

The University of Washington Faculty Council on Instructional Quality

The Faculty Council on Instructional Quality met Friday, May 16, 2003 at 8:30 a.m. in 36 Gerberding Hall. Chair Jan Carline presided.

PRESENT: *Professors* Carline, Coutu, McGovern, Wenderoth
 Ex officio Bowen, Jacobson, Lewis, Trudeau

ABSENT: *Professors* Copland, Greenwald, Hoffer, Kyes, Mulligan, Nichter, Reinhall
 Ex officio Bridges, Conquest, Croft, Lowell, Susan Clark, Pitre, Brooks, Judi Clark, Trudeau

Carline called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Synopsis

1. Approve agenda
2. Approve minutes
3. Report of the Senate Exec Committee Meeting
4. Quick return to issue of public nature of student evaluation data.
5. Report of the Ad Hoc group on the information system; review of vision statement
6. Initial Discussion of Teaching Portfolio.

Agenda

The agenda was approved.

Minutes

The minutes of the April meeting were approved.

Report of the Senate Executive Committee Meeting

The Recommendations for the Evaluation of Teaching passed SEC and will be sent to all faculty members. During the discussion, a lot of unresolved feelings surfaced about the student evaluations of teaching. One SEC member said a colleague was not promoted because of student evaluations.

A Class C Resolution on this subject was passed some year ago by the Faculty Senate, but the current recommendations may reach more Deans and Chairs and will bring the matter to the fore once again.

Public nature of student evaluation data

Report of the Ad Hoc group on the information system; review of vision statement

The length of time it takes students to get through school has become a budget and enrollment issue at the UW. For various reasons, students are taking too long to finish, and a 210-credit rule has been instituted by the Admissions Office as follows:

The University's satisfactory progress policy requires students to complete their undergraduate degree programs within 30 credits beyond the minimum required for the degree. Because most degrees require 180 credits, students generally must complete their programs by the time they earn 210 credits. Undergraduates who have completed over 210 credits will be notified by email the third week of the quarter that a hold is being placed on their registration due to lack of satisfactory progress. Students ineligible to graduate will be permitted to register for succeeding quarters only if they receive approval from their department and college after filing a graduation plan. Approval to enroll beyond 210 credits may not extend beyond two additional quarters.

Mary Pat Wenderoth reported on the ad hoc group on the proposed Curriculum Information System, which is looking at the reasons students are taking so long to finish their baccalaureate degrees. One major cause is that students are having a hard time matching their interests to what the UW offers. To help the better navigate the course schedule, the ad hoc committee would like to take a three-pronged approach:

- Create a searchable database for University courses. This would help students match interests with what's available and with the requirements for their disciplines. It should also help course evaluation scores, since students would be making more appropriate course choices and would be more satisfied. There can be a feature that supplies similar or related courses in response to a search (If you like XXX course, you may also like YYY course)
- Find ways to improve the Instructor Course Description (ICD) and add them to a searchable database. It would be very helpful if ICDs could be searched not only by keyword, but also by "course outcomes" objectives that could be added by the instructors.
- Make certain that the new database is driven by a "one-stop-shopping" template for faculty to use, so that the information only has to be added into a template once. It would be very helpful and attractive to faculty if this template could also generate the course syllabus and be connected to the faculty member's Webpage.

Wenderoth said the ad hoc committee is working to generate a set of desired outcomes and products for the new information system, and will not try to resolve or dictate "ways and means" to the technology experts, who can solve issues of security, confidentiality, etc. After the system is implemented, it will be very important to make sure the departments get support to get the information in and keep it updated.

With this database as envisioned, there can also be more information included about courses now described just as "Special Topics." Another useful feature would be a "What's New This Quarter" page. This might be accomplished through meta tags each department could decide upon.

Administrators would find the system useful as well, since it would have reporting capabilities for a variety of uses and needs:

- How often a particular course is being offered
- How many students are taking a course
- How many Writing courses are being offered
- What Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) are being satisfied by what courses

It will be important to design the system with the right inputs and support so it is accessible to students, faculty, and administrators, and so that more information can flow. Student evaluations could even be done online, if a way can be found to make sure there is adequate participation (perhaps withholding grades until an evaluation is done).

The ad hoc committee will meet again on May 21 to discuss issues and plan their next steps. Getting faculty, students, advisers, and the administration involved and on board the idea is expected to be a key component for success.

Student Evaluation System

Although many faculty members hate the fact that their student evaluations are published on the Worldwide Web, Washington State Public Disclosure laws make it unlikely that the evaluations can be removed from the Web now that they are up. However, Web access could be password-protected by UWNETID, and any member of the general public who wishes specific information could still obtain it in hard copy by contacting the University.

This approach would allow faculty, students and staff access to the evaluations, and still be consistent with Washington State law. Other universities who operate under public disclosure laws do not publish this kind of information on the Web, because ratings are considered personnel records and are not public information.

A case can be made that openness about these ratings is good for the UW's image, and that removing open information now on the Web sends the wrong message. But the reality is also that a Web search on a faculty member's name for any reason – scholarship, C.V., etc. - often returns the teaching ratings and little or no other information. It might also be possible to keep outside search engines from cataloguing the ratings sites.

Since there is no overwhelming push from the faculty, said Carline, it might be best to just let the matter lie and see whether it is still an issue next year.

Initial Discussion of Teaching Portfolio

New faculty members are getting the message that they have to be good at talking about their accomplishments, and they have to have a strong teaching statement as well. But there is interest in developing an online teaching portfolio as well, to showcase accomplishments.

Portfolio guidelines developed in 1997 are helpful, but may need to be revised or broadened. One approach would be to go to departments and help them define what they want to see in a teaching portfolio – writing, ethics, etc. – so a template can be developed. Perhaps this could be related to the ICD database, so administrators could look at a faculty member's courses to see whether teaching portfolio objectives are being met. An archive of exemplary portfolios would also be a valuable resource.

The Carnegie Initiative called Scholarship for Teaching, known at