

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
FACULTY COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC STANDARDS
FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2009, 1:30-3:00 p.m.
284 Mary Gates Hall

Chair John Schaufelberger called the meeting to order at 1: 32 p.m.

Meeting Synopsis:

1. Chair's Report
 2. Approval of the minutes of April 10, 2009
 3. SCAP Report (Jay Johnson)
 4. Admission and Graduation Subcommittee Report (Susanna Cunningham)
 5. Adjourn
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Chair John Schaufelberger welcomed everyone to today's meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves for today's guests.

1. Chair's Report

Schaufelberger reported that the Honors subcommittee will be looking into the requirements for baccalaureate honors. The current guidelines state that correspondence courses do not count towards honors eligibility and a student who had an online course is appealing that rule. Schaufelberger noted that the subcommittee will look and see if they need to modify the current requirements.

2. Approval of the minutes of April 10, 2009

The minutes for April 10, 2009 were approved with no comment.

3. SCAP Report (Jay Johnson)

Jay Johnson presented one SCAP item, a request by Aeronautics and Astronautics (AA-20090311) to revise program requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Aeronautics and Astronautics degree. He noted that the request was routine.

Action: A motion was made to approve to forward the routine request by Aeronautics and Astronautics. The motion was seconded, and approved.

4. Admission and Graduation Subcommittee Report (Susanna Cunningham)

Susanna Cunningham reported that the Admission and Graduation subcommittee met a week ago Monday and reviewed the report for the English Language Proficiency working group. She noted that they approved some motions at the meeting and that Professor Sandra Silberstein will address those issues at FCAS today.

Sandra Silberstein, Professor of English and Chair of the Provost's Working Group on English Language Proficiency, explained that the committee met again because the subcommittee had raised some very productive issues. She read aloud the charge given to her working group that asked them to examine the UW's policies and procedures on English language proficiency to make sure students have the needed skills to succeed. The questions they were asked to address included:

- Who should be assessed for proficiency?
- How should they be assessed?
- What types of coursework or other support need to be provided?
- Who should pay for such coursework or support?

Silberstein identified the university's "anomalous use of citizenship as the criterion for English language proficiency screening" as the impetus for reform. She noted that the FCAS subcommittee had offered some recommendations to the working group, and approved the following recommendations:

1. Eliminate citizenship as the criterion for screening English language proficiency
2. All undergraduate students shall be required to demonstrate English language proficiency.
3. English language proficiency can be demonstrated in any of the following ways (followed by a list of measures)
4. Students who do not demonstrate English proficiency as defined above will be required to take the DELNA screening. A score of 55 or higher on the DELNA will demonstrate English language proficiency.

Silberstein noted that the Office of Educational Assessment piloted the DELNA screening this summer with results showing a strong effect for language.

5. Students presenting four years of (non-ESL) English in an English-medium high school, but who do not otherwise demonstrate English Language proficiency, are exempt from taking AEP courses, but will participate in mandatory advising.
6. As an interim policy, Washington Community College transfer students who have completed an AA or AAS degree, but who do not demonstrate English Language proficiency, are exempt from taking AEP courses, but will participate in mandatory advising.

Silberstein explained that the subcommittee suggested an interim policy because we have reason to believe that transfer students have benefited from support thus far: With the use of citizenship criteria and diagnostic testing, there are many transfer students who take English language courses, and with all this support, do almost as well as other students. Thus, exempting transfer students from AEP courses is a gamble to be tried on an interim basis. She noted the Provost's position, not wanting to ask transfer-degree students to pay extra for educational outreach courses. Silberstein said the Working Group's (WG) expectation is that the courses will become credit-bearing, and they hope ultimately that they would be supported financially by the institution.

Another concern of the subcommittee had been not wanting to rely on the self-report of English language proficiency/use in the DELNA. Thus, the WG's new recommendation is that students who present four years of non-ESL English in an English-medium high school will be exempt from taking the AEP courses, but low-scoring students will need to participate in mandatory advising. Silberstein explained that the Provost noted in a letter that she would like to exempt transfer students from taking the DELNA or any screening test and would have any students who generate cause for concern by other measures (such as low GPA) flagged and followed. Silberstein noted that the subcommittee felt it was important to screen all students and to then follow them by collecting data to see if a policy of exemption for low-

scoring students works. Silberstein handed out a proposed decision flow chart for English language proficiency screening, and data from a pilot test of the DELNA.

Schaufelberger asked participants for any questions. Silberstein was then asked a series of questions for clarification about the proposed requirements and their underlying assumptions. Questions included: whether transfer students without a degree would be able to include four years of high school or college English (no, but they can petition), what is meant by “English-medium high school” (a school in which English is the medium of instruction), whether the proficiency requirements are in terms of the degree rather than a certain number of English language courses taken (degree, although appeal is possible), and what is meant by “mandatory advising” (see below). Silberstein responded to each concern and remarked that what they want to know is that students are able to use language across the curriculum.

Brad Holt pointed out that the requirement is unique to English as there is no competency requirement for entering into either math or science. It was noted that there are many cases at UW where students are doing alright in their basic English composition course but not in other courses requiring English, because there are two sets of skills involved.

