

## **UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON FACULTY COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

The Faculty Council on Academic Standards met on **November 1, 2002** at 1:30 p.m. Chair Carolyn Plumb presided.

### **Synopsis**

1. Approval of the minutes of the October 18, 2002 FCAS meeting.
2. Announcements and Updates.
  - DL course review.
  - Challenging students and creating instructional standards.
3. Rose Report: Discussion and update on October 21, 2002 Senate Executive Committee meeting.
4. Program approval process at the tri-campus level.

### **Approval of the minutes**

The minutes of October 18, 2002 were approved as amended.

### **Announcements and Updates:**

#### **DL course review**

Plumb said more has been done on the Distance Learning approval process. It was decided in the 2001-02 academic year that Distance Learning courses would be treated essentially the same as other new and changed courses in the review process. Already existing Distance Learning courses would have to go through that review process.

The University Curriculum Committee contacted Steve Buck, chair of the Faculty Council on Educational Outreach, for assistance in defining the guidelines for reviewing DL courses. Both the FCEO DL Review Committee and the University Curriculum Committee are dissatisfied with the poor follow-up on recommendations made by that review committee, and the FCEO council as a whole, on the Distance Learning content in the New Course Application form. Detailed syllabi for both classroom and DL versions of the course, which the review committee considered crucial, were generally not included in the applications. Language regarding the use of new technology and E-mail in DL courses was not stipulated. And there were other omissions.

When asked about current approval of Distance Learning courses, Wiegand said some DL courses have been given “tentative approval.” It was noted that it is hard to distinguish, sometimes, which proposals should be considered Distance Learning. The “correspondence-like courses” will be left as correspondence courses.

Janssen said, “I don’t think there has to be an electronic component for a course to be considered Distance Learning. The student to student and the student to faculty relationships are the most important factors in a DL course.” Wiegand asked, “What kind of technology is there overall [in a DL course]? This is a question to be asked.” Wiegand will send the council a sample New Course Application form with current DL content.

Plumb said, “We may coordinate SCAP with the DL subcommittee from FCEO, which is currently working with Tim Washburn on issues related to DL courses raised by the Curriculum Office.”

### **Challenging students and creating instructional standards**

Plumb said there were seminars for all three campuses two year ago regarding this issue. And last year, Dean of Undergraduate Education George Bridges, Regent William H. Gates, and Professor Robert

Crutchfield (chair of the Teaching Academy Board) visited the council at its November 30, 2001 meeting and discussed “Academic Standards and Writing Requirements at the University of Washington.”

Regent Gates expressed concerns about writing and speaking, and about standards for instructional quality. Recently, Plumb met with George Bridges, Faculty Senate chair Sandra Silberstein, Faculty Senate vice chair Doug Wadden, and Faculty Council on Instructional Quality chair Jan Carline, to discuss these concerns.

Bridges said, “There are two central points here. One: Do we send our students a clear message about expectations at the University of Washington regarding the amount of work and the quality of work they should be doing? And two: Some instructors offer *very* challenging courses; others don’t. Students are rightly concerned about those instructors who do not offer challenges, although it must be noted that those instructors are few. Most instructors are conscientious and have meaningful instructional standards. But how do we respond to those students who have genuine concerns about instructional standards? What do we do? We need to have an articulation of standards at the departmental level. If someone is *not* meeting desired instructional standards, how do they know what they are to do to meet those standards? We don’t have written standards.”

Plumb said, “There are many issues involved here. The Office of Educational Assessment (OEA) is studying ‘critical thinking’ and related issues. The Arts and Sciences Writing Committee (formed as a result of Regent Gates’ visit) is looking into writing requirements.”

Bridges said, “We need to give *positive* information to Regent Gates, and to other regents: information on the largely successful examples of faculty/student excellence and writing requirements across the campus. Regent Gates hears mostly from disenchanting students complaining about the poor quality of teaching. He doesn’t hear from all those students who applaud the standards upheld in their courses.”

Bridges said the Faculty Council on Instructional Quality (FCIQ) will be looking at the new course application form: to “beef it up” for course assessment. And FCAS, he said, could look at the departmental ten year review process. At the present time there is no Faculty Senate involvement in this process. Plumb said, “From department to department, there are different ways of conducting the ten year review process.” Again, Bridges emphasized that “most faculty work exceedingly hard to give their students proper attention and good teaching. But there are occasional egregious exceptions. For instance, a graduating senior complained about a 400-level course that offered a major test with only multiple choice questions. There were even spelling errors in the exam itself. Quite obviously, said Bridges, “There was no interest or care on the part of the instructor in this course. The student had every right to be deeply disappointed. The student was absolutely correct. And we must serve the students.”

