

## UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON FACULTY COUNCIL ON ACADEMIC STANDARDS

The Faculty Council on Academic Standards met on Friday, **December 5, 2003** at 1:30 p.m. Chair Carolyn Plumb presided.

### **Synopsis**

1. Approval of the minutes of the October 31, 2003 FCAS meeting.
2. Introduction of ASUW representative Sam Castic and GPSS representative Siri Erickson-Brown.
3. SCAP (Subcommittee on Admissions and Programs).
4. Summary of activity of the Undergraduate Advisory Council.
5. Cathy Beyer, Research Scientist, Office of Educational Assessment: Study of Undergraduate Learning (SOUL) – some early findings.

### **Approval of the minutes of the October 3, 2003 FCAS meeting**

The minutes of the October 17, 2003 FCAS meeting were approved as amended.

### **Introduction of ASUW representative Sam Castic and GPSS representative Siri Erickson-Brown**

Plumb welcomed ASUW representative Sam Castic and GPSS representative Siri Erickson-Brown to the council, and asked council members to introduce themselves and identify their departments or units.

### **SCAP (Subcommittee on Admissions and Programs) – Nancy Kenney, Chair, SCAP**

Kenney said the following proposals were deemed “routine” by SCAP at its meeting on October 21, 2003:

1. College of Engineering – Industrial Engineering (IND E-100803). Revised Program Requirements for the Major in Industrial Engineering. “Internal and external reviews of the IE undergraduate curriculum (including an ABET accreditation review and Program Review) have indicated that it was too rigid, with too many required courses and too few electives. Following an internal review of the curriculum and a benchmarking study of other top Industrial Engineering undergraduate curricula, this new, more flexible curriculum has been designed. It maintains the basic goals of providing a broad and comprehensive set of requirements, while providing students with more flexibility to pursue areas within IE of personal interest. The IF faculty, student advisory board and the visiting committee all have endorsed this new curriculum.”
2. School of Dentistry and Dental Public Health – Dental Public Health Sciences (DPHS-090803). Revised program requirements for the major in the Bachelor of Science; revised requirements for the options in Dental Hygiene pathways and added 2-credit minimum for both research-learning and service-learning experience. “Issue: The University of Washington Faculty Council on Academic Standards needs to review and approve changes printed in the 2002-2004 General Catalog. Clarification: In 2001 the Dental Hygiene Program path options were modified to reduce path options from 4 to 2. However, this modification was never approved by the Faculty Council on Academic Standards because no Form 1503 was filed. Impact: Students admitted into the Dental Hygiene Program in 2003 and 2003 were recruited as if the 2002-2004 Program curriculum was approved. In the Summer of 2003, we successfully petitioned the graduation of one student. The proposed change has minimal impact on students because they are still only required to complete a single path selected from a choice of 2 path options rather than 4. This change was required due to loss of dental hygiene faculty resources without replacement. Future: The School has a new dean and the Department has a new chair. Future Program admissions, curriculum, and graduation requirements will reflect the School of Dentistry and Dental Public Health administrative changes. We anticipate another submission of Form 1503 prior to publication of the 2004-2006 General Catalog.”

3. College of Arts and Sciences – Communication (COM-102203). Revised requirements for the minor in Communication. “We feel the minor should reflect the work of one-half of the major. The major requires two 400-level courses, thus the minor should require only one 400-level course. Our 400-level courses are under extreme enrollment pressure and this change should help ease that pressure.”

**Summary of activity of the Undergraduate Advisory Council – Carolyn Plumb and Steve Buck**

Plumb said that, a year ago, the so-called Rose Committee [named for former Faculty Senate Chair Norman Rose] suggested the possible restructuring of certain faculty councils into University councils, involving equal representation of faculty and administration, and hopefully eliminating the “parallel universe” of faculty councils and administrative committees addressing similar issues.

