

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
FACULTY COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC STANDARDS

The Faculty Council on Academic Standards met on Friday, **February 21, 2003** at 1:30 p.m. Chair Carolyn Plumb presided.

Synopsis

1. Approval of the minutes of the January 24, 2003 FCAS meeting.
2. Update: A&S Writing Committee activity.
3. Update: Restructuring committee report.
4. SCAP-related issues: Report from Debbie Wiegand regarding UWREN undergraduate certificate program.
5. Vote on final version of proposal for changes to Decennial Review Self Study document.
6. Drama department authorized to discontinue the minor in Drama: Letter from the president.
7. Departmental enrollment capacities and academic standards.

Approval of the minutes

The minutes of January 24, 2003 were approved as amended.

Update: A&S Writing Committee activity

Plumb reminded the council that Arts and Sciences Dean David Hodge appointed the Arts and Sciences Writing Committee, of which Plumb is a member.

Plumb said that approximately 75% of the University's undergraduate students are in the Arts and Sciences; thus this committee's recommendations will be wide-ranging. "The committee's recommendations may well have effects beyond Arts and Sciences," Plumb noted.

Plumb said the committee has heard from the Expository Writing Program, the Interdisciplinary Writing Program, the Academic English Program, as well as the Engineering Communication Program. This quarter, the committee has invited three national experts (Susan Jarratt, David Russell, and Kathleen Yancey) in college writing to the UW for meetings with the committee and the public. The committee also wants to hear from the administration, particularly the Office of Admissions and Records. Washburn said the College Board will add a writing section to the SAT test in 2005.

Plumb said the Arts and Sciences Writing Committee's recommendations may be threefold: 1) entry recommendations; 2) lower-division recommendations; and 3) upper-division recommendations. There may be a University-wide coordinator of this threefold program. "We are attempting to put the teeth back into the writing requirements of the University," Plumb said.

Plumb is on the committee both as a representative of FCAS and because she is the director of a writing program.

Washburn said, "A program is needed to instruct students on remedial writing skills. Also, we do not have a minimal verbal skill requirement at the University. I've talked with George Bridges [Dean of Undergraduate Education] and others about this." Plumb said, "Transfer students are an issue too: what exactly should be required of transfer students with respect to remedial verbal and writing skills."

Asked by Plumb what her observations are from the students' perspective, ASUW representative Cammie Croft said, "Other schools have an initial writing course, but there is no Freshman writing course at the UW that I'm aware of." Plumb said every student has to take English 131 or show an equivalent level of writing skill in his or her Freshman year. Washburn said, "I've tried to correlate SAT verbal scores with academic performance in 131, but it doesn't hold up very well." Plumb noted that "the proficiency part of writing is only a small part of the writing skills that are needed."

Newell added: "Expository writing doesn't fit the writing need of my students [in Anthropology]. Students should take a writing course in the context of their studies." Plumb said, "There are 'linked courses.' A teacher from a

writing program will teach a writing course linked to a regular course and offer writing instruction as it relates to the needs of students in that discipline. This has worked very well in Philosophy courses, for instance.” Croft said, “I had this [linked course]. It helped tremendously in the Philosophy course.”

Wiegand said, “We’ve had some problems with students dropping the linked writing course.” Plumb said, “We still have a ‘W’ course designation here, but it’s weak.”

Hazard Adams said, “The University is best off when it puts pressure on high schools. Teachers would welcome such pressure if it were brought to them in the right way. Students who did well in my own courses had had Latin, or good grammar training, or excellent teachers (and most excellent teachers had good grammar as a high priority in their teaching).” Adams said he thinks the “linked course” is a great idea. But he repeated his appeal to the University “to make a concerted effort to connect with the teachers of English at secondary schools; *not* through the administrations at those schools, but directly with the teachers themselves, whenever possible.”

Washburn said, “There is a seventh grade ‘WASL’ test. We could ask the designer of that test to visit the council.” Washburn said that “Critical Reading” will be included in the writing exam required by SAT. Admissions for entry to the University. Liston said, “Incorporating information literacy skills is also necessary. Many students are lacking these skills at the University level.”

Croft said, “After the eighth grade, I never had grammar taught to me in any class.” In her own case, she had a good foundation in grammar by the time she reached the eighth grade, but a great many of her peers were less fortunate.

Buik said it would be salutary to require high schools to have a college-level writing course. Washburn noted that many high schools do have such a program. Kenney said, “I’m concerned about the idea of fixing the problem before students get to us, because the problem *doesn’t* get fixed before they get here. The ‘linked courses’ do help. A significant problem is that many of our classes are too large.”

Simon said, “Unless you give essay tests, you won’t see any improvement. We *have* a writing center in our department [Political Science], but no support from the University to sustain and support it.” Kenney said, “I have undergraduate student tutors in my classes with large enrollment. They do the first readings of papers, on certain exams, and teaching assistants do the final reading. This helps both them *and* the TA’s. And hopefully it helps students.” Buik said, “Peer-swapping of papers works well: students don’t want to give poor work to their peers.” Woods said, “It needs mentoring on both sides.”

Plumb said, “With respect to faculty development, we need support for faculty and TA’s who *want* to do this. Faculty need to be seen as part of this structure.” Simon said, “We need models.” Plumb said, “I can connect you to models.” Simon said, “That will help. But we need a centralized place to go to, to get support. It’s only by coincidence that I happen to be here in a council meeting in which you can inform me that you can connect me to models.”

Newell said, “Shouldn’t there be a faculty teaching website?” Plumb said, “It’s on CIDR.” Simon said, “I’ve used CIDR, and not found a whole lot there.”

