

Appendix E

Grinnell College Campus Plan Update

Focus Groups on Library and Collaborative Services

3-4 March 2010

The importance of collaboration between libraries and other campus services that directly support student learning was a key theme of the Libraries' 2008-2009 Self Study. As the self study report noted,

Over the past ten years, many academic libraries have increased their collaboration with related campus services to better integrate instructional support for students and, sometimes, faculty. Typical partners include IT help desks, writing centers, media production services, and services focused on quantitative literacy. The goal of these efforts is to provide seamless support to students as they access information in a variety of formats, engage with their classmates and with ideas, and use a range of technologies to create new scholarly and artistic works. Much of this collaborative work has been framed by facilities projects that bring together many instructional support services under one roof. The new spaces created to house these collaborations are typically referred to as "information commons," "learning commons," or "academic commons."

Intensified collaboration among these groups at Grinnell has been under way since early 2009, as the ARC initiative (Academic Resource Centers). Our tour last October of classroom, library, and other learning spaces at various colleges and universities in the northeast reinforced our sense of the importance of this kind of collaboration. We were especially impressed with the sophistication of the services that support learning and teaching where there was coordination of library, technology, and media services, and we noted that two of the libraries we visited (at Middlebury and Wellesley) housed the College's writing support services.

To get a better sense of whether Grinnell students, faculty, and staff wanted to see a new library include other services -- and which services would be most important to include -- we convened seven focus groups to meet with Shepley planners Janette Blackburn and Ann Newman on March 3 and 4. We invited approximately 65 students, faculty, and staff to participate, of whom 40 actually did. Student participants were selected by the Student Government Association. Faculty participants represented governance groups and all three academic divisions. Staff participants included all the services represented by ARC, including Libraries (librarians and support staff), Writing Lab, Reading Lab, Science Learning Center, Math Lab, ITS, Faulconer Gallery, Curricular Technology, and Academic Advising). Each focus group included a mix of faculty and staff, and two of the groups included students.

The focus group discussions were structured around three questions which the participants were given in advance:

1. What is your vision for student learning at Grinnell College?
2. What types of collaboration among academic support services will enrich learning, teaching, and research?
3. What types of spaces are needed to encourage these collaborations and help integrate student services and student learning?

Participants arrived well-prepared for discussion. Several planning themes emerged from most or all of the groups:

- The critical need for integrating media collections, equipment, and support into a single service. There was nearly universal agreement that our current dispersal of collections and services in three campus locations does not work well. There was weaker consensus that media services need to be in the library.
- The desirability of bringing the library, writing lab, reading lab, and technology services together. The visibility of these services -- and their visibility in a common space -- is important not just to encourage use, but to model the integration of the research process.
- The importance of providing more support for using technology and of developing technological literacy in student learning.
- The growing importance of data in the Grinnell curriculum -- quantitative, spatial (GIS), and to a lesser extent qualitative. There was agreement on the need for collaboration among librarians, technology professionals, and others in supporting student and faculty use of data, but less agreement on the need for locating a data-support service in the library.
- The growing importance of primary sources of many kinds in inquiry-based learning, and the need for ready access to these resources within the library.
- The need for group study space for students in the library (and elsewhere on campus).

Blackburn and Newman started this two-day visit with a meeting with the leadership group that oversees academic services to clarify goals and College context -- the Vice President for Institutional Planning, the Dean and Associate Deans of the College, the Vice-President for College Services, the Director of Information Technology, the Librarian of the College, and the Director of Faulconer Gallery), and ended with a meeting with the same group to review preliminary results, and a wrap-up meeting with President Osgood.