One suggestion was a committee to be named the Faculty Council for Undergraduate Education. (This would have combined FCAS, FCIQ (Faculty Council on Instructional Quality), and FCEO (Faculty Council on Educational Outreach). But on further discussion it was revealed that such a council would have comprised upwards of 60 members, and would have been altogether impracticable. It was decided, instead, to enlarge Undergraduate Dean George Bridges’ Undergraduate Advisory Council. Plumb and FCAS member Steve Buck, as well as FCIQ Chair Jan Carline and FCET Chair Kimberly Gillis-Bridges, serve on that council.

Plumb said that academic integrity was one issue in the discussions of the Undergraduate Advisory Council last year. Student learning objectives is a prominent issue being addressed this academic year. She said the accreditation agency indicated that the University of Washington remains far from achieving the goal in student learning objectives that the agency thinks it should achieve. This is a concern the University must respond to within a year’s time.

Plumb noted that Gerald Gillmore, Director Emeritus and Affiliate Professor, Office of Educational Assessment, has been spending some time offering his experience in the area of learning outcomes and assessment, and Christine Ingebritsen is the “point person” in George Bridges’ office. Plumb said that from her experience outcomes should be discipline-specific, and that information from assessing outcomes needs to be funneled back to promote continual improvement in student learning.

Buck said the Undergraduate Advisory Council is trying to promote communication between the Office of Undergraduate Education and the faculty councils. “The council is trying to make sure,” he stressed, “that someone is working on issues that need to be addressed, and that the groups working on an issue are coordinating with each other.” He said that FCIQ is working on issues of advising and student learning objectives.” And he noted that George Bridges’ staff is working to develop a model to be tested this spring. “People working directly on this issue are talking to each other. And, significantly, many of the same people work with both FCIQ and the Bridges’ staff group.”

Buck said there are “no specific proposals on the table now” in the Undergraduate Advisory Council. “Jan Carline’s group [FCIQ] would like to see Web-based system-wide information made available to both students, faculty and staff.” George Bridges, said Buck, wants something “that can be centrally catalogued and used for campus-wide information search by students.”

Washburn said the “systems staff is part of this; and it won’t be stand-alone. There will ideally be a student portal for accessing the information, and it will help students identify courses that align with their interests.” Plumb observed: “I said at the November 19<sup>th</sup> [UAC] meeting that we don’t want the technology to drive the activity; rather, the activity should drive the technology.” Washburn said, “We’ll be asking departments to include learning outcomes in the future edition of the University Catalog.”

Buck said that, in addition to student learning objectives, UAC topics include the Academic Progress Task Force and related issues; revision of and support for writing programs at the UW: Arts and Sciences will be coming up with a report soon; direct transfer (the capacity and criteria for admission from Washington state community colleges); and tri-campus relations.

**Cathy Beyer, Office of Educational Assessment: Study of Undergraduate Learning (SOUL)**

Cathy Beyer, Research Scientist, Office of Educational Assessment, distributed a pamphlet entitled, "What Students Say About Their UW Experience" (given to all incoming UW students); "Critical Thinking and Selection of a Major," a two-page "SOUL" handout for the council containing "Three Points On Critical Thinking / Problem Solving," and When and Why Students Select Their Majors; and "How Professors Demonstrate That They Care About Students' Learning," another two-page "SOUL" document that was sent to all faculty in Fall 2002.

Beyer said 304 students were tracked in a four-year longitudinal study that began in 1999. The students were tracked in several categories: writing, critical thinking, understanding of diversity, personal growth, and information literacy. "We used a variety of methods," said Beyer. "We asked students to turn in portfolios each year, and surveyed students every quarter, both via e-mail and online. We have analyzed a great deal of data on first year students, a significant amount on second year students, and a smaller amount on third and fourth year students. We learned that everything students learn has to do with their major."

Beyer said that, today, she would address: 1) critical thinking; and 2) how students select their major. Washburn asked if students should enter their major earlier [than they have been accustomed to do]. Beyer replied that she did not think that that would be the most helpful solution. "If we were more explicit in our teaching, that would help; but it is best not to formalize students entering their major earlier, which happens anyway." Beyer said, "The extent to which a student learns depends on our clarity of teaching."