Plumb asked council members to think about this issue, and to discuss it with faculty members in their departments. Further discussion of this issue will be placed on the agenda for the March 7, 2003 FCAS meeting.

Update: Restructuring committee report

Plumb said the Special Committee on Faculty Council Organization (SCFCO) – now co-chaired by Steve Buck and Ross Heath – which was established to consider the possible restructuring of the faculty councils to form University Councils (combining faculty councils and administrative committees) has not done anything substantive as yet. She reiterated the rationale behind the possible restructuring: the feeling on the part of some people involved with faculty councils, and in the Faculty Senate, that “some things that *should* go through faculty councils actually go elsewhere.”

Plumb said that she, FCIQ (Instructional Quality) chair Jan Carline, FCEO (Educational Outreach) chair Steve Buck, and Ross Heath met to discuss a potential problem with the University Councils: the restructured councils might well be too large, if they are to accommodate all the groups mentioned in the proposed restructuring grid.

Plumb said, “Whatever does happen, it won’t happen anytime soon – in regard to FCAS, at least.” As for what *has* happened, Faculty Senate chair Sandra Silberstein spoke to George Bridges, and they decided to invite Plumb, Steve Buck and Jan Carline to meet with the Faculty Advisory Committee for Undergraduate Education. Plumb will serve on that committee, as well as FCAS, and will report to FCAS about that committee’s discussions.

Asked what the purview of FCIQ is, Wiegand said, “Primarily issues related to teaching and learning, such as learning objectives within courses.” FCIQ also works closely with the Office of Educational Assessment (OEA) on course teaching evaluations.

Asked what the Graduate Council is, Woods said it is “a small group dealing with broad issues.”

SCAP: Report from Debbie Wiegand regarding UWREN undergraduate certificate program

Wiegand said she spoke with Warren Gold, head of the UWREN undergraduate certificate program. She said, “They’re trying to address the capstone course problem. Gold said there has been no official approval of this [certificate] program. The certificate is not transcribed. With the move of UWREN to Program on the Environment they are considering creating a degree program in restoration ecology. I suggested they also consider converting the certificate program to a minor. At issue is the capacity of the capstone course, which is needed to be able to get the certificate. The limitation on enrollment in the capstone course is that they’re working with clients in the community.”

Vote on final version of proposal for changes to Decennial Review Self Study document

Plumb pointed out the two changes made in the current draft of the “Proposal for Changes to Decennial Review Self Study.” These changes were suggestions that came from FCIQ, who has endorsed the revisions.

In Section B: Teaching, #1, the words “state-funded” have been deleted, since faculty who are not “state-funded” are also involved; and in Section B: Teaching, #4, the phrase “including the mentoring of junior faculty” has been added.

The council felt the deletion of the words “state-funded” was in order; that the word “evaluate” should replace the word “gauge” in Section B: Teaching, #3; and that the phrase “including the mentoring of junior faculty” should be moved to follow the word “procedures,” and be reworded to read, “such as mentoring junior faculty.”

Janssen MOVED that the “Proposal for Changes to Decennial Review Self Study” be approved with the above-mentioned emendations; Kenney SECONDED the MOTION.

THE FACULTY COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC STANDARDS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO APPROVE THE “PROPOSAL FOR CHANGES TO DECENNIAL REVIEW SELF STUDY” WITH THE EMENDATIONS MADE AT THE FEBRUARY 21, 2003 FCAS MEETING.

Drama department authorized to discontinue the minor in Drama: Letter from the president

Plumb distributed a letter from Interim President Lee Huntsman to Arts and Sciences Dean David Hodge in which Huntsman states, “I am writing to inform you that the Department of Drama is authorized to discontinue the minor in Drama due to limited instructional resources. I regret that they are finding it necessary to eliminate this option, but I understand their decision to focus their resources on students in the major.” Plumb said, “I think we did the right thing in sending this proposal to the provost.”

Departmental enrollment capacities and academic standards

Plumb asked the council, “Should this issue be on our plate?”

Janssen, who broached the issue, said, “We should begin to talk about how a department determines its enrollment capacity, and how it maintains its academic standards while maintaining its enrollment capacity.” Janssen said department service load and majors (some majors have a more intensive resource load) are key factors in this

balancing act. “The question is: How does a department best determine what its enrollment capacity *can* be without a sacrifice in academic standards,” said Janssen. Kenney said it would be instructive to learn from competitive majors with limited enrollment how *they* maintain.

Hazard Adams said, “Departments like English fear that if you don’t take all the FTE’s you can, you’ll lose the number of students you want to maintain. There are ideological differences throughout the University. It would be good to have departments look at this.”

Washburn said, “The degree to which a department is service-oriented vs. major-oriented is a huge factor.”

Janssen said, “If faculty do *not* determine their enrollment capacity, the administration *will*.”

Kenney said, “Yes, and the answer may be different for every department. The *reasons* why departments arrive at these capacities must be somewhere.”

Janssen will talk to the Graduate School, and Plumb will contact a couple of competitive admission departments. They will report to the council at its next meeting on what those discussions disclose.

Next meeting

The next FCAS meeting is set for Friday, March 7, 2003, at 1:30 p.m., in 142 Gerberding Hall.

Brian Taylor
Recorder

- PRESENT:** *Professors* Plumb (Chair), Buike, Janssen, Kenney, Labossiere, Newell, Simon and Woods;
 Ex officio members Adams, Croft, Liston, Wiegand and Washburn;
 Regular guest Robert Corbett, Coordinator of New Programs.
- ABSENT:** *Professors* Eastin, Fan and Gianola;
 Ex officio members Bridges, Gerhart, Morales and Ver Steeg.