

## BRYN MAWR &amp; HAVERFORD COLLEGES

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## Council of Twelve Examines Bi-College Cooperation

**By Andrew Thompson**

A survey conducted by Council of Twelve in early December on the state of bi-college academics shows that while not seriously divided, the academic relationship between Haverford and Bryn Mawr is somewhat strained.

This semester, Students' Council (SC) Council of Twelve set out to research the state of academic relations between departments across Haverford and Bryn Mawr. An online survey was developed to gauge student perception and experience with bi-college academics. The survey received over 100 responses from Haverford students. The results of the survey were presented to the Student Affairs Committee of the Haverford College Board of Managers on December 5.

A vast majority of those students that responded to the survey—78 percent—were in favor of better academic cooperation across the Bi-Co. The survey also showed that a significant portion of Haverford students—44 percent—had taken courses at Bryn Mawr within their major. Twenty-eight percent of respondents said they had been encouraged by their Haverford advisor or other Haverford professors to take classes at Bryn Mawr, while 64 percent said they had neither been encouraged nor discouraged, and 7 percent said they had been discouraged by Haverford faculty from taking Bryn Mawr classes.

The survey showed relatively few problems for transferring credit from a Bryn Mawr class. About 9 percent said they had been told that a Bryn Mawr course would not count toward their Haverford major, minor, or concentration.

Council of Twelve Chair Harrison Haas '10 said the survey might have been subjected to selection bias, with students who have had more favorable experiences taking courses at Bryn Mawr more likely to fill out the survey.

“We’ve heard enough horror stories that this [difficulty transferring credit] is going on,” he said.

Of those survey respondents who had a major, minor, or concentration offered at both colleges, when asked if they felt each college’s department offered the same level of academic rigor, only 13 percent said yes, while 48 percent said no, and 37 percent said they were not sure. Council of Twelve acknowledged in their presentation that the vast majority of the 48 percent that felt the departments were unequal specified that they felt Haverford had the stronger department.

At Thursday’s Council of Twelve meeting, Haas said that SC plans to contact Bryn Mawr’s SGA President and see if they will run a similar survey.

“My guess is probably the results will be exactly the same, only they’ll say Haverford is the worse school academically,” Haas said.

Haas would like to see departments across colleges interact with one another on a more frequent basis. He said that some only meet once every dozen years, as required for evaluation.

President Dr. Stephen G. Emerson '74 said the administration does not plan to make any systemic changes to facilitate greater bi-college academic cooperation.

"It's people-dependent, it's department-dependant, it's on the individual level," he said.

SC Co-President Will Harrison '10 said he would like to see Haverford and Bryn Mawr departments take better advantage of the bi-college relationship by avoiding redundant upper-level courses. He would also like to see courses that can't be transferred for major, minor, or concentration credit indicated as such in the course guide.

Haas hopes that greater academic cooperation will lead to greater social cooperation between the two schools.

Specific departments mentioned by survey respondents as being difficult to transfer courses from one school to the other were Biology, Psychology, and Economics, especially the intro courses. Outside the survey, The Council of Twelve said in their presentation that problems had also been reported in Anthropology, Spanish, Sociology, and Computer Science.

Several Council of Twelve members did not respond to interview requests from *The Bi-College News*.

Biology Department Chair Rob Fairman wrote in an email to *The Bi-Co* that he was surprised by the perception that it is difficult to transfer courses between colleges in Biology.

"Given that our two departments have complementary—rather than overlapping—missions, we have actually made it easier recently for students to count Bryn Mawr courses in our curriculum," he wrote.

Psychology Department Chair Rebecca Compton wrote in an e-mail to *The Bi-Co* that she was surprised Psychology was seen as a difficult department to transfer courses in-between colleges.

"All courses in the Bryn Mawr psych department can count for Haverford major credit, and vice versa, and we have a substantial amount of cross-registration between departments," she wrote.

Economics Department Chair Anne Preston was unavailable for comment. Anthropology Department Chair Maris Gillette and Spanish Department Chair Graciela Michelotti declined to comment.

Computer Science Department Chair Steve Lindell said the departments of both schools were quite different because Bryn Mawr has switched to a new introductory sequence using robotics, whereas Haverford is still using a more traditional introductory course.

Lindell said students have had problems transitioning between the Bryn Mawr and Haverford programs due to the differences in curriculum. He said the department makes clear to students which transitions are doable and which are difficult. Nonetheless, he does not want to discourage Haverford students from taking Bryn Mawr computer science courses.

Haverford's Registrar Lee Watkins said that he and Bryn Mawr Registrar Kirsten O'Beirne interact frequently. However, the schools have different regulations on matters from pass/fail policies to lottery procedures.

"At Haverford, the registrar conducts all lotteries for Haverford courses," he said. "At Bryn Mawr, mostly the faculty do their own lotteries."

Watkins added that Haverford has 133 limited enrollment courses while Bryn Mawr has almost twice that.

"We are two separate institutions, governed by two different faculties, who have two different ideas on how to do things," he said. "Who is to say one is right and the other is wrong?"

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