

APRIL/MAY 2015



TIME AND DEPTH FOR & WITH LOYOLA

FACULTY CONVERSATIONS, SPRING 2015

Questions about Time and Depth, April Faculty Assembly, 4/17/15

Follow up conversations:

- 04/20 @ 4:00-5:15, JH120 (Tenured Faculty)
- 04/22 @ 10:00-11:00, BE204 (Affiliate Faculty)
- 04/23 @ 12:15-1:30, Cohn 133 (Chairs)
- 04/27 @ 4:00-5:15, Columbia rm270 (open)
- 04/28 @ 10:00-11:15, BE204 (Tenure Track)
- 05/01 @ 10:45-12:00, JH120 (open)

Questions for the VPAA, May Faculty Assembly, 5/8/15

TIME AND DEPTH FOR & WITH LOYOLA

TAKE-AWAYS: BIG THEMES FROM THE FACULTY ASSEMBLY LAUNCH, FOLLOW-UP CONVERSATIONS, AND RECONVENING Q&A WITH THE VPAA

Vice President of Academic Affairs Amy Wolfson’s [white paper on time and depth](#) for and with Loyola, and [follow-up questions](#) for the April Faculty Assembly, initiated a series of conversations about our values as an academic institution in the Jesuit and liberal arts traditions, and the structures of faculty and student life that might cultivate or inhibit those ideals. In general, the conversations among faculty at the April 17 Faculty Assembly and in the follow-up sessions were lively and engaged as faculty accepted the invitation to think imaginatively and philosophically. The conversations ranged widely and addressed both very large questions (such as, What do we value as liberal arts-oriented university?) and very intricate questions (such as, What is the formula between seat-time and credit hours?). Many colleagues remarked that we haven’t before had structured opportunities to ask such questions or engage such conversations across departments and divisions as a campus-wide faculty. When faculty reconvened on May 8 for Q&A with the VPAA—another new practice at Loyola—colleagues continued to think imaginatively while also pressing for answers to “What next?” and “Where to?” in this process. At that final Faculty Assembly, the VPAA also began to place these faculty conversations about Loyola against the backdrop of national trends and comparison institutions. As such, Academic Affairs will pair the thematic notes from the time-and-depth faculty conversations with institutional and comparative data she shared with the Board of Trustees earlier that week ([see companion slide presentation](#)).

Throughout the month, each conversation evolved differently, especially in response to the specific experiences, concerns, and ranks of the participants in any given group. Still, some common themes and areas of attention emerged:

WHAT KIND OF UNIVERSITY ARE WE?

There is a general feeling that there is something distinct and exciting about working or studying at Loyola. What does that mean? The term “liberal arts-oriented university” captures the various elements of Loyola—Jesuit mission, Core curriculum, mix of graduate and undergraduate programs, etc.—but it also might describe a tension as much as describe an identity. Who do we want to be on the liberal arts / professional programs axis? How do we present ourselves to future students and potential faculty hires? Loyola seems to be in flux or at a crossroad in its institutional identity. Do we need a shared identity to unite us as a faculty, or more flexibility to allow developments in different areas and directions? Another way to ask the question: Who are our peers? Faculty workload and student course load are often determined by the nature of the institution. (e.g., liberal arts colleges tend to be 4/4 course load; universities tend to count credits over courses; current research expectations may not align with industry standards for a 3/3 workload, etc.). Loyola may be an outlier among Patriot League and top liberal arts schools on workload and course load, while the AJCU schools and regional peers have more variation. It might be helpful to have an institutional conversation about peer and aspirational institutions (see data from Board of Trustees AVP presentation). In all, how can we best talk about the value of the liberal arts within a national conversation that does not necessarily take liberal education as a given? Perhaps the strategic planning process will help to affirm a direction.

THE IDEA OF 3/2, THE 50/30/20 FORMULA, AND FACULTY RESEARCH EXPECTATIONS

In general, Loyola faculty work very hard and are inspired by the scholar-teacher model. Faculty want to be at an institution that values both high-quality scholarship and effective teaching. Faculty do wonder if there might be flexibility within the model for differences between faculty, as well as worry about the total amount of work (including administrative work) which doesn't always allow time for in-depth research beyond the summer. The general 50/30/20 formula for tenured and tenure-track faculty doesn't always feel like it adds up to 100 in practice. The idea of 3/2 sounds warranted and good (particularly among faculty hired more recently) and a frequent follow-up question is, What's the catch? Workload is understood differently across categories of faculty as well as faculty who teach in the undergraduate program, graduate program, clinical fields, etc.? Also, do we know that a 3/2 load provides the ability to go deeper into our research during the academic year? In fact, we have faculty across campus who teach less than a 3/3 load as compensation for administrative responsibilities, teaching time-intensive courses (e.g., Messina, service-learning), directing thesis/dissertation projects, or other individual agreements. Investigation into how such alternate loads have affected faculty may be worth investigating. Student class sizes also vary considerably across majors, within types of courses, and undergrad v. grad. Other additional avenues toward depth might include adjusting the timing of breaks, number of study days, and length of a semester. Other related ideas included flexibility in workloads to accommodate different faculty efforts and talents (e.g., days on campus, blocks of time), either as distinct tracks, changing over time, or specific to individuals.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT EXPECTATIONS, DEPTH OF ENGAGEMENT, AND THE IDEA OF 4/4

