

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
FACULTY COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC STANDARDS

The Faculty Council on Academic Standards met on Friday, **March 7, 2003** at 1:30 p.m. Chair Carolyn Plumb presided.

Synopsis

1. Approval of the minutes of the February 21, 2003 FCAS meeting.
2. SCAP (Subcommittee on Admissions and Programs): “Non-Routine”: Biology (BIOL-121302).
3. Visit from the Dean of the Graduate School: Marsha Landolt.
4. Input for the Writing Committee.

Approval of the minutes

The minutes of February 21, 2003 were approved as written.

SCAP (Subcommittee on Admissions and Programs): “Non-Routine”: Biology (BIOL-121302)

Betty Nicotri, Associate Director, Undergraduate Programs, Biology, joined the council to discuss the following proposal from Biology:

College of Arts and Sciences – Biology (BIOL-121302). Revised major requirements; new option. “The Biology Program, the Department of Botany and the Department of Zoology are consolidating to form a single department. The combined faculty worked together this past year to design an integrated undergraduate curriculum and proposed that it replace the B.A. and B.S. programs in Botany and Zoology and B.S. program in Biology Track I and Biology Track II. The proposed curriculum leads to two degrees, a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science in Biology. These programs provide broad training in biology at the entry level, a focus on fundamental concepts and skills at the intermediate levels, and opportunities for specialization in one of five sub-disciplines of Biology at the advanced level. The hallmarks of curriculum are coverage of biology from all levels of organization, an appreciation of diversity of animal, plants and other organisms, and an emphasis on the analytical approaches that biologists use to understand the natural world.”

Kenney, representing SCAP, said this proposal involves rewriting the entire undergraduate major in the light of consolidating Biology, Zoology and Botany into a single department. Kenney said there are six general options and five specialized transcripted options in the revised program. Kenney said SCAP voted to accept the proposal as it is on academic merits. But because it involves a significant change in program structure the proposal is not “routine.” It involves the elimination of the Botany and Zoology programs as they had previously been constituted (though their departments accepted the consolidation of the programs into a single department: Biology). Therefore, the proposal has been brought to the attention of FCAS.

It was pointed out that no course work in any of the programs will be lost in the consolidation. Though it was added that some courses that are now necessary have not yet been officially approved. Wiegand said, “Actually, the courses *have* been approved, but they are not in the catalog. They are, however, approved for Autumn Quarter.” Plumb said that Faculty Senate Vice Chair Doug Wadden noted that all deans of Arts and Sciences agreed that any consolidation of academic programs must go through the RCEP process. “He said we should get any concerns we have about this proposal out of the way at today’s meeting.” Wadden will take the proposal to the provost on Tuesday to see what is required in the way of RCEP review.” Again, it was pointed out that RCEP has to do with degrees and not with consolidation or reorganization of departments.

“We’re not being obstructionist,” said Plumb. “But the Senate wants to have the process be open and known.”

Asked why the consolidation was made, Nicotri said, “It was felt that the programs could work more efficiently under consolidation and that the old division along taxonomic lines doesn’t reflect how modern Biology functions. We tried to learn from other mergers such as the consolidation of Speech Communication and Communications into Communication.” Though, as was pointed out, that consolidation was not voluntary, while this one is.

Kenney said, “Still, it’s important to go through the RCEP process, and to ask the question: How did this happen? Just to be observant of this process.” Nicotri said, “our plan is to periodically review the list of electives. But we don’t want to make the list so long that it becomes intimidating. And yes, we want to work with Anthropology and other departments when doing so is relevant.”

Wiegand said, “Overall, this is a positive change. Students think in terms of biology more than in terms of zoology or botany.” Wiegand also suggested that there may have been a feeling that graduate students were not being attracted to these programs, and that this change may redress that problem.

Asked how many students are in the Biology, Zoology, and Botany programs, Nicotri said, “Combined, there are between 850-900 students; that shouldn’t change much in the consolidated program.”

