

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON FACULTY COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC STANDARDS

The Faculty Council on Academic Standards met on **November 22, 2002** at 1:30 p.m. Chair Carolyn Plumb presided.

Synopsis

1. Approval of the minutes of the November 8, 2002 FCAS meeting.
2. Announcements:
 - Plumb will be attending the Curriculum Committee meeting next week.
 - Discussions regarding the tri-campus program approval process are ongoing.
 - The committee assigned to continue the work of the Rose Committee meets next week.
3. SCAP: one new proposal: routine.
4. Follow-up discussion regarding Debra Friedman's visit.
5. Input from FCAS for A&S Writing Committee.

Approval of the minutes

The minutes of November 8, 2002 were approved as amended.

Announcements

Plumb will attend the Distance Learning Curriculum Committee meeting on December 27th. The amended Distance Learning application form will be reviewed at the meeting.

Plumb said discussions regarding the tri-campus program approval process are ongoing. Faculty Senate chair Sandra Silberstein and Faculty Senate vice chair Doug Wadden are among those studying the process and working on recommendations to take to the Faculty Senate.

The newly-appointed follow-up committee to the Rose Committee will be meeting on November 25th. "The special committee will work on a plan for the possible reorganization of the faculty councils," said Plumb.

SCAP: one new proposal: routine

One new SCAP proposal was approved as "routine":

College of Arts and Sciences – Economics (ECON-100302). Revised Admission Requirements. "Introducing an application deadline for the major will allow us to: 1) Admit qualified students in time for them to register as Economics majors the following quarter. This will permit students to enroll in major coursework earlier, reducing the pressure to take all of the required 400-level Econ courses during the senior year. 2) Focus on admissions the first two weeks of the quarter, which will allow us to meet individually with students. During this meeting we will be able to educate the student about opportunities in the department (and elsewhere) and introduce ourselves as resources for the students. 3) Reduce the number of extended pre-majors by identifying students who do not meet the admissions requirements, and either admit them through a petition process, or help them to identify alternative options."

Two other proposals reviewed at the November 15th SCAP meeting require further clarification. The home departments will be informed and advised, and the proposals reviewed again at the next SCAP meeting.

Follow-up discussion regarding Debra Friedman's visit

Plumb summarized Friedman's visit, saying that of the three "problem areas" first described by Friedman in her earlier visit, the one area that people across campus seem interested in addressing is that of transfer students. Friedman and many others across campus would like to see more transfer students enter the UW with a major.

Plumb said, "There is a broad spectrum of transfer admission processes used by departments here [at the University]. One wonders if it would be possible to do this in a more systematic way." She said there might be something the council could propose "to make the transfer process better. We need to both make the process more systematic and allow for the idiosyncratic nature of individual departments and units."

Asked about the preparedness for declaration of a major on the part of transfer students, Washburn said, "90% of transfer students have expressed a *desired* major. They may not end up in that major, but they at least have some goal in mind to start out with." Washburn said many transfer students come to a special early "advising event" to receive counseling. They get a sense of what is required of them in their preparation for entrance into a major. Washburn also said that "professional programs, for the most part, work very well in their preparation of students: programs such as engineering and business. Students *can* know before they get here if they're *in* their major. In the Arts and Sciences, however, students come here and *then* find out if they'll get into their majors."

Washburn said, "Our admission process is such that, if a student is denied by a program, they are admitted as a pre-major, but *not* as a pre-major in the department containing that program. They can make up their deficiencies and try again for acceptance in that program, or they can select a new choice of major."

Wiegand said that one-fourth of all pre-major extensions are transfer students. Washburn said, "Transfers only have five or ten extra credits when they graduate, but they experience the same dropout rate as do regularly admitted students." Wiegand said, "If 1,000 out of 8,000 juniors are extended pre-majors, that could be said to be a problem; though that 1,000 includes everyone, of which only 300 are transfers." It was clarified further that most of those extended pre-majors just need a few prerequisites prior to being admitted into a department, and there are probably only around 100 of the transfer students that end up being "problems."

Washburn said, "All universities consider this issue – of transfer students entering the University without a major – to be a problem. The community college system is becoming better informed about the need for alignments and preparation. They are planning better." Wiegand said, "At Arizona State University, a student can combine two minors to make up one major. That is one way of dealing with students who cannot come up with a major."

Wiegand said there is difficulty with Winter Quarter enrollment at the 100-level because of "bottleneck courses." "We have tried to reserve *spaces* for incoming transfer students from community colleges." Newell asked, "How many of these bottleneck courses are offered at community colleges? It would be helpful to know."

