The Committee continues its work, along with our colleagues on the Design Team. Over the last month we have focused attention on two areas: writing, and quantitative literacy. We are also gearing up for work on the question of interdisciplinary learning, which we will attend to after the break.

**Quantitative Literacy:** Monday, October 11th saw the campus visit and lunchtime presentation of Ed Burger, Professor of Mathematics at Williams College in Massachusetts. Faculty attended from many areas of the College: Economics, Psychology/Neuroscience, Biology, Geology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Classics, French, Education, History, and Russian. Dr. Burger began with the questions “What do we want Bates students to have when they leave?” and “What do we want them to retain, twenty years after they leave?”

He noted that students who evade classes requiring math often see quantitative presentations of data in a blurry way. Ideally, a training that brings them to want to find the answer to a quantitative question will give them a new lens through which to view the world. The key is to teach mathematical reasoning not (just) as part of a long (often unexplained) road to calculus, but rather to start with a big idea or question (“What is prejudice?” Why are there different sizes of infinity?”) and then for the students themselves to feel impelled to seek mathematical answers.

The group discussed how to introduce quantitative reasoning into classes beyond the obvious cohort, and how training would be available for faculty interested in introducing such reasoning into their curricula. Various curricular models were discussed (including a “little q” standard for testing out of a basic quantitative class, and “big Q” markers for various college level classes).

On September 22nd the Coordinating Committee also heard a presentation on quantitative literacy by Bates’ own Grace Coulombe, Director of the Mathematics and Statistics Workshop. She, together with Marcia Makris and Greg Anderson, attended a workshop in Washington (State) last August, and her report drew in part on that experience. For those faculty interested in pursuing this question of quantitative literacy, and how to integrate such thinking into the curriculum as a whole, check out:

http://1.hollins.edu/homepages/hammerpw/qrhomepage.htm
http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/mcenter/mcql.htm
http://www.wellesley.edu/QR/
http://www.hamilton.edu/academics/resource/qlit/index.html
Grace also is willing to make presentations to departments, programs, and other interested groups of faculty and/or students.

**Writing:** With regard to writing, the Committee has heard a fine presentation from our colleagues in the Writing Workshop: Joyce Seligman and Seri Rudolph. We have also heard a preliminary proposal from the Design Team, which includes possible writing-intensive training in each of the four years of undergraduate education.

Their suggestions include: a first year writing-intensive course experience, which might supplement the FYS; writing intensive classes for sophomores and juniors, or the possibility of certain slots in a class being designated writing intensive; a portfolio of writing assignments due in sophomore or junior year; a sophomore or junior major research paper; alternatives to the senior thesis (in some cases).

The Committee is in the process of talking though this document, and, more important, bringing it to you, our colleagues, in various venues, for reactions and comments. Feel free to approach us about this!

**Other Discussions:** We have begun electronic discussions and exchanges among ourselves on the separate but related questions of interdisciplinary training, a global perspective(s) on politics, people and the environment, and a broadly defined sense of civic and social responsibility. We look forward to a presentation to our group by Arlene MacLeod and Val Carnegie and discussions with other faculty members.

Early next semester we hope to join with you and others in our campus community to hear Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich, Core Professor (Philosophy, Women’s Studies) at The Graduate School for Interdisciplinary Arts & Sciences of the Union Institute & University. She has written extensively on how interdisciplinary education can have an effect on our students, and, ultimately, on our civic and public life.

One area in which we would appreciate help from the faculty is student involvement. We have two excellent student representatives on the Coordinating Committee, and they hope to get permission to publish a brief column on this curricular process in the Bates Student. But please, if you can, invite a student to lunch and talk about the Bates education, then let us know what you think, and what you are hearing. Whether or not you can do this, we’d love to hear from you.

**We want to touch base with you about the exercise on linking our educational goals to current—or possible future—practice on campus.** Contact the committee members directly or reach us all at beast@abacus.bates.edu. Our website is: http://www.bates.edu/goals-bates-education-04-05.xml and contains links to many useful resources.