Faculty Senate Chair Sandra Silberstein said, “We sent a formal letter to Dean Hodge [Dean David Hodge, Dean, Arts and Sciences], and said: If the merger occurs, it needs to go through the RCEP process. In that process, the proposal goes first to the provost and then to the RCEP committee.” Silberstein said departmental deans should approach the provost whenever they have a proposal that involves the RCEP process. She also said, “We’d be glad to do a presentation for FCAS on the RCEP process.” She added that the provost could stop the RCEP process and simply deny a proposed merger or elimination. But the Biology consolidation, she said, “does seem straightforward.”

Asked how long the RCEP process is, Silberstein said it can take up to two months. “But the whole point is to move the thing along quickly. In this case, the stakeholders seem well taken care of.”

Washburn said it might be good for the RCEP committee to know that FCAS has approved the consolidation subject to the RCEP process. Plumb, once again, said that Wadden recommended that she not sign the proposal since he will be taking it to the provost to get his advice. Janssen said the problem with the *environmental* aspect of the proposal is that several departments – including his own: Civil and Environmental Engineering – have their own environmental courses, and may not have been contacted by the Biology program regarding possible overlap and duplication of content.

Newell asked, “Has there been enough input?” Plumb asked Janssen, “Should your department look at this proposal?” “If the word *environment* will show up on the degree, yes,” Janssen replied. Newell expressed the same concern for her department: Anthropology, which has *its* environmental and evolution and ecology emphases as well. “I’m on *this committee*, and I didn’t know [about the environmental aspect of the Biology proposal]. I found out from a Zoology student in my class. They’ve never come here and told us.”

Plumb summarized by saying: “I’m hearing two concerns: 1) access to lower-level Biology by non-majors; and 2) the need to have Civil and Environmental Engineering, and Anthropology, and perhaps other departments, look at the environmental aspect of the Biology proposal. It would be hurried to put our stamp of approval on this without checking on these concerns. But overall we find it a good consolidation.”

Newell said, “We need to see more courses cross-listed. That way, *both* departments must approve.” Plumb asked Janssen and Newell to send her specific descriptions of their concerns so that she may pass them on to the Biology department, Plumb will notify the departments and let them know that Wadden will be taking the proposal to the provost.

Visit from the Dean of the Graduate School: Marsha Landolt

Plumb introduced Marsha Landolt, Dean of the Graduate School, and said one reason she asked Landolt to visit the council was to find out the possible role for FCAS in the effort to establish guidelines for departments in determining enrollment capacities.

“Where do we go for models [in management of enrollment capacities]?” asked Plumb. She quoted from Janssen’s letter that was the impetus for the council’s taking up this issue. In the letter Janssen asks if the Graduate School determines the limits of departmental graduate enrollment.

Landolt distributed a letter on “Graduate Enrollment” that she sent to graduate program coordinators in January 2003. The letter addresses the problem of over-enrollment in many departments and the necessity of enrollment caps in the Graduate School.

Landolt said, “Regarding enrollment dollars for the University of Washington, we’re allowed [in the Graduate Department] a certain percentage of FTE’s: 75% undergraduate students, and 25% graduate and professional students. Managing graduate enrollment is more difficult in the Graduate School because we do not have a central portal such as Tim Washburn’s office in undergraduate education [Admissions and Records, of which Washburn is Executive Director], through which students are admitted. Rather, admission decisions are made in individual departments and programs. The decisions are then relayed to the Graduate School’s Office of Graduate Admissions.”

“During the last few years,” said Landolt, “Managing graduate enrollment has not been a particular problem because the University was growing. But now we’re over-enrolled. The Regents want enrollment brought back to the state-supported level. We *have* to cap our enrollment now.” Asked why the Graduate School is over-enrolled, Landolt said, “The primary reason is that students are not graduating at the rate we thought they would. We’ve told departments to review their students and encourage them to graduate if they’re close [to graduating]; or to suggest that students take a leave of absence, if they’re just writing, and reenroll when they’re ready to graduate.”

