

Wednesday, May 16, 2012

11:00 a.m. in the provost's office

Notes from a meeting to discuss the future of the Dominica Service-Learning Project

Present: Patricia Bevans (director of international study), Deborah Cady-Melzer (vice president for student life and leadership), Gloria Heffernan (director of service-learning), Linda LeMura (provost and academic vice president), Donald Maldari, S.J. (associate professor).

- The meeting started with a review of the minutes from the last meeting to discuss the future of the Dominica Service-Learning Project, held on July 22, 2011 with Deborah Cady-Melzer, Linda LeMura and Donald Maldari. The July 22 meeting continued the discussion begun in 2009 with Linda LeMura, Donald Maldari, and Shawn Ward, the vice president for student development at the time. That July 22 meeting had adjourned and questions of funding had been tabled until a new director of service-learning and a new director of international study could be hired.
- It was noted that the Dominica project has worked very smoothly and under budget since it began.
- Donald Maldari summarized his understanding of the significance of the project for the students:
 - It offers the students an international experience in a safe place where there is need and where they can communicate with people in English. An advantage of Dominica, too, is Donald Maldari's experience there: he has contacts and is familiar with the culture and how to organize activities.
 - It offers academic reflection that flows from the religious studies course that they already took with him. He had found the lack of an academic component in the early trips to be a lacuna in an academic institution.
- Donald Maldari stated that he foresaw three scenarios for the future of the Dominica Service-Project:
 1. That the College commit itself to include the project within the allocation of funds available for student activities on an equitable percentage basis. In practice this would mean that the College would equitably divide the available funds among the existing student projects, assigning a percentage of those funds divided among the number of projects. That number, the percentage, and the actual amount of funds allocated to each activity would be subject to fluctuation from year to year. The Dominica Service-Learning Project could also draw upon funds made available through the Ruggieri Endowment. Donald recognized that in the current financial situation in which the College finds itself, this option is not feasible for the 2013 project but he would like to see this implemented as normal *modus operandi*.
 2. That the Dominica Service-Learning Project revert to its previous arrangement of self-funding. Donald noted that this option is not feasible in the way that it had been done up to and including the 2009 trip: it took too much time and energy for him.
 3. That the Dominica Service-Learning Project be indefinitely suspended or abolished.

- Deborah Cady-Melzer suggested that the trip might be constructed around the funds available, i.e. that if funding was low the project could take place in a location that would require less funds such as within the United States.
 - Donald Maldari thought that this was a good possibility, although it would lose the international component. If such a plan were developed Gloria Heffernan and Deborah Cady-Melzer said they would help in the project's organization and implementation such that Donald Maldari would be responsible only for teaching.
- Gloria Heffernan offered to run a fundraising workshop for the students. This would not only help the students in fundraising efforts but help the students reflect on the significance of their future experience.
- Patricia Bevans noted that a different travel agent, such as the one being used for study abroad projects, could reduce the airfare to Dominica. She also reported that an alumna had inquired about donating to service-learning projects.
- Linda LeMura suggested that funding for one faculty member on a trip to Dominica might be available even next year.
- Donald Maldari suggested that the students work with Gloria Heffernan, Randy DeVett-McKeon and perhaps the office of institutional advancement to fund the 2013 project but that a procedure now be put into place to identify future funding when the College's financial situation improves.
- Deborah Cady-Melzer raised the question of the relation between the impact on Le Moyne students and the amount of funds dedicated to service and service-learning projects. She noted that a relatively small number of students profit from these experiences and she expressed concern regarding the accessibility to the projects to a larger number of students. She likewise stated that no decision regarding future funding could be made until a new director of campus ministry was hired.
- Donald Maldari pointed out that all freshmen receive information about all the learning communities in their orientation packet, including the Dominica Service-Learning Project, and that membership in the LEAD learning community is open to all incoming freshmen. He noted that past experience with allowing students not in the LEAD learning community was most infelicitous.
 - Deborah Cady-Melzer was concerned about how aware the incoming freshmen are of this option.
- It was decided that this year's program remains a possibility if the College judges that the impact on the students is such that it warrants the program's funding and if a mechanism is put into place to insure the project's future funding. If such a mechanism develops then students will do fundraising aided by Gloria Heffernan and Randy DeVett-McKeon for this year only; the project will occur if sufficient funds are available. If the College decides that the impact on students is insufficient to warrant College funding then the program will be cancelled. Deborah Cady-Melzer and Linda LeMura will pursue this decision and report their findings to Donald Maldari.

The meeting concluded at 12:15 p.m.