There is general agreement that faculty value depth of student academic engagement and shared consternation that contemporary culture nurtures busyness/distraction over sustained attention. There is a general consensus that it is difficult for undergraduate students to balance 5/5 courses and to participate in a myriad of additional activities and commitments, academic or otherwise. The idea of 4/4 sounds good, particularly among faculty with experience at such institutions, in terms of what faculty could ask/expect of students in term papers, projects, service-learning, etc. But there is healthy skepticism about whether students would spend extra time on academic depth or fill it with additional non-academic pursuits. Also, some long-serving faculty note that we once had a 4-1-4 schedule with a January term. Last, how does graduate study, experiential instruction, thesis advising, etc. fit into our conception of student workload?

CURRICULAR CREATIVITY, CREDIT HOURS VERSUS COURSES, AND WHAT "COUNTS"

Faculty are deeply engaged in and excited about the in-depth work that builds on material and habits first cultivated in traditional academic courses. How do we best incorporate labs, fourth hours, practicums, independent studies, theses, service-learning, and other high-quality student experiences into the official Loyola undergraduate experience? Faculty members also wonder how their own work with students at both undergraduate and graduate levels on theses, labs, independent studies, etc. fits into the faculty workload. Loyola has decided to organize its curriculum around courses, rather than credits. Is the course-based structure the best way to provide a baseline for curriculum planning,

academic standards, shared student experience across majors, and faculty workload? Some faculty worry that it creates some inflexibility and might not “count” work and experiences that we otherwise hold dear, both as an institution and in specific fields. Some faculty are also interested in thinking creatively about scheduling, both in terms of meeting times within the week and course models beyond weekly seat-time. It is important to know what is in the university’s domain to define for ourselves, and how much is prescribed by federal and state law, as well as accrediting bodies at the graduate and undergraduate levels. And also how our definitions of seat-time and courses align with our peers.

RELATION OF CORE, MAJOR, GRADUATE INQUIRY, AND THE LIBERAL ARTS

There is broad and deep agreement that we need and want to nurture students’ intellectual curiosity. There is also general agreement that the idea of a shared undergraduate curriculum (i.e., a “Core”) is a distinctive aspect of Loyola and the Jesuit model of higher education. There is less agreement on how to nurture that curiosity and the ideal size, scope, flexibility, and function of the uniting experience, both at the undergraduate level (via a “Core”) and the graduate level. There is also general acknowledgement that the range of course requirements for majors and graduate programs is quite varied, sometimes fueled by disciplinary needs or accrediting standards. Some of the most imaginative conversations happened when we shifted away from thinking about our existing sets of courses in the core and majors/graduate programs and more at the conceptual level of the ideal proportion between core/majors and also the relation between them, and perhaps also to graduate programs. So too, creativity tended to flourish when we shifted from thinking about “Core review” (which has its own institutional history) and toward a broader “curricular review.” Some conversations also addressed the uneven distribution of undergraduate students across majors amid the University goal of providing a diverse offering across the liberal arts.

ADVISING, RETENTION, AND INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

There is a general sense that undergraduate and graduate students are in need of advising but that we might wish to revisit what aspects should be handled by faculty and which aspects might be better handled by professional advising staff. This has implications for faculty labor (i.e., time), student experience, and retention. There is also some desire to streamline the advising process (e.g., paperwork, electronic options) to decrease workload for faculty advisors. Some conversations also addressed students’ developmental growth over time at the undergraduate level. While undergraduate students don’t officially declare a major until after their first year, the advising system, campus culture, peer and parent pressure, and certain majors effectively push students to identify with a major early on, often before arrival. Relatedly, there is encouragement to have students “save” any electives until the end of the degree. As a result, our institution doesn’t easily allow students the full liberal arts experience of exploration and curiosity. At the graduate level, there was sentiment by some faculty that students completing a thesis engaged in a depth of learning that could not otherwise be duplicated in a typical classroom setting. How might the graduate student experience provide models or opportunities for depth in undergraduate inquiry, too?