Landolt sent a Graduate Enrollment Summary Form and a letter to every department (to deans, directors and chairs), regarding Autumn Quarter 2003 enrollment, and recommend enrollment caps for each department. “We told departments to notify us if there were problems with the enrollment cap we proposed. Sometimes, as for example this year with the Evans School, we will hear that a proposed cap is just too low. Sometimes, enrollment adjustments are conscious decisions resulting from such things as the creation of a new program or the results of academic program review.”

Landolt pointed out to the council a 10-year summary of Graduate School enrollment at the University of Washington: It contains a myriad of data including full-time vs. part-time enrollment, number of minority students, the number of degrees awarded, etc. (These data are available for the University as a whole, each campus, school/college, department.) “All of this helps us to see where growth and shrinkage has occurred in departments and schools and colleges. Given the complexity of the graduate admission system, it’s amazing we come as close as we do to our targeted enrollment. In terms of recruitment of new students, it’s hard to know from one year to the next, in particular departments, what your yield will be.” Plumb said, “Departments have set their own numbers, in large measure. It’s been a bottom-upward process.” Landolt said, “Yes. It has. We were growing until last year; we could take new programs on. That has changed dramatically. For the Seattle campus, the target enrollment for Autumn Quarter 2003 is 7,764 headcount (7,700 FTE).

Plumb said, “Most departments have smaller faculty numbers now, but more graduate students.” Landolt said, “Most of our growth has been in the Master’s programs, which *can* accommodate more students with fewer faculty.

As for determining the capacity of departmental enrollment, Landolt said, “The Graduate School’s ten year academic program review is a crucial factor. It’s the closest thing to peer review. The ten-year enrollment statistics are also a key factor. Also, we talk to deans and department chairs and query them regarding their enrollment needs.”

Newell said that leave of absence can be a problem. “Students use them to stay in departments seemingly forever. We do have a ten-year review, and we try to encourage students who are still ‘hanging around’ after ten years to complete their program at that stage, but students insist that there is no official ten-year rule.” Landolt disagreed: “We don’t allow it much, and there’s a limit to the number of on-leave quarters a student can accumulate.”

Plumb asked, “Could there be a correlation between the number of graduate students and physical space available?” Landolt responded: “There could be a correlation. For example, in lab-based disciplines. Other types of programs might be able to accommodate large numbers of students with limited physical space.”

Landolt said, “The quality of mentoring should be an important criterion in determining a limit on enrollment. The level of resources— especially for doctoral programs – should be a major criterion. The job market – not just the

academic market – should be a key criterion: that is, career options. Are students being *placed* in the market? These are what departments should consider when considering how many graduate students to enroll, I believe. Hopefully, the current crisis won't keep us from realizing what the University is all about.”

Washburn said, “Our goal now is to get back to the state-funded levels of enrollment.” He added that, looking over the charts that Landolt distributed, he observed “very little change in new enrollment percentages over the last half-decade in the Graduate School.”

Next meeting

The next FCAS meeting is set for Friday, April 4, 2003, at 1:30 p.m., in 142 Gerberding Hall.

Brian Taylor
Recorder

PRESENT: *Professors* Plumb (Chair), Fan, Janssen, Kenney, Newell, Plumb and Simon;
Ex officio members Croft, Wiegand and Washburn;
Guests Marsha Landolt, Dean, The Graduate School; Bette Nicotri, Associate Director, Undergraduate Programs, Biology; Sandra Silberstein, Faculty Senate Chair
Regular guest Robert Corbett, Coordinator of New Programs;

ABSENT: *Professors* Buike, Gianola and Labossiere;
Ex officio members Adams, Bridges, Liston, Morales and Ver Steeg.