

## **Faculty Council on Academic Standards**

2005-2006 Annual Report

Submitted by Don Janssen, Chair

Approved by FCAS Membership, October 27, 2006

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. (University Handbook, Volume 2, Part 4, Chapter 42, Section 42-34). This responsibility falls into the following three 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 both admissions and graduation, and
- 3) Establish criteria for Baccalaureate Honors and select Medalists (highest-level awards),

as well as related issues. FCAS addresses these three primary areas through subcommittees, and works on related issues either through working groups or the committee as a whole (as appropriate). FCAS met every other week (except for finals and break weeks) during the academic year, with the subcommittees and working groups meeting separately. The following is a summary of the activities of FCAS for the 2005-06 academic year.

Review of New and Revised Degree Programs – The bulk of this work was handled by the Subcommittee on Academic Programs (SCAP), which met on alternate weeks (when FCAS didn't meet). SCAP makes an initial evaluation with respect to whether or not the change is "routine" (minor changes to existing programs) or non-routine (major changes or new program proposals). Routine proposals are presented as a summary to FCAS, and FCAS generally (always this past year) votes to follow SCAP's recommendation. Non-routine proposals are also presented by SCAP, but are discussed in detail by the whole committee (FCAS). In some instances, representatives from the units submitting the degree program revisions were asked to attend the SCAP and/or FCAS meetings to provide additional information on the proposals. Also, as part of the discussions, FCAS determines whether the proposal will also require Tri-campus review (all proposals for new degree programs require Tri-campus review, as well as proposals that would affect one of the other campuses or would result in a significant change in demand for the program, a significant difference in the difficulty in meeting entrance requirements to the program, or a significant difference in the difficulty in meeting graduation requirements for the program). Proposals approved but determined to require Tri-campus review were given qualified approval pending discussion of the comments posted as part of the Tri-campus review procedure. After the Tri-campus comments were received, FCAS discussed the comments and prepared appropriate responses before giving approval and forwarding the proposal to the Faculty Council on Tri-campus Policy.

A total of 54 proposals were reviewed between June 16, 2005 and September 15, 2006. Of those proposals, 48 were approved as either routine or as non-routine but not

requiring Tri-campus review. An additional three proposals were given qualified approval pending Tri-campus review. Two of those three were then discussed and given final approval by FCAS; the third received Tri-campus review during Summer 2006 and will be discussed by FCAS during Autumn 2006. The remaining three proposals were left on hold pending revisions from the submitting units.

Admissions and Graduation - The Subcommittee on Admissions and Graduation (Admissions Subcommittee) had four major activities this year: the New Admissions Review Process, review of Admissions Petitions, and of Graduation Petitions and the development of a procedure for Preliminary Admission of Exceptional Students.

New Admissions Review Process – The Admissions Subcommittee met with representatives from the Office of Admissions to help develop and “fine-tune” the Holistic Admissions Procedure for new students. After initial discussions with the Office of Admissions, a “Norming Committee” was formed which included faculty representatives from most of the Colleges and Schools having significant undergraduate enrollment. Admissions Subcommittee members were included in this group. This Norming Committee met during Autumn quarter to develop guidelines for the reviewers to use in evaluating both the academic and the personal characteristics of the applicants. Significant discussions included factors that help identify potential students that would be successful at UW. The Admissions Subcommittee also met with Office of Admissions personnel after the new review process had started in order to address various issues that came up once the process had begun. They also reviewed a summary report dealing with the results of the new Holistic Admissions Process.

Admissions Petitions – The Admissions Subcommittee reviewed petitions submitted by students who had not been admitted as part of the initial review. The Subcommittee does not review all petitions – rather they review samples of various types of petitions in order to give Admissions Personnel guidance on how to deal with specific issues. In general, the petitions this year were easier to deal with, because many of the types of “special cases” that had come up in past years were already dealt with as part of the Holistic Review Process.