As to critical thinking, Beyer said, "There *is* no such thing as generic critical thinking; it depends on a student's major." She referred the council to students' comments in the handout: "Critical Thinking and Selection of a Major Faculty Council on Academic Standards." Beyer added: "The way students define what they're doing depends on their major. Students in the same major give similar responses when asked to define critical thinking and problem solving."

"There is no generic problem solving," said Beyer. "Different disciplines have different methodologies for critical thinking. Students in all majors are asked to do increasingly complex critical thinking. Tasks increase in complexity. New concepts are learned, and new projects are undertaken using new concepts." Beyer noted that students' descriptions of their tasks become more complex as they progress in their curriculum. "Their language becomes more complex and specific to their discipline. Definitions of critical thinking and problem solving become more complex."

Beyer observed that "not only is critical thinking discipline-based, but it becomes more complex as students go deeper into their major. Critical thinking starts right away, in the freshman year, then becomes more sophisticated. By their second year, 63% of students say that the course they found to be the most challenging in terms of critical thinking was the course in what became their major."

"Most students choose their major because of content," said Beyer, "and because of the challenge that the major poses. They do not choose their major just because of the money it will allow them to make. Students tend to be drawn to a discipline they have a passion for." Beyer said it would be helpful if students knew exactly what learning outcomes were expected of them in specific disciplines. "Students want more instruction in what makes a good paper (outside of English). Students are looking for

methodologies.” Beyer said this is an issue for transfer students as well. “Often, transfer students haven’t done much writing in disciplines other than English. The immersion for these students is more challenging, but they usually end up doing well.”

Beyer emphasized that “students do not want more technology; they want more faculty time. The stronger the faculty presence, the better. Students in the study conducted by OEA definitely want more faculty time. It would be important to ask, with respect to distance learning: Do students know what non-distance learning students know? And: How did they do it?” Washburn said, “It might be necessary to have some face-to-face instruction early in the course.” Beyer said, “We need to make the bones of the discipline apparent early, to make possible the best critical thinking. People tend to think that *their* way of thinking, in their own discipline, is the one right way to think. Clarity of teaching and methodology in a course can improve students’ critical thinking.”

Kenney said, “We *do* train students to think according to *our* discipline.” Beyer noted that “when I started teaching here, in 1984, I was part of an honors core sequence of three classes in which a historian, a sociologist, and a geographer taught courses in how their disciplines studied ‘the city,’ and later at how their disciplines studied inequality.”

In talking about two or more faculty teaching one course, Pitre [from Minority Affairs] said, “The population I’ve worked with over the past 21 years does not like team teaching. It makes it harder to learn.” Beyer added, “And the more people involved, the harder it gets.”

Regarding course domain and program domain, Beyer said, “Students are often drawn to a discipline because of their personality. Their temperament is complementary to a particular discipline.” She said the 100- and 200-level courses are important for incoming students. “If a 200-level class does not ask students to think critically, they will be in a ‘strange land’ when they proceed to their majors. Those early courses are exceptionally important for students, and change the way they think.”

Beyer stressed that “the quality of connection is vital. In any class you teach, the core of the whole discipline is in the kernel.”

Asked about ways in which she suffuses her insights and avails others of her long experience, Beyer said, “I give a lot of talks, and love to speak to and have discussions with people interested in student learning, critical thinking, and problem solving. We put out many written documents in the Office of Educational Assessment. And we’re currently in the process of writing a book.”

Plumb thanked Beyer for a most helpful and informative presentation and discussion.

#### **Next meeting**

The next FCAS meeting is set for Friday, January 9, 2004, at 1:30 p.m., in 36 Gerberding Hall.

Brian Taylor, Recorder

- PRESENT:** *Professors* Plumb (Chair), Buck, Fan, Janssen, Kenney and Plumb;  
*Ex officio members* Castic, Erickson-Brown, Pitre, Richards, Washburn and Wiegand;  
*Regular guest* Robert Corbett, Coordinator of New Programs.  
*Guest* Cathy Beyer, Research Scientist, Office of Educational Assessment.
- ABSENT:** *Professors* Keith, Labossiere, Newell, Reusch, Simon, Stygall and Woods;  
*Ex officio members* Bridges and Navin.