

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
FACULTY COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC STANDARDS
FRIDAY, May 22, 2009, 1:30-3:00 p.m.
224 Mary Gates Hall

Chair John Schaufelberger called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m.

Meeting Synopsis:

1. Chair's Report
 2. Approval of the minutes of May 8, 2009
 3. SCAP Report (Jay Johnson)
 4. Admission and Graduation Subcommittee Report (Susanna Cunningham)
 5. Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Quality and Rigor Report (Don Janssen)
 6. Adjourn
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1. Chair's Report

Chair John Schaufelberger reported that the Honors Subcommittee had met and selected the recipients for graduation medals and that those students had been notified.

2. Approval of the minutes of April 24, 2009

The minutes from May 8, 2009 were approved with no comment.

3. SCAP Report (Jay Johnson)

Jay Johnson reported that SCAP had met and discussed six proposals for changes to existing programs. Five of the proposals, all from Slavic Languages and Literatures, were determined to be routine by the committee, as they only involved changes to courses required for options and minors in the department. SCAP forwarded the proposals to be approved by FCAS as a consent item.

Action: A motion was made to approve the following five proposals from the Slavic Languages and Literatures. The motion was seconded and approved.

- **Slavic Languages and Literatures** – (SLAVIC-20080508A) is requesting a change for program requirements for the Option in Eastern European Languages, Literatures, and Culture within the Bachelor of Arts degree in Slavic Languages and Literatures.

- **Slavic Languages and Literatures** – (SLAVIC-20080508B) is requesting a change for program requirements for the Minor Russian and Slavic Literatures (SDB name Russian Literature/Slavic Literature).
- **Slavic Languages and Literatures** – (SLAVIC-20080508C) is requesting a change for program requirements for the Minor in Slavic Literatures. (SDB name SLAVIC).
- **Slavic Languages and Literatures** – (SLAVIC-20080508D) is requesting a change for program requirements for the Minor Russian Language.
- **Slavic Languages and Literatures** – (SLAVIC-20080508E) is requesting a change for program requirements for the Option in Russian within the Bachelor of Arts degree in Slavic Languages and Literatures (SDB name Russian Language, Literature, and Culture).

The sixth proposal, from Chemistry, requested that admissions to Chemistry and Biochemistry both be made competitive. SCAP was receptive to the proposal, since demand for both programs has grown markedly in the last few years, but had questions about how the process would be implemented. To that end, the committee had sent questions to the Chemistry Department about the proposal and suggested that a representative come to the following SCAP meeting to discuss the proposal.

Rich Keil asked whether there is an inventory of the number of departments that are open or selective versus those that are competitive. Johnson said he did not know. Brad Holt said that he had raised the issue of majors becoming competitive with the Provost in a Senate Planning and Budget Committee Meeting. Schaufelberger said the fact that faculty resources do not follow enrollment in majors was partly driving the changes. Rather than simply keeping students out, programs are trying to allocate resources. He noted that budget cuts could create more issues, in that students may be admitted for whom the university does not have the resources to provide the major they want. John Sahr noted as well that becoming competitive is a way of pushing retention challenges out of a major. David Sayers, who directs the Individualized Studies program, said that that program should not be looked as a solution for such students, as it requires a faculty sponsor for each student pursuing the major, nor does it solve the problem of course availability. Vikki Haag Day said that the question for the university is whether there are enough open majors.

Holt said that it might be appropriate to send a letter to the Provost voicing concern about the trend towards competitive majors and that FCAS is not necessarily equipped to deal with questions concerning resources. Johnson noted that past practice of SCAP and FCAS was to request that department's limit their rationales for changes to programs to issues of academic standards. Holt said that making such a distinction is not necessarily easy, but also that the change to competitive admissions approved for Economics and Chemistry's proposal both are in reaction to resource limitations. Todd Mildon said it would be possible to develop an inventory of departments who have changed to competitive admissions over the last several years. Don Janssen said that he recalled an effort by FCAS to determine how many slots each program at the university had. Schaufelberger said that this issue could be looked at the next meeting of the Council in two weeks.

4. Admission and Graduation Subcommittee Report (Susanna Cunningham)

Susanna Cunningham, chair of the Admission and Graduation Subcommittee, reported that they had reviewed two admissions petitions and had turned both down. The Subcommittee also discussed what final language on the English Language Proficiency (ELP) policy would be placed in the catalog, as well as a possible proposal for the Handbook. Schaufelberger, noting that he will be meeting with the incoming Senate Chair, asked whether the Subcommittee would be moving forward with a proposal. He said that the Chair was interested in having a preview of what work the Council was planning for the following year, particularly if it would involve legislation. Cunningham indicated that they would be working on a proposal.