One unfortunate issue that came up was attempts by a variety of persons to influence the admissions decision for a student by considerations other than the specific merits of the student. After considerable discussion (initially by Admissions Subcommittee members and later by FCAS), the following statement of principles was developed:

The integrity of the admissions processes at the University of Washington depends upon the unbiased determination of the appropriate merits of each applicant. Attempts to influence those processes by use of a person’s University or community stature, promise of financial donation (or threat to discontinue financial donation) or any other means that do not directly address the merits of the applicant are inappropriate and an affront to the status of the University as a Public Institution of the state of Washington.

These same principles apply to all evaluations of students, including grading, petitions, applications to majors, selection for honors and awards, and disciplinary actions.

**Graduation Petitions** – The Admissions Subcommittee also met to review samples of graduation petitions.

**Preliminary Admission of Exceptional Students** – The Admissions Subcommittee was originally approached by the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics with a request to approve a procedure by which they could provide preliminary admission to select high school athletes prior to their Senior years. The subcommittee, after considerable discussion, decided that the concept was valid and should be extended to any unit in the university. A procedure was developed, and was approved by the full committee (FCAS). This procedure is included as Attachment 1.

**Awards** – The Awards Subcommittee selected the Freshman, Sophomore and Junior Medalists in Autumn. The process involved reviewing the transcripts of a number of students with exceptional grade point averages for each class. A similar process was used to identify finalists for the President’s and Transfer Student Medals in Spring. Finalists were then requested to provide written responses to a number of questions, in order to help the Awards Subcommittee develop better appreciations of the individuals. Finally, one President’s Medalist and one Transfer Student Medalist were chosen. The Awards Subcommittee would especially like to thank Sarah Shannon from the School of Nursing (not an FCAS member) for assisting with the awards selection process.

**Other Council Work** – FCAS continued an examination of the number of upper-division credits actually taken by students in various majors. In the 2003-04 academic year, 37 different majors graduated one or more students with fewer than one year’s worth (45 credits) of coursework beyond the sophomore level. The number was 28 different majors for the 2004-05 academic year. Information on majors with small numbers of upper-division credits will be forwarded to the Graduate School as additional information to be considered when those units receive their 10-year reviews. FCAS also discussed additional concerns about 10-year reviews with Melissa Austin from the Graduate School

Form 1503 is used for proposing new Majors, Minors and Options, and also for proposing changes to existing majors, Minors and Options. The committee revised the 1503 form as well as the supporting documents (links) so that they would be more web-friendly and also easier to use.

FCAS discussed the authority for reviewing programs at the Bothell and Tacoma campuses, and decided that the FCAS-role performed for 1503-related proposals at the Seattle campus would be more efficiently handled by campus-wide review bodies at the respective Bothell and Tacoma campuses. Therefore, FCAS voted to delegate this authority through the following motion: “Continuing with recent practice, FCAS will delegate the faculty approval of new undergraduate degrees, majors, minors, options to be offered at UWT and UWB, and substantive changes to same to the respective oversight bodies at UWT or the General Faculty Organization at UWB, respectively. And further, that the chair of these respective faculty bodies at UWT and UWB, or their

committee chairs as delegated, are authorized to sign the proposals related to the above in lieu of the signature of the Chair of FCAS”.

FCAS has developed and approved working definitions of BS and BA degrees (Attachment 2) to assist in our approval process for new and modified degree proposals. These definitions have been sent to the Board of Deans for comment.

FCAS responded to a question from ASUW representative J. Lee concerning majors that require a higher cumulative UW GPA higher than the University minimum of 2.0 (2.5 in the case discussed). Since a student’s Cumulative GPA could be lowered below 2.5 due to a low grade in a course not required for the major (while the student fulfilled all other Major requirements), FCAS felt that such requirements were not reasonable. Students denied their degrees *only* because their cumulative GPA dropped below that required for the Major (but was still above the University minimum 2.0) were encouraged to submit graduation petitions. FCAS will contact these departments offering these Majors (nine total majors, in Chemistry and Business Administration) and ask them to remove the overall GPA requirement that was different than the University’s.

