

**Faculty Council on Academic Standards  
2012-13 Annual Report  
Submitted by George Dillon, Chair**

The Faculty Council on Academic Standards (FCAS) is responsible for matters of university policy relating to the academic affairs of the university, such as admissions policy, scholastic standards, university graduation requirements, and inter-institutional academic standards (Faculty Code and Governance, Chapter 42, Section 42-34).

This responsibility falls into the following four primary areas:

1. Review new and revised undergraduate (and some professional) degree programs.
2. Provide guidance to the Office of Admissions in the development of operating policies and procedures for admission.
3. Provide guidance to the Office of the Registrar in the development of operating procedures for continuation and graduation.
4. Establish criteria for Baccalaureate Honors and select Medalists for freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior classes.

FCAS addresses these primary areas through subcommittees and works on related issues either through working groups, special subcommittees, or the council as a whole (as appropriate). FCAS met every other week (except for finals and break weeks) during the academic year, with subcommittees and working groups meeting separately. The following is a summary of the actions and continuing issues of FCAS during the academic year 2012-2013. It also includes summaries of the actions and concerns of the subcommittees.

### **Non-Routine Actions**

This academic year was unusually rich in issues with major long-term implications for the university. In addition to the normal flow of business. Two of these issues stand out: the beginning of integration of on-line degree completion programs into the University's baccalaureate programs and the Diversity Requirement. Each required Class B legislation and each was passed by the Faculty Senate and Faculty and became part of the Student Governance and Policies. In addition, a number of requests were made that can be grouped under the general rubric of "restrictions on access to to majors and minors for regularly admitted undergraduate students." This was a third area of concern.

#### **1. Approval and Integration of Online Degree Completion Programs**

The first of these issues was the creation two distinct statuses of UW undergraduate students: those regularly admitted and those admitted under limitation to specific degree programs (Chapter I, Sec 1.E). New online degree and degree completion programs will offer limited admission, and existing programs including Evening Degree will also. FCAS approved the first online degree completion program, a major in Early Childhood and Family Studies Education. This degree program is virtually identical to the existing on-site major in ECFS, differing slightly only in the requirements for admission to the major. FCAS insisted that the program require all prerequisites be completed by the time of admission to the program so that students already admitted would not become boxed in trying to take

prerequisite courses that might not be available, or available at the reduced price, online while taking their major.

On a related, though less significant matter, FCAS was asked about the wording of letters of participation sent to students who had completed a Coursera MOOC course, specifically the Programming Languages course taught by Prof. Dan Grossman of CSE. FCAS, following the advice of the Attorney General's representative, approved the format of a letter that did not identify the Coursera offering as a "University of Washington offering." Further requests of this nature are anticipated. The legal, technical, administrative, and academic ramifications of online degree programs have begun to be recognized—as for example whether the occasional practice of allowing Evening Degree students to take 'day' (state-supported) courses should be abruptly stopped or phased out. This set of complex questions will be addressed by a Provost's committee on implementation chaired by David Satzmerly and with FCAS representation.

## **2. Diversity Graduation Requirement**

The second major issue was the approval of a Diversity graduation requirement descended from the one that failed to pass the Admissions and Graduation subcommittee last year. The first draft considered this year came from the Council on Multicultural Affairs; there were many modifications and substitutions, and the draft that passed SEC differed somewhat from what FCAS had approved, though not enough to raise significant opposition. The legislation was further modified on the floor of the Senate, and the legislation passed with few objections from the faculty at large.

## **3. Restrictions to Admission to Majors and Minors**

The Economics Department proposed a new Writings skills test as a criterion for admission to their major, citing as precedent the Foster School of Business Writing Proficiency test which was introduced in the early 1990s to filter out students whose composition courses had inadequately prepared them to write in Business. The proposed Economics test is significantly different from the older Business screening test since it aims to test writing on economics texts and topics. It was frankly proposed to counterbalance their test of quantitative abilities that has in recent years been admitting some students whose quantitative abilities are disproportionately higher than their verbal abilities. FCAS with considerable scepticism and reservations approved this requirement on a provisional basis, requiring the department to develop statistics from their three year experiment on how many students were excluded by the test and how effective the test had proved to be in improving the quality of the student's writing in the major. It also urged the department to require English composition as an admission requirement.

The Foster School of Business proposed offering a Minor in Entrepreneurship with limited enrollment and competitive admission standards. The department argued that it did not have the resources to offer such a minor to all the students who might want to take this one, and that it would have to be limited and competitive or not at all. FCAS noted its expressed opposition to minors in departments which do not facilitate their students access to advising and courses in the department (FCAS Policy on Competitive Minors—May, 1012) and was assured that pre-graduation screening and priority access to courses would be granted the students minoring in Entrepreneurship.

In general, FCAS reiterated its concern that such restrictions seem to be proliferating in departments with high student demand and each one infringes on the desirable principle that regularly admitted students in good standing are free to take any course, provided they have met its prerequisites.

In relation to another trend—'early' admission to a major as a Freshman—FCAS continued to defend the principle that once admitted, students should not be subjected to a second admission screening as rising Juniors. Rather, they are admitted majors and subject only to the continuation policy in force for all majors.

## **Subcommittees**

### **The Subcommittee on Admissions and Programs (SCAP)**

Under the leadership of Brad Holt, SCAP reviewed all proposals for new degree programs, majors (and options within majors), and minors as well as all changes for existing majors and minors. In addition, SCAP provided the initial round of review for the online degree program in Early Childhood and the discussion of the limited admission status.

### **Honors**

The Honors Subcommittee applied the criteria for Baccalaureate Honors and selected recipients for the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior medals.

Honors reports questioning the decision to create two President's medals, one for four year students and one for transfers, noting that the criteria for differentiating the four year candidates are not usually available for students with only two years in residence, that few of the eligible transfer students complete the application essay, and that many have completed their degree nearly a year before and their attendance at graduation to receive the medal is unlikely.

### **Admission and Graduation Requirements**

The Subcommittee on Admissions and Graduation under the leadership of Susanna Cunningham met irregularly since the diversity requirement was considered directly in the main FCAS meeting. It prepared a new draft of the diversity requirement.

## **Council Members for 2012-13 Academic Year**

**Faculty:** Gunnar Almgren, Social Work; Susanna Cunningham, Nursing; George Dillon (Chair), English; Bradley Holt, Chemical Engineering; Don Janssen, Civil Engineering; Richard Keil, Oceanography; Patricia Kramer, Anthropology; David Melin, Navy; David Pengra, Physics; John Schaufelberger, Construction Management [inactive]; Sarah Stroup, Classics; Jennifer Taggart, Mathematics.

**Presidential Designee:** Phillip Ballinger, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment, Admissions

**Ex-Officio Representatives:** Annette Anderson, PSO; Cynthia Fugate, ALUW; Grant Kollet, PSO; Michael Kutz, ASUW; Elise Randall, GPSS; Mel Wensel, UAAC.

**Recorder:** Initially Jay Freistadt, then Grayson Court