobs on campus (especially in international admissions and international counseling)
- Suggestion boxes
- More late start of second 8 week-classes (for students who drop a class and need to stay in compliance with their 12 unit load)
- An international student advocate in international admissions and possibly on the Board of Trustees
- More psychological help for adjustment and personal issues

Several members of the work group noted that the college needed to comply with federal laws, and that there may have been changes to the laws or their enforcement. Furthermore, the college clearly values international students and there is a gap between these stated perceptions and what the college intends. The work group will be receiving more information at its next meeting about these stated concerns.