#### Committee and Subcommittee Membership

Active Faculty Council on Academic Standards Members for 2005-06 Academic Year:

Shawn Brixey, Philip Ballinger, Steve Buck, Robert Corbett, George Dillon, Christine Ingebritsen, Don Janssen (Chair), Steve Keith, Jonathan Lee, Henry Louie, Todd Mildon, Laura Newell, Mariko Navin, Carla Rickerson, Michelle Trudeau, Debbie Wiegand, Hannah Wiley, Matt Winslow, Susan Woods

Admissions and Graduation Subcommittee Members:

Don Janssen, Jonathan Lee, Laura Newell, Gail Stygall, Susan Woods (Chair),

Awards Subcommittee Members:

Shawn Brixey, Don Janssen (substitute for Laura Newell in Autumn), Steve Keith, Mariko Navin, Laura Newell (Chair), Sarah Shannon (substitute for Shawn Brixey in Autumn and Steve Keith in Spring)

Subcommittee on Academic Programs Members:

Robert Corbett, George Dillon, Steve Keith (Co-Chair), Todd Mildon, Mariko Navin, Jennifer Payne, Michelle Trudeau, Debbie Wiegand, Matt Winslow, Scott Winter, Susan Woods (Co-Chair)

Recorder: Whitney Thompson

Submitted by Don Janssen, Chair, Faculty Council on Academic Standards, 2005-06

Reviewed and Approved by FCAS Membership, October 27, 2006.

## **Attachment 1**

### **Preliminary Admission of Exceptional Students**

#### **BACKGROUND**

High school students often have a variety of exceptional talents that can be identified early while the students are a year or more away from graduating from high school. This early recognition and subsequent guidance could benefit one or more programs/departments/schools on campus. These talented students may be heavily recruited by other universities or not be counseled properly to take the right courses to be competitive for UW admission. After identifying an exceptional student, the interested UW campus group would have a greater potential of getting the exceptional student to apply, be admitted and enroll in the University of Washington if they could:

- 1) provide guidance to the prospective student with respect to specific areas that may be lacking in the student's profile, and
- 2) provide incentive to the student to address any potential problem areas identified (or to maintain the student's current level of broad achievement) and to apply to the University of Washington.

The purpose of Preliminary Admission of Exceptional Students is not to admit students that would otherwise not be likely to be admitted, but rather to recruit exceptional students and make sure that they are desirable students for admission.

#### **PROCEDURE**

The procedure for identifying and contacting exceptional high school students would be expected to vary, depending upon the program/department/school interested in recruiting the student. Specific details must be worked out with the Director of Admissions (or his designee) and can be approved only after review by the Faculty Council on Academic Standards (in their University Handbook-defined role of being responsible for Admissions Policy). These details are expected to include specific conditions that must be fulfilled for the student to actually be admitted.

#### **LIMITATIONS**

Specific limitations regarding procedures for identifying and contacting exceptional high school students will be worked out as described above. In general, offers of preliminary admission must be made before the end of December of the student's senior year in high school. Also, the number of offers of Preliminary Admission for Exceptional Students made by a specific program/department/school during a given academic year should not exceed 20% of the average number of students who enrolled in that program/department/school at the UW each year for the past five years. This number may be modified for specific groups once historical data on the success of that group's Preliminary Admission Program becomes available.

Any Preliminary Admission procedures that are developed for specific programs/departments/schools must comply with the Statement of Principles of Good Practice (SPGP) of the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC).