Cunningham noted that there that there were some logistical challenges around determining whether a community college student has an associate's degree. Phil Ballinger said that Washington community colleges don't provide transcripts by the time the students admitted for the fall would have to be screened, so Admissions would have to rely on self-reporting. The same would be the case for students admitted for winter or spring. Ballinger said that Admissions would go forward with the policy for those admitted for the fall and look towards a solution in the meantime.

Ballinger also said that the proposed text for the catalog would also have to be changed. Since the current wording allows for exceptions for student holding associate's degrees from Washington community colleges, international students with such a degree would seemingly be exempt in the same way that residents are. This would be a change in policy, as international students have been screened separately from other undergraduates as a requirement for admission to the university. Ballinger said that he did not think it was the intention of the working group or FCAS to change how admissions of international students are handled; therefore, the language in the catalog concerning the ELP would need to preclude their exemption. Ballinger said he would discuss with Sandy Silberstein, chair of the working group, to see whether exempting international students had been intended.

Schaufelberger said that changes, if any, should be brought to FCAS at their final meeting on June 5th. His concern was that there be an audit trail, regardless of what exact policy is implemented, and that wordsmithing language for the catalog would not be a problem.

Holt asked whether the Subcommittee was satisfied with data about degree completion for students specially admitted to the university. Ballinger said that it was important to remember that not all these students are athletes, and that another committee as well as Pat Dobel, the faculty representative to Intercollegiate Athletics, also examine the data. Janssen said that it was because of FCAS looking at the data on the progress of special admits in the past that the Ad-Hoc Committee on Academic Quality and Rigor was started. Ballinger said that he had more concerns about students admitted with records slightly above those specially admitted. He also said that student athletes don't always simply drop out; in some cases, students will transfer before completing a UW degree. Schaufelberger said that the sport with the most issues was baseball, since students can be drafted while in their senior year, and thus lose their incentive to complete a degree. He noted that further discussion of this issue could be taken up by next year's committee.

With reference to the discussion of associate's degree, Todd Mildon said that there were some proprietary schools that also offer associate's degrees. Ballinger said that this would have to be considered in tightening up the language for the catalog.

5. Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Quality and Rigor Report (Don Janssen)

Guest Don Janssen presented the report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Quality and Rigor. He noted that a previous reviewing of data on the progress of specially admitted students had been part of the rationale for the creation of the committee. Janssen said that the larger issue was that there is no formal mechanism for reviewing a course once it is approved and, in particular, for reviewing whether a course is or remains sufficiently challenging. An additional concern was the number of student athletes receiving credit in independent study and special topics courses. He said the Committee came up with three areas to review: 1) regular courses, of how challenging students find a course; 2) special topics courses, the subjects of which are never approved centrally by the university; and 3) independent studies, particularly cases where students or faculty seem overly reliant on them. The sources of information included course evaluation form data, particularly a measure called the Challenge and Engagement Index (CEI), provided by the Office of Educational Assessment (OEA), and departmental surveys.

Janssen said that the CEI has been provided as part of reports on course evaluations to instructors for the last three years. The measure presents in decile form (1-10) an indicator of how challenging and engaging students found a particular course. A "9" indicates that students ranked a course higher on this indicator than 90% of other courses offered by the department. Presenting the CEI this way presents difficulties for comparison because even if a course was made more challenging, it still might not move up in comparison with other courses in the department, nor does it really help with comparisons different instances of a course. For these reasons, the Committee asked that OEA turn the CEI into a raw number so that these comparisons would be easier.

Janssen said the impulse behind collecting the scores was diagnostic rather than punitive. For instance, a course previously approved as a seminar may have evolved into a lecture course, and thus dropped required papers or exams. He said another reason that the scores for a course might differ is when taught by different instructors. In neither case is the problem necessarily that of the course, but rather its implementation. Janssen said that the main recommendation from the Committee was the CEI should be provided in reports on curriculum to chairs and Deans. With it, trends can be seen and outliers, such as courses whose CEI drops or fluctuates over time, can be identified at least as points of discussion.

Janssen said that the next the committee looked at the use of Special Topics classes, which are typically numbered "499." Janssen said that Special Topics courses can be used to pilot new courses in order to "debug" them before seeking official approval for them. However, in some cases, the same version courses will be offered repeatedly as Special Topics without becoming approved as a specific course. The difficulty that this presents is that only the Special Topics designation is recorded on the transcript.

