

MEETING OF THE GENERAL STUDIES ROUNDTABLE—PHASE II
October 6, 2 006

The General Studies (GS) Roundtable met from 2:30-3:30 October 6, 2006.

1. COMMUNICATION -- Members deliberated over how best to share the roundtable discussions with the campus community, ultimately deciding that agendas, notes from the meetings, and any supplementary attachments should be set up as an archive on the General Studies web site. The co-moderators will work with the GS web site coordinator and inform deans and chairs of the availability of this information. Daryl Kelley proposed that each college initiate focus groups charged with bringing information back to the roundtable after the revised GS model is further along.
2. REPORT FROM RICK MILLER ON THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION (NSF) SCIENCE EDUCATION MODEL – Rick described a sequence of courses that we might consider as we put together a model of the revised GS program:
 - A, Course #1 (first semester): This is an introductory course to science itself, not an introduction to a specific scientific discipline. This interdisciplinary course deals with the following questions:
 - What does science do for society?
 - What kinds of questions does science answer?
 - How do we gain knowledge in science? How does the scientific method work?
 - What contemporary issues (ex: stem cell research) are amenable to scientific endeavors?
 - B. Course #2 (second semester): This course concentrates on a given area of science, thus addressing students' familiar complaint, "I did this last year in high school."

This model (Questions, Methods, Cutting-Edge Issues) could apply to the social sciences, and perhaps the humanities, as well. Rick then distributed a handout describing *Frontiers of Science: A Science Course for the Core Curriculum at Columbia University*. This course encourages cross-talk among discipline, lends itself to interdisciplinary (either team-taught or turn-taught) instruction, and promotes the use of primary sources, particularly in the issues component.

3. COMMENTS FROM THE ROUNDTABLE – The third part of such a course, the issues component, must not become stagnant. Members also raised the issue of class size, mentioning that the course might consist of a seminar section complemented by a number of break-out groups similar to lab sections. These break-out groups could be led by graduate assistants, upper-classpersons functioning as the equivalent of Student Peer Leaders, or even paid senior students who have passed a credit-bearing course in student leadership.

4. **BUILDING A MODEL** – The roundtable has spent considerable time discussing the aims of education in general, the desirable and undesirable components of a general studies program, and some possibilities for revisions that would benefit our students. Now it's time to distill these discussions into a GS structure that will support the outcomes identified in Phase I and other principles the roundtable considers important.

Example: A 30-hour program consisting of 10 3-hour thematic courses that incorporate a breadth of skills (writing, oral presentation, etc.) GS courses may extend into the junior or even senior year.

Members were charged with bringing a draft model to the 10/20/06 meeting, considering such elements as the name of the program itself, the number of hours involved, area distribution, and the number of courses in each area. Members may send their drafts directly to the members of the roundtable or to Scott and/or Martha for collation.