As for teaching evaluations, it was noted that faculty argue that teaching evaluations are but one indicator. Chairs have to be responsible too, especially if the course is required; if students *have* to have the course. Plumb said, “It has to be a bottom-up, rather than a top-down, solution. We can’t play cops. The percentage of the faculty who are *like* this is very small.” Newell said, “When I was chair of my department’s curriculum committee, faculty had to justify the current content of their courses. The College Curriculum Committee and the University Curriculum Committee should look at course validity and quality. This process could be required in the ten year review process. Courses that aren’t approved at the departmental level should not be taught.” Bridges agreed, but added, “It’s hard for faculty to express criticism of their colleagues.”

Kenney said, “If the undergraduate review process could be staggered so that the graduate review process was, say, five years away, that would help.” Bridges again suggested that FCAS look at the ten year review process. Wiegand said, “We could put some of this in electronic form.” Kenney suggested that

“what is lacking is the power to force faculty to put up relevant course information on the instructor course description site: to state what exactly will be included in the course.” Simon said, “We could have more standards, or we could depend on students being better shoppers. And syllabi could be made more easily available.” But it was noted that many faculty do not want their syllabi on the Web. Newell, for one, said, “I don’t. Other people can easily steal one’s syllabi.” Kenney said, “Instructor course descriptions need to be available and continuously updated. Courses would need to be updated, kept up to date. Courses evolve. The catalog always exists, but nothing is individualized in those descriptions.”

Plumb said this will be an agenda item throughout the academic year.

### **Proposed Academic Calendar revision – George Bridges**

Bridges said there are distinct advantages to making a change in the academic calendar. “It would make for a consistent exam week, for one thing---the exam week would begin on Monday rather than on Thursday” he said.

Something else Bridges said would be possible with the new calendar is a better student orientation. “Most incoming Freshmen arrive on Thursday, and, if the first day of class were on the following Wednesday, instead of the following Monday – as is the case in the current calendar – there would be more time for academically oriented forums, as well as socializing events, before classes started.”

“We want to involve the faculty in this,” said Bridges.” He said the downside of the new academic calendar is its potential effect on the Teaching Assistant training programs. The English department, for instance, has a two-week training program for its TA’s, as do other departments. Such programs would have to start prior to September 16<sup>th</sup>. “We would be moving TA training forward,” said Bridges. “It would cost something, but we could do it. We would save money elsewhere. We would have a one-day-only stay-over visit prior to the start of the academic calendar. And, as I said, they would be more extensively ‘socialized’ on the Monday and Tuesday before the beginning of Autumn Quarter on Wednesday.”

Bridges also said that an enhanced orientation program involving faculty could be built. “We could have a broader-based orientation; it might help with first-year programs during the academic year.” It was noted that every department does TA training differently, and compensates differently. But Bridges said emphatically, “If anyone works overtime, they should be paid. It’s that simple.”

Plumb said, “I would be in favor of the proposed new academic calendar if TA training were not decreased, and if TA’s were paid if they worked overtime.”

Don Janssen made the following motion for a council vote:

“WE APPROVE, IN PRINCIPLE, THE PROPOSED ACADEMIC CALENDAR REVISION, WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT TA TRAINING WILL NOT BE REDUCED AND THAT ADDITIONAL FUNDING, IF NECESSARY (TO COVER TA TRAINING PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER 16<sup>th</sup>), WILL BE PROVIDED BY THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION.”

Nancy Kenney seconded the MOTION.

THE FACULTY COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC STANDARDS VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE ABOVE-WORDED MOTION.

**Rose Report: Discussion and update on October 21, 2002 Senate Executive Committee meeting – Carolyn Plumb**

Plumb presented a summary of the council's deliberations on the Rose Report at the special October 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Senate Executive Committee. At the SEC meeting, Plumb presented the concerns expressed by FCAS at the 10/18 special meeting as well as thoughts about the positive side of the restructuring. At the SEC meeting, the Faculty Council on University Relations (FCUR) endorsed the Report. The Special Committee on Faculty Women (SCFW) wondered how conflicts of interest would be resolved in the proposed new structure. Steve Buck, chair of the Faculty Council on Educational Outreach (FCEO), said, "The more we can work with the administration *early on*, the better."