## Attachment 2

### Types of University Degrees

The totality of a university education including general education requirements, the student's major and any elective courses required to fulfill the credit requirement is known as a "degree." General education requirements may also be known as "distribution requirements" or "core requirements." Traditionally, these courses introduce students to the variety of disciplines at the university including the arts and humanities, mathematics, social science, and natural sciences. (Most major universities require competency in a second language and introductory courses in college composition.) Pedagogically, these courses are meant to introduce students to variety of ways that society, culture and nature (and their interactions) are studied at the university including: the understanding of human culture, art, and artifacts through the analysis of ideas and texts; appreciation of art and cultural products through concepts of beauty, symmetry and expression; understanding society and culture empirically through quantitative and conceptual analysis; understanding nature through appreciation, experiment, and theoretical frames of reference. While these skills traditionally have been taught in basic disciplines such as literature, history and chemistry, the growth of interdisciplinary approaches at the university and the rise of teaching through application have lead to the extension of the general education into professional disciplines.

Universities award various different *types* of degrees, which are referred to through *degree titles* including the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), the Bachelor of Science (B.S.), the Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.), the Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering (B.S.E.E.), Bachelor of Nursing (B.S.N.), etc. While the bachelor degree in general represents a university education in ensemble, the degree titles specify the nature of that education. (Majors specify the focus of a university education, but do not appear in the formal title. At the University of Washington, only the degree title appears on the diploma.) Programs leading to professional degrees in such fields as nursing, engineering and fine arts include the focus of the education in the degree title and typically are restrictive in content. Broadly speaking, while Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science are less restrictive, they also differ as to degree of specialization. Here follows working definitions of the BA and BS.

**Bachelor of Arts degree:** The Bachelor of Arts degree usually indicates a liberal arts education and is most often awarded to students pursuing majors in the arts, humanities and social sciences. It is typically the most flexible of university degrees, as most majors within it do not require extensive pre-requisite courses. The major, while providing the specialization required of all degrees, allows students to choose among options. Accordingly, research is defined broadly and, to some degree, may be defined by the student. Broadly speaking, the goals of the BA are to acquaint the student with a discipline and to instill in them the skills to pursue that discipline on their own.

Philosophically, the BA aims to provide a student a broad undergraduate education. Depending upon whether the BA's elective component is restricted to the major or not, it may be used to add strength to the major, to complement the general education, or to explore and develop personal interests, as well as to qualify for advanced study in the major or an associated field. Through its combination of specialized study and flexible exploration of the university, the BA provides a critical foundation of skills and knowledge useful in any career.

**Bachelor of Science degree:** The Bachelor of Science degree, like the Bachelor of Arts, emphasizes a broad selection from the disciplines of the university. However, the Bachelor of Science degree is often more specialized than the Bachelor of Arts degree. While including the same survey of university disciplines in its general education requirements, the Bachelor of Science often also requires prerequisite courses for entry into a major. Majors within the Bachelor of Science will typically require more specific credits and the courses for the degree will often be more directly aligned, so there is less flexibility. Programs leading to a BS generally have more quantitative and mathematical requirements, while the programs involve a high level of interdependence of required courses and consequently incorporate sequential studies. Research within the major will often require prescribed methods such as laboratory study or fieldwork.

Philosophically, BS degree programs provide for a specialized and research-oriented undergraduate education; practically, the students will often be considering graduate study or careers in specific fields that require the use of experimentation and the application of scientific principles and facts in solving problems; understanding of the critical role of mathematical reasoning; analysis and techniques in comprehending problems in the natural or social sciences. However, while “science” in the title makes it appear that the degree is awarded for achievement in the natural sciences, what it truly connotes is the amount of specialization.

**Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees in Natural and Social Sciences:** When a program offers both a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science, the distinction between the two programs often between one that offers specialist training in the field with curricular flexibility for the student (the BA) and an integrated, research-oriented program, often with more quantitative requirements (the BS). Often the BS is specifically tailored for students who plan careers in the field, while the BA provides a more generalized university education, but also equips them to work in allied fields. In some cases, a BS will also require a specialized or experiential component, since the practice of a field may occur in many other places besides a laboratory.