

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
FACULTY COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC STANDARDS
FRIDAY, January 8, 2010, 1:30-3:00 P.M.
224 MARY GATES HALL

Chair John Schaufelberger called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

Meeting Synopsis:

1. Chair's Report
2. Approval of the Minutes of December 18, 2009
3. Holistic Admissions Policy (Philip Ballinger)
4. Adjourn

1. Chair's Report

Chair Schaufelberger said that the Office of Shared Governance is in the process of hiring a permanent Council Support staff to replace Kristy Carter, who has taken another position at the university. For this meeting, Robert Corbett of UAA would be taking minutes. Schaufelberger said that the Class B legislation revising sections of the University Handbook and approved by FCAS at its previous meeting would be considered at the February meeting of the Senate Executive Committee, with a goal of putting it before the Senate at their March meeting.

2. Approval of the Minutes of December 18, 2009

The minutes from the December 18 meeting were approved.

3. Holistic Admissions Policy (Philip Ballinger)

Schaufelberger noted that two documents had been sent to FCAS describing and profiling the university's admission policy in preparation for Ballinger to review it with the Council. The two documents were 1) a profile of freshman admitted for Autumn 2009, and 2) an explanation of the freshman holistic review process. Schaufelberger asked if the document on the admissions process was public. Ballinger said that Admissions publishes a summary of the factors leading to admission on their website, but that while the policy is public, it is not posted on the website.

Ballinger said that the policy was widely vetted with various constituencies of the university before being approved by the Regents to apply to the class entering in Autumn 2006. The policy has now been used for four cycles of admissions and the perception is that its outcome has been positive. While the academic profile of admitted students has been raised, the university has also improved on measures of diversity. Ballinger noted that this past fall there was a decrease in enrollment of African-American students. He said that this probably was not because of the process, but because of the unique year, as similar institutions (Michigan, Berkeley) have also experienced a drop.

Ballinger said the point of discussing the admission policy now was to share some challenges facing the process. He did this by using two applications of students who have applied for this coming fall.

Ballinger said that the primary challenge is that the university implemented the process inexpensively, choosing to rely on yearly cohorts of graduate students to do a great deal of the reading of applications from Thanksgiving to February. Each application normally receives two reads, but Admissions has begun to admit strong students on the basis of a single read by a senior reader. Also, if the two reads of an application diverge significantly, the application would be given another reading. 10-12% of applications require a third reading.

Ballinger said that the challenge of employing graduate students is that each year a cohort has to be recruited, vetted, and trained. Graduate students were attractive initially, because their salary is accompanied with a tuition waiver that Admissions did not have to pay. Using professional readers would be more expensive, but would cut down on the need for retraining readers.

Ballinger said the other primary challenge is that holistic review is about goals of the university besides academic factors. Some students may achieve tremendously in the face of adversity, but present problems in terms of academic preparation. The question for Admissions is whether there is a point where the student cannot be served well by being admitted to the university.

Ballinger said that another challenge is the growth of the applicant pool. The entire pool must be read and scored in order for the university to actually admit most students, which means that the university's admission notification is late compared to such schools as WSU and Western. The university currently does not pool admission notifications, but perhaps that should be considered to avoid this problem.

Pengra asked whether applicant fees go to Admissions to support the process. Ballinger said there had been discussions of this, but currently they go into the central University budget.

Ballinger distributed two applications for FCAS to review based on the criteria for holistic review. Ballinger said the applications represented extremes in the process. He first pointed out a list of numbers placed on the top right of the first page of each application, which present data about an applicant's school and socio-economic context. The numbers are shorthand for such indicators as the difference between the high school GPA and first year UW GPA of students admitted from the high school, number of subjects in which students take AP exams at the high school, and percentage of students that are on a free or reduced lunch program at the high school. Other figures indicate the educational level of parents and other factors to be considered as context for reviewing an application.

The first application was an example of a student who would be admitted based on a single read. Her application included perfect SAT scores and a perfect GPA, and also indicated that she had taken several AP classes and other college credit courses at a local community college. So, in addition to her record, the student had also taken full advantage of college preparatory courses available to her in her area. Ballinger said that the student has been admitted both by the university and Honors.

Ballinger next asked the Council to consider the application from a student from the Yakima valley beginning with the student's personal statement. He noted that the student comes from a low-income family and that neither of his parents graduated high school. It was also clear based on test scores and GPA that the student's record is marginal academically and that, should he enroll in the university, he would need and receive academic support. (The applicant did, however, take an advanced math class in his senior year.) Nevertheless, Ballinger said that, due to his circumstances, the student's application that would be rated high in holistic review because of notable achievements in the face of adversity.

Ballinger said that the question remained, when is low too low? It is true that by using only quantitative academic indicators, research can provide probabilities for academic success, but holistic review includes other factors which are also in line with the mission of the university. Ballinger said that the student would be admitted to university, but a condition of his enrollment would be participation in programs offered by the Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity.

