

Faculty Council on Academic Standards  
Annual Report, 2004-2005  
Donald Janssen

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 2004-05 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 deemed 30 degree change proposals to be "routine" (minor changes that did not merit full FCAS discussion) and recommended approval of them. An additional 7 proposals for either revised or new degree programs were determined to be non-routine, and were brought to the attention of the full council for discussion. In some instances, representatives from the units submitting the degree program revisions were asked to attend the FCAS meetings to provide additional information on the proposals.

Admissions and Graduation - The Subcommittee on Admissions and Graduation (Admissions Subcommittee) had three major activities this year. They met with representatives from the Office of Admissions, the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics (Athletic Department), and Faculty Athletics Representative to revise the Interim Policy for Special Admission of Athletes. The revised Interim Policy simplifies the categories of special admission, provides more flexibility in timing of admissions, and requires the Athletic Department to report annually to FCAS concerning the status of their Special Admits. This policy was approved by the full membership of FCAS.

The Admissions Subcommittee also worked (along with other faculty from around the University) with the Office of Admissions to develop a procedure for holistic admission of transfer students. This involved reviewing a number of transfer student applications in order to provide "norms" for the Office of Admissions to use.

The Admissions Subcommittee finished the academic year by reviewing select admissions and graduation petitions. The subcommittee's comments and actions on the selected petitions are used as guidelines by the Office of Admissions for evaluating similar petitions.

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 noted that many of this year's top grade point students appeared to be continuing a trend of being less broadly-focused. While the eventual Medalists chosen were well-rounded, excellent students, a number of the students in the top 0.5-percentile grade points were not. The Subcommittee is considering looking at a wider range of grade points for next year, in order to increase the number of well-rounded students in the selection pool.

Other Council Work – FCAS developed legislation (Class B changes to the University Handbook) allowing for the transfer of more than 90 lower-division credits, as well as establishing criteria for when the transfer could occur. This legislation was passed by the Faculty Senate, ratified by the full faculty, and signed by the president. The Council worked with Dean Bridges to have an announcement of this change published in the Daily.

A Working Group was established to examine the issue of Ghost Majors. Ghost Majors are students who are taking all the classes necessary for a specific major, but have not declared that major (until very close to graduation). It was concluded that while Ghost Majors exist in greater or lesser extents in various units around campus, they were a problem that could be best addressed at the Departmental level by enforcing major-only restrictions on specific courses (if necessary).

A Working Group was also established to examine the number of upper-division credits actually taken by students in various majors. In some cases students have graduated with fewer than two quarters worth of credits at the junior level or above. SCAP will take a closer look at upper-division credit requirements for future new and revised program proposals, and FCAS will probably continue to examine the issue next academic year.

FCAS prepared an advisory memo reminding faculty that after July 1, 2005, all Distance Learning (DL) courses offered for University credit must be officially approved for DL. This memo was distributed to the Deans, Directors and Chairs by the Secretary of the Faculty.

FCAS worked with the Task Force on Academic Progress to develop recommendations dealing with changing majors, declaring a second major, and dual degrees. The Council met with Assistant Dean Paul LePore (Arts and Sciences) to discuss double majors (96% of which involve at least one Arts and Sciences degree). FCAS will continue to work on this issue next year.

The Council made minor (editorial) revisions to a document unearthed from the archives by Tim Washburn, which defined the various (100-, 200- etc.) course levels. FCAS then reconfirmed these course level definitions. The Secretary of the Faculty is working to have this document included in an online compilation of University Policies.

FCAS endorsed a proposal initiated by Tau Sigma (transfer student honor society) regarding the 90-UW-credit requirement for eligibility for honors. Since some transfer students were deferred admissions, and were allowed to take (and transfer) additional credits in order to remain full-time students, they would meet graduation requirements without taking 90 credits from the UW. The Council agreed to waive up to 15 of the required UW credits (for honors eligibility) for transfer students with deferred admission through Summer 2005.

Active Faculty Council on Academic Standards Members for 2004-05 Academic Year:

Steve Buck, Robert Corbett, Don Janssen (Chair), Steve Keith, Arvind Tripathi, Laura Newell, Mariko Navin, Emile Pitre, Louise Richards, Gail Stygall, Michelle Trudeau, Tim Washburn, Debbie Wiegand, Hannah Wiley, Susan Woods

Admissions and Graduation Subcommittee Members:

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

Awards Subcommittee Members:

Steve Buck, Don Janssen(substitute for Steve Buck during May), Steve Keith, Mariko Navin, Laura Newell(Chair), Tim Washburn

Subcommittee on Academic Programs Members:

Robert Corbett, Steve Keith (Co-Chair), Mariko Navin, Michelle Trudeau, Tim Washburn, Debbie Wiegand, Scott Winter, Susan Woods (Co-Chair)

Significantly Overworked (and invaluable) Recorder: Brian Taylor

Submitted by Don Janssen, Chair, Faculty Council on Academic Standards  
Reviewed and Approved by FCAS Membership, June 3, 2005