Plumb said that, at the end of the meeting, a vote was taken to establish another working special committee on faculty council reorganization. The vote passed. The special committee will contain some members from the Rose Committee, and some new members.

Three categories will be developed in those discussions: 1) understanding that different responsibilities / purviews may be represented best by different structures; 2) a trial period involving two, or perhaps three, University councils; and 3) consideration of how the other councils would work during the trial period.

Janssen said concern has been expressed that faculty decision-making responsibilities are not diluted or lost if the proposed University Councils are adopted. Hopefully, faculty would find out about significant issues earlier in the process than they sometimes do at present. Plumb said, "I will be on the newly-appointed committee, and will be expressing FCAS concerns to the other members of the committee. Control is a definite concern. The new organization of councils might make our work more, and not less, cumbersome. We would want to do all that we could to prevent that from happening."

**Program approval process at the tri-campus level – Carolyn Plumb**

Plumb said, "This will be a thorny issue. I attended the October 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Faculty Council on Tri-Campus Policy (FCTCP), and have spoken to Faculty Senate vice chair (and last year's FCAS chair) Doug Wadden about this issue. I will also be meeting with FCTCP chair Jacqueline Meszaros, and will attend the November 4<sup>th</sup> FCTCP this coming Monday."

Plumb said, "We know about the Seattle campus's approval process because of SCAP (the Subcommittee on Admissions and Programs). But the review process at UW Bothell and UW Tacoma has been local, and involves, for instance, review and approval by an Executive Committee of the GFO (General Faculty Organization) at UW Bothell, and review and approval by faculty associated with RAPP (the Review and Approval of Program Proposals Committee) at UW Tacoma."

Plumb said that "some people think that, because there is one University Handbook, all programs should be approved through one process. There *are* SCAP-like processes at UW Tacoma and UW Bothell. Faculty Senate chair Sandra Silberstein and vice chair Wadden are fine with the processes at the other campuses, but both believe that programs should ultimately be approved by SCAP and FCAS."

Plumb distributed a chart showing the "UW Academic Program Planning: Part 1: Planning Phase; Part 2: Development Phase; Part 3: University Approval; and Part 4: HEC Board and Regents Review.

Plumb said the new proposal would stipulate a similar approval process for all three campuses of the University. All SCAP-like levels would be informed early on in the process, *before* the idea is developed. There would be an early, University-wide posting of the proposal, and a 30-day period for feedback. (There would need to be a means of acknowledging that the comments were read and considered, and not simply ignored; and the 30-day period for response could be longer, if necessary.) Departments would use the feedback to go ahead with, or not go ahead with, a specific program development at that point.

The proposal would then go on to the College Curriculum Committee – or to one of the equivalent bodies (mentioned above) at the other campuses – and to SCAP. So there would be two review processes in the new approval process, with two chances for objections to be raised. It is not clear how conflicts would be resolved.

Plumb said the major potential problems are: that there would be no mechanism for conflict resolution at the second stage; that this is a proposal only for non-routine items (deciding what constitutes “routine” items will be a difficult issue to get consensus on); and that the proposal skirts the issue of a centralized approval body.

Plumb said that “by the time a program proposal gets to us now, it is too late to assess many aspects of it. In the proposed new approval process, the council would have two opportunities to comment to the department whose idea the proposal is.”

Janssen said, “I don’t like the final approval *not* coming through this campus’s council (FCAS). And someone from UW Bothell and UW Tacoma should be voting members on FCAS, when their proposals come to us.”

#### **Next meeting**

The next FCAS meeting is set for Friday, November 8, 2002, at 1:30 p.m., in 142 Gerberding Hall.

Brian Taylor, Recorder

**PRESENT:** *Professors* Plumb (Chair), Fan, Janssen, Kenney, Newell and Simon;  
*Ex officio members* Bridges, Croft, Ver Steeg and Wiegand;  
*Regular guest* Robert Corbett, Coordinator of New Programs.

**ABSENT:** *Professors* Buike, Eastin, Gianola, Labossiere, Stygall and Woods;  
*Ex officio member* Adams, Gerhart, Liston Morales and Washburn.