

“3/5ths of a Mile in 10 Seconds”  
AAC&U Remarks  
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### **Moving Off Center...**

Good afternoon – thanks for coming.

I am David Kite and I teach philosophy and core curriculum courses at Champlain College. I am here as part of team from Champlain – along with Cinse Bonino, Bob Mayer and Jen Vincent. .

Champlain has pulled off something – we think – is remarkable – the development and implementation of a new integrated interdisciplinary core curriculum in just about a year and a half – from the blue sky/initial proposals to the actual implementation of the new core with our 1<sup>st</sup> year class that entered Champlain last fall.

You’ll be hearing some of our war stories over the next twenty minutes – my job is to set things up by letting you know a few things about Champlain College – and then to briefly describe the major stages of our core writing and implementation process.

### **Champlain College:**

Champlain is in Burlington Vermont – we are a professional college with about 2000 students and roughly 80 full time faculty members.

We are a professional college – we have no arts and sciences majors. Students are drawn to the college by our promise of an intensively focused professional education – usually the enroll their first year already having declared a professional major (we call them “programs”).

We are a college that is very good at managing change quickly – perhaps this is due to our small size, or to the very practical and professional orientation of our programs.

Another important fact to consider is that at Champlain we do not have tenure. Our full time faculty does enjoy good job security but there is no tenure.

### **The Core project:**

As a brief overview – I’d like to distinguish three major phases of our Core curriculum process.

First – the initial planning and blue-sky proposal phase. This really got underway in the Spring 2006 semester and it concluded in May 2006 when the faculty senate met in a series of daily meetings over two weeks to select a curriculum blue print.

The blue sky planning part worked brilliantly. Faculty and staff were all invited to form teams and submit proposals – all practical considerations were off the table – the goal was simply to explore what we thought was an idea general education curriculum. This worked nicely – motivated faculty self-selected and formed workgroups – there was lots of discussion and new ideas circulating all around the campus. It introduced the issue and got people motivated – so far so good.

Unfortunately we did not have a very clear plan for how to move from these initial blue sky proposals to a settled core curriculum blueprint. So – the result coming out of the faculty senate was a compromise that included many good elements and some other special considerations – a compromise that worked broadly but really did not satisfy anyone particularly.

Second phase: getting back on track. This is where – I feel – the administration stepped in and really helped the process. While accepting most of the main features of the faculty senate plan – the President also set out some requirements/expectations of his own. Most notably he asked for an integrated series of interdisciplinary courses at the center of the core – a 35 hour course sequence.

At this point, the administration also set up a way to move forward. We created a Core Curriculum “Core Development Team” – Jen, Bob and me – charged with developing particular course proposals, consulting with faculty, developing master courses.

This has been the bulk of our work since last fall (Fall 2006).

The 3<sup>rd</sup> phase is about the implementation of these new classes. Starting this past fall, our first year students have been taking the first year classes. So, as a team we are also involved in helping the Core curriculum teachers understand these new courses and connect them to their own strengths and styles as classroom teachers.

Of course – the second and third phases overlap. While helping to implement the first year courses, the second and third year classes are at various stages of development.

So – a lot is going on – and with that overview I am going to turn things over to my colleague here, Jen Vincent.