Special guest Nana Lowell explained the DELNA flowchart and how students would meet the exemption from taking it. She spoke about the numbers of total students (1,202) in the pilot and how they attempted to estimate the magnitude of impact the screening would have. Holt asked for clarification of “mandatory advising” because of his concern that many transfer students are going directly into majors and department advisers will be advising these students. Debbie Wiegand explained that the advising sessions are currently being developed, but that their purpose will be twofold: to use the DELNA test results to help students decide what’s best for them among the options available to further their English skills and to create a positive impression of the resources available to them that are there to help them succeed. The group advising sessions would take place during orientation before the students sign up for classes. Wiegand noted that they hope to monitor to see how it works. Silberstein outlined the best practices of student support that the Working Group would like to see, noting that they will not likely be developed fully at this time because of the university’s budget cuts.

A concern was raised about the effect of the new recommendations on members of a family who might find one person exempt while the other is required to do mandatory advising, take the AEP diagnostic, and take AEP courses. Webster pointed out that living in the same family does not indicate the same proficiency. Silberstein explained that the recommendations are about English proficiency and that the subcommittee felt strongly that this kind of support must be given to non-native speakers to help them not only succeed, but be able to do the widest range of things. She noted that the DELNA is just a screen and there are several ways for students to demonstrate the different kind of work they can do.

Chair Schaufelberger addressed the council by asking them whether they were prepared to recommend to the Faculty Senate that demonstrated proficiency in the English language would be a requirement for a degree. It would need the Faculty Senate’s approval, and would require a change to the handbook. He also asked them to consider what criteria will be used to determine proficiency. Schaufelberger outlined the council’s responsibilities for admission and graduation requirements and proposed a solution that would link the English language proficiency system presented today to a prerequisite for taking English composition, a requirement for graduation. He noted how this solution would avoid the need to go through the legislative process to change the handbook.

A lively discussion began that addressed several issues including, how an English composition requirement for graduation would fit with the subcommittee’s recommendations, how AEP courses might be credit-based, and how linking English composition to a graduation requirement for non-native speakers could have some negative consequences, e.g., the issues at hand is not English composition solely, but language proficiency; transfer students have already had English composition. Schaufelberger noted the

need to create a transparent audit trail of the decisions and recommendations made because the decision to use citizenship as the criterion for screening English language proficiency was never recorded, and it is not clear what group made the decision.

Phil Ballinger suggested a solution he felt would avoid the negative impact an admissions requirement would have on diversity at UW. To avoid having an admissions requirement, he proposed removing the 5th recommendation, which allows a student with four years of English in an English-medium high school to be exempt from taking AEP courses and, on a trial basis, go back to the proposal of using the self-report data from the DELNA and foregoing anything else.

Several participants noted their concern with the idea of making English language proficiency a graduation requirement for students. The discussion returned to the idea of tying the English language proficiency requirement to admissions, and how that would work. Vicki Haag Day ran a scenario in which a student would be “conditionally admitted” to the university. Ballinger noted it does not reveal an expected outcome, but rather a process. He identified some concerns about the outcome of a conditional admission, such as the fact that it would likely pick up more students than the citizenship screen, and it is not clear what would happen if all these students did not meet the conditions. It was pointed out that there are many resources in place to help students succeed. Silberstein noted that the English language specialists want students to have enough English language skill to succeed here in their work and that adequate test scores suggest that students should be able to do a vast majority of university work. Ballinger underscored how a conditional admission could negatively affect diversity, and how a screening test with a condition suggests an outcome, which would be graduation. Cynthia Fugate noted that if the concern is about diversity and they want students to graduate, that they will be affected either at the beginning or end of their university experience. Ballinger noted the increase in students affected because an admissions requirement applies to all students admitted. It was noted that the issue was not going to be resolved today.

Schaufelberger noted that the issue must be resolved in about a month’s time because students will be coming in June, and they must figure out how the requirement will work. He reiterated the idea of linking the requirement to a writing course because it is a clean solution and one that exempts transfer students, something the Provost requested. He proposed that the group reconvene in two weeks time.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:02 p.m.

Minutes by Melissa Kane, Faculty Senate, mmkane@u.washington.edu

Present: Faculty: Cunningham, Fitzpatrick, Holt, Johnson, Schaufelberger (Chair), Stroup, Taggart

President’s Designee: Mildon

Ex Officio Reps: Fugate, Jespersen, Haag Day

Regularly Invited Guests: Ballinger, Corbett, Sahr, Wiegand, Sayrs

Absent: Faculty: Almgren, Keil

Ex Officio Reps: Nguyen, Meske

Regularly Invited Guests: Winslow

Special Guests: Sandra Silberstein, English Professor, and Chair, Provost’s Working Group on English Language Proficiency
Chris Gilman, Director, English Language Programs
Enrique Morales, Sr. Associate Vice President, Minority Affairs
Shawna Shapiro, GPSS Representative, Working Group Research Assistant
David Szatmary, Vice Provost, UW Educational Outreach

Lynne Walker, Academic English Programs Coordinator
Nana Lowell, Director, Office of Educational Assessment, Invited Consultant