Washburn said, "We could insist, in the Arts and Sciences, that language proficiency be taken care of *before* a student gets here. Community college transfers need the same core requirements as students do here." Newell said, "It would be good if some of those [core requirements] could be taken care of at the community colleges." Washburn said, "There's no incentive today for departments to take on more majors." He also said the requirements "are so different for different departments and units."

Wiegand said, “We don’t have the monitoring of students as they progress without declaring a major.” Washburn said, “When students are approved as extended pre-majors, a *field* has to appear as a default major.” Plumb said, “The system is much improved over what it used to be. A student has to see an advisor after a certain time, to see if they can get into a certain major.” Simon said, “Perhaps, if transfer students were warned that they are not likely to get into their chosen major, that would help.” Newell said, “With *any* system, there will be students who can’t be helped due to their unrealistic attitude.”

Washburn said, “For programs that have courses that can only be satisfied on our campus, we could see if some of these courses could be taken at the community colleges.” Kenney said, “To say that all community colleges are equal is not accurate. Some are better than others, especially in specific areas.” Wiegand said, “Now, an advisor calls a department and puts in a request to have spaces held in classes for transfer students; some departments are stingier than others. It’s also a reality that departments control the capacity of majors they let into their programs.” Asked how that capacity is controlled, Simon said, “One way is to look at upper division 300-400 level open spaces.”

Plumb said, “This issue will come up again. Let’s think about how to improve this situation. We can improve our communication with community colleges, which would help the odds of students getting into specific programs at the University. And those students who do not seem likely to get into their majors can be redirected.”

Input from FCAS for A&S Writing Committee

Plumb said she is on a committee studying writing assessment and competency. The committee includes, among others, former Faculty Senate chair Gerry Philipsen from Communications, Jere Bacharach from History, Catherine Beyer, Research Scientist from the Office of Educational Assessment (who has conducted several studies of writing at the University, and looked at studies from other universities), Deborah Hatch, Writing Consultant from the Center for Instructional Development and Research (CIDR), and two faculty from English. FCAS member Gail Stygall, who directs the Expository Writing Program, has also been consulted by the committee. And Plumb also directs a writing program in Technical Communication.

Ideas under discussion by the committee include: having a centralized unit that coordinates writing programs on campus, particularly those that are beyond the freshman level; expanding interdisciplinary writing at the UW; and making the “W” requirement more rigorous. It is felt that students need more writing practice, particularly in their disciplines. Everyone on the committee, Plumb said, felt that “it is a real problem, and that something needs to be done about it.”

Newell said, “If the instructor is *willing* to take on the writing requirement seriously, money is needed to make that possible. It is a question of money. How much support will the University give?” Plumb said, “The ‘W’ course requirement is very weak: ten pages of two separate papers, or one longer paper that is revised.”

Janssen said, “It would be a good idea to require writing in the course of their major. That way they’re writing about subject matter they’ve bought into.” Plumb said, “In my experience, students write better papers when they have better assignments and better guidance in writing, and thus faculty development is also a piece of the puzzle. Budget is a major issue in all of this, as many of you have pointed out.”

Woods said, “There is some ‘Tools for Transformation’ funding available for this kind of program.” Washburn said, “We are trying to establish an SAT-type diagnostic assessment for non-native speakers and citizens with SAT-verbal scores below 400. I’ll report back to FCAS on the progress of this assessment.”

Plumb said, “We have to remember that many of our students are transfer students, and these students won’t have been involved in any UW writing program when they arrive. As for non-citizens at the UW, they have to take ESL courses [English as a second language] after entering the University, regardless of when they enter (as a freshman or as a junior). They are required to take a certain number of them.”

Plumb said, “The tide could be changing. The new learning outcomes for the state K-12 system may produce more competent writers.”

Next meeting

The next FCAS meeting is set for Friday, December 6, 2002, at 1:30 p.m., in 36 Gerberding Hall.

[Note: Room 142 is undergoing reconstruction after heavy damage in the flooding of Gerberding Hall.]

Brian Taylor

Recorder

PRESENT: *Professors* Plumb (Chair), Buike, Fan, Janssen, Kenney, Labossiere, Newell, Simon and Woods;

Ex officio members Croft, Morales, Wiegand and Washburn;

Regular guest Robert Corbett, Coordinator of New Programs.

ABSENT: *Professors* Eastin, Gianola, Stygall and Ver Steeg;

Ex officio members Adams, Bridges, Gerhart and Liston.