Janssen noted, based on a review of transcripts and courses listings, it appeared that most students took only a few if any such courses, but that there were outliers who took a number of Special Topics courses. Janssen said that policies concerning offering Special Topics courses or using them to fulfill major requirements varied according to department. With that in mind, he said that the committee would

recommend individual topics should only be offered twice before being submitted for review, and that limits should be applied to how many Special Topics course can be used to complete a major.

Lastly, the committee reviewed the use of independent study courses. While most students take at least one independent study course, there were few who received 40 or more credits through independent study. He added that some majors consistently have students who take significant amounts of credit through independent study. He noted that there was a perception that supervising such students actually takes more time per student than in a regular class, so the question would arise whether such supervision would be adequate if a faculty member has a number of such students concurrently. Documentation of the faculty contracts for independent studies also varied by department, creating the possibility that misunderstandings could arise about expectations between student and instructor. In terms of student demographics, the committee expected that students at both the highest quartile and lowest quartile would take the most credits of independent study, which turned out to be the case. He said that this on its face this seemed questionable, since what might be appropriate for strong students could be seen as inappropriate for weaker students. Janssen said that the committee would recommend that there should be a limit on independent study credits counted towards fulfillment of the major. He said they would also recommend that faculty be limited to twelve concurrent independent study students.

Keil said that instructors may use independent studies to create a team for a special project. Janssen that such a project would show up as multiple independent studies. The real issue as he saw it is when a faculty member shows up repeatedly as a leader in offering in independent studies. Jennifer Taggart said that a number of courses are offered as special topics in Math, while Day said that not all departments think of Special Topics as a simply a designation to use to pilot a class. Johnson asked if students were profiled in ways beside level of GPA. Janssen said the committee looked at sub-groups such as Honors, EOP, special admits, etc. For independent study, Honors and EOP had the most outliers.

Holt asked Janssen what the actions items for FCAS would be a result of the study. Janssen said that at least some of the recommendations could be required of new programs. A priority would be including a review of the CEI as a part of the 10-year program review process. Holt said that, since it is possible for students to take multiple Special Topics courses, including a subtitle for these courses on the transcript would be good. Mildon said that if FCAS made such a recommendation, then a technical fix could be developed. Schaufelberger noted that subtitles for Special Topics are used in the time schedule.

Almgren said that an academic program review is not necessarily the appropriate place for reviewing the use of independent studies, and that it would be better to place the burden of creating exceptions on the department. Janssen said he also felt that recommendations for changes in the use of independent study would be more effective if they came from a Dean. Sayrs said he worried about how EOP students were singled out in some parts of the report. Janssen said he welcomed edits to the final report and the particular groupings of students were simply the ones for which the committee had access.

Johnson asked whether the problems identified by the committee indicated something serious. Janssen said that it was not serious problem overall, but there are concerns. The worry is that regardless of how few students or faculty “worked” the system, outliers occasionally do become notable. Thus, a 10 credits limit on independent study credit did seem like a reasonable limit to assure against this. Johnson said he

thought this problem was one for colleges and departments, rather than being put in general guidelines by FCAS. Schaufelberger asked about Janssen's presentation to FCIQ and their response. He said they had concerns about being restrictive with independent study credit, but in general liked the idea of departments having a justification to make courses more rigorous. He noted that the suggestion of 10 credits of independent study was only a starting point.

Schaufelberger said that, since the committee was set up by the Senate Executive Committee, they would expect a report back. While the final report of the committee could be placed on the Senate website, the SEC would probably want a shorter version. Janssen said he work on that, though he also wanted further feedback and comments on the final report before calling it finished.

Schaufelberger said that the Council's final meeting of the academic year would be in two weeks. He said the primary agenda would be looking at what FCAS should take up next year. Schaufelberger suggested that members come up with items for next year's discussion. The Council would also hear a presentation from Holt about the use of grade requirements, both cumulative and for individual courses, as major requirements. Johnson added that Chemistry would be meeting with SCAP to discuss their change to competitive admissions, so that proposal would also need to be considered at the final FCAS meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Minutes by Robert Corbett, UAA, rcorbett@u.washington.edu

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

President's Designee: Mildon

Ex Officio Reps: Nguyen, Jespersen, Haag Day

Regularly Invited Guests: Ballinger, Corbett, Sahr, Sayrs

Absent Faculty: Stroup

Ex Officio Reps: Fugate, Meeks

Special Guests: Don Janssen