Ballinger said that that holistic review does not involve grading each element of an application. Rather, each reader is asked to describe the application, from the perspective of academic qualities as well as from the perspective of personal qualities.

After thanking Ballinger for his presentation, Holt said that he was interested in reviewing the admission process in light of the outcomes for students admitted. The purpose would be to revise the process to better identify students who won't succeed. Ballinger said that there is already basic monitoring going on about student success. Since adopting the process, these measures have gone up at the university, including retention and graduate rates. He said that there are factors for success that are known statistically, but the difficulty is applying them to individual applications. Additionally, studies have shown that non-cognitive factors of admission, such as community engagement don't attach well, i.e. they don't necessarily predict academic success or failure.

Ballinger read the statement on undergraduate admissions preceding the explanation of holistic review, which outlines several goals admission besides academic success. Holt said that a possible criticism would be that this policy was only for admission and that the goal of the university should be to maintain diversity of the four years of a college education.

Schaufelberger asked whether any of students admitted under holistic review had graduated. Ballinger said that some had. He noted that Emile Pitre of OMA was studying the progress of students and could be invited to speak to FCAS to discuss it. He said that the use of holistic review is a question of values, and balancing those values with the goal of academic success. Ballinger said that at some point there should be a group of faculty appointed to review the process, but that this review should start with the Admissions Committee of FCAS. Almgren said that he agreed with the idea of the review, but added that also there should be a look at what is modifiable in the student experience to help students succeed.

Pengra asked whether the second applicant presented to the Council would be required to do anything when admitted to the university, and whether he would be allowed to work. Ballinger said that the university could do affirmative things, such as a summer program and mandatory advising. Allen said that it was possible he would have to enroll in the Academic English Program, which is not covered by the Husky Promise.

Ballinger said if the singular aim of the university was to graduate students as fast as possible and at the highest rates possible, then holistic admissions would probably not be used. He noted that, to begin with, the applicants to the university are self-selecting, so the average student being considered for admission is quite strong. Nevertheless, Ballinger said that there is a real tension between access and success, since aiming at diversity means admitting students with more academic risk factors. The inability to use race or ethnicity in holistic review means that underrepresented minority students in the middle-income bracket are sometimes missed.

Pengra said that there are clearly students who could be admitted in a first pass so there must be a subset of students who can be rejected at first pass. Ballinger said that most of the latter group are those who do not meet the university's minimum admission requirements, such as in math or foreign languages,

in the first place. Schaufelberger asked about admissions for children of alumni or donors. Ballinger said that no consideration in general is made and, in fact, the university is unusual in having a firewall between development (and athletics) and admissions. He noted that some institutions, such as Michigan, do take into consideration whether a parent went to the university, and the university itself sometimes considers it when taking students from the wait list. Whether considering alumni status of family may be something the university should do would be an interesting question.

Holt asked about whether a review of the process would be appropriate. Ballinger said it could be discussed in the Admissions Committee, but the first thing to would be to review the financial support for the program. Ballinger said again he was not terribly worried about the outcomes of the process; for instance, for the first time, the university's ultimate graduation rate is now over 80%. What is a concern is how to continue this expensive and labor-intensive process in the face of an applicant pool that has grown from 15,000 at the origin of the process to over 21,000 applications now. Kramer said that a review could help in determining which portions of the process could be streamlined, while Holt said it might be possible to identify pools of students.

Schaufelberger noted that some consideration should be made on how non-resident students (out-of-state and international) are admitted, since that is potentially a political problem. Kramer asked whether the process applied to all students. Ballinger said that holistic review is done for all types of students, but that the admission of students occurs through the use of different pools (e.g., resident, domestic non-resident, and international).

Schaufelberger asked about how decisions are made in order to manage how many students actually enroll. Ballinger said that has traditionally been determined based on the use of historical data, but now Admissions can attach a probability to each application from which they can build up class as well. Schaufelberger asked when the decisions are made about the size of the freshmen class and the proportions of resident and non-resident students. Ballinger said that ultimately the Provost approves these in February, in consultation with Admissions, UAA, OMAD and other offices at the university.

4. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Minutes by Robert Corbett, Coordinator of New Programs, UAA, rcorbett@u.washington.edu

Present: **Faculty:** Almgren, Kramer, Holt, Schaufelberger (Chair), Keil, Taggart, Pengra
Ex Officio Reps: Fugate, Padvorac, Jespersen, Haag-Day, Allen (for Blume)
Regularly Invited Guests: Corbett, Sayrs, Ballinger, Winslow

Absent: **Faculty:** Cunningham, Stroup, Holman
President's Designee: Mildon
Regularly Invited Guests: Sahr, Wiegand