

Meeting Notes – Courageous Conversations

The meeting took place on Jan. 29, 2010 at 1:30 pm in room 314 of the YPST building.

The meeting began with attendees introducing themselves and providing an example of something good that had happened recently. Following introductions, Dr. Robinson briefly went over the purposes of the proposed councils, stating that the learning council had the goal of improving student learning, the planning council's mandate was to improve the ways of making things happen, and the community forums would talk about the connections and collaboration between the campus and the community, and would feature presentations by deans on their own areas of responsibility. Dr. Robinson said the handout featuring concerns drawn from visioning sessions and faculty meetings would be items that could be addressed by the various councils during future meetings.

Dr. Robinson projected a list of ideas to guide the conversations (see attached) with the intent that some would be covered in the current meeting and others discussed in future sessions. The first conversation question was, "What do you value?"

(As noted in the meeting, the following responses were not attributed to their specific authors.)

Responses:

- Students who make a legitimate effort;
- Character;
- Diverse cultures;
- Making an all out effort when teaching: "I feel bad when the student doesn't get through (my class)."
- Kindness and respect;
- Reputation: "Sometimes we forget we're not just Ybor – your reputation precedes you throughout the other campuses."
- A good work ethic;
- Creativity of our students – Robinson: "Do we have this, or do students bring it with them?"
Response: Sometimes it is both. Robinson: "Has their creativity been extinguished here?"
Response: Yes. Sometimes there will be promising students, but they get frustrated with things like registration and financial aid and just leave. Response: It seems as if the system is at fault – there is not enough people working in registration. Robinson: Maybe we can't change the system, but we can alter our way of doing things here.
- Commitment and follow-through: "Some of our students work against some pretty big odds."

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Next Question: “Why are you here?”

Responses:

- I love it here – as a former student here, I loved having a chance to come back as a faculty member. I like what I do here – I don’t always like things here all the time, and I wanted to part of changing that.
- I left my former job... and decided I wanted to work in academia. HCC Ybor had a reputation that was not really deserved.... I work with a lot of needy students... I work with the students where they are (academically), and I work with a lot of returning adults.
- I have taught a lot of places – different campuses – and I tried for years to get a full time job here. This is home for me.
- I live close by. Once I came to work here because I liked the diversity of people. I like what the college is doing for the community. It is a learning experience working here.
- I came here because I felt you (Robinson) were sincere about making a difference.
- I was an adjunct for HCC, including on the Dale Mabry campus. I worked part time at Ybor. I could feel the difference at Ybor; all different people, different characters. I was told that as a woman I couldn’t succeed in science and wanted to change that view. I also wanted to be one of the people helping first generation college students.

Next question: “When do you know when you’ve failed?”

- You can’t always tell. Some students may fail a class but they learn things. You never can tell what they are going to retain from your class.

Dr. Robinson referenced a study showing female elementary teachers were unwittingly transmitting a dislike of math to female students who were looking at the teachers as role models. He speculated that perhaps there are times when we have the same type of influence with our students.

More responses to “When do you know when you’ve failed?”

- I just don’t feel that I did a good job last year. I taught my classes and everything, I just don’t feel like I did a good job last year.
- Students will let you know when you’ve failed.

Question: How do know you have failed as a person?

- When you set a goal and you don’t reach it.
- I know I’ve failed when I keep thinking of the same mistake over and over.
- You’ve failed when something didn’t work out and you don’t have a chance to change it.
- When you are not personally satisfied with the outcome.
- Students are told no one is perfect – don’t blame others but set goals for yourself.

Question: How would you like to be remembered?

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- As a mentor of students.
- He ran a good race; he cared for others.
- She did the best she could every day with what she had.
- He wasn't one of those "would've, should've, could've" people.
- Someone who felt that if you don't like the way things are, get in there and change it.

Next question: What makes you go on?

- Thinking about what my son would think if I didn't.
- We just celebrated Martin Luther King Day, and I think of his struggle.
- Commitment and integrity – the arts community is like that.
- I do the best I can for other people – I like to aid other people. I have a real passion for people.

Dr. Robinson asked the group to consider what are the next questions we need to ask as we think about the issues the councils will handle.

Responses:

- How do we avoid student confusion and frustration?

(Next came a discussion of registration and financial aid issues. One issue was addressed by Dr. Robinson – a situation where a student had to make several back and forth trips to get a class schedule and a parking permit. Dr. Robinson said some issues, like this one, can be resolved right away.)

- Datatel – we can't get on during peak times.
- Datatel is not equipped to handle a college of our size.
- Dropping and adding is a problem – students coming in late can't catch up.
- Facilities – our buildings are old; we need new things and space.
- We need new teaching and staff positions.
- Add/drop should be over before the first day of classes
- What about mandatory first day attendance?

Dr. Robinson said the issue has been studied by the IAC and there are concerns that faculty didn't support the idea. There was a general indication of surprise at this finding. Dr. Robinson said if the idea is going to move ahead, the faculty need to support the proposal.

- I've always advocated an idea of letting students drop a class, but they can't add. They should take a late-start class.

A brief discussion followed on the merits of allowing drops but no adds, and the need to streamline the system.

The subject of training adjuncts was raised, with an idea of holding separate orientations for new adjunct hires every year and an in-service for all adjuncts. Some comments were made about the

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college-wide in-service, and how that differed from the campus adjunct in-service. A discussion followed on the need to spur attendance, including the possibility of paying adjuncts to attend (similar to actually teaching a class).

- How do we hold administrators responsible for what they should be doing?

Dr. Robinson briefly explained administrators were subject to performance reviews, and if they failed to accomplish goals, that would be an issue in those reviews.

Dr. Robinson then discussed the new councils that will be an outgrowth of the Courageous Conversations. He said the Campus Learning Council would focus on improving student learning and would need to come up with a purpose statement. He said the council should look at ways of replicating successful learning practices while doing away with bad practices that show up in the classroom. Could this be done by tweaking classes? Holding workshops? He added that the council should meet monthly and use subcommittees for certain tasks.

Dr. Robinson said the council should focus on such things as the length of committee service and the size of the membership – he thought 10 to 15 would be the maximum number of members that would allow the committees to operate efficiently. He said the council should be co-chaired by his academic assistant and a faculty member, with a campus dean serving as a resource person. He suggested the learning council have representation from various departments and have faculty, staff and student members. There was a brief discussion on how best to represent all the departments on the council, and it was generally agreed that the council membership would cover broad areas like science, math, and public service with the council representative informing individual departments on council actions.

Dr. Robinson said the Campus Planning Council would follow the same basic design of the Campus Learning Council with 10-15 members and be co-chaired by the academic assistant and a dean. However, the planning council should focus its efforts on tasks such as reviewing and implementing items on the visioning lists, evaluating unit plans, the campus plans, and determining what new things need to be done. What things are important and should be pursued?

Dr. Robinson said the Community Forum would meet twice a year and give those groups and organization with a relationship or interest in the HCC Ybor City Campus a chance to make suggestions and have those comments forwarded to the administration. He said deans would make brief presentations at these sessions. When Dr. Robinson asked which groups to invite, several of the suggestions included Academy Prep, Tampa Bay Tech, and Barrio Latino, among others.

Dr. Robinson informed the group that the next conversation would take place Feb. 19 at 1:30pm, and to email the academic assistant (dliller@hccfl.edu) with any thoughts and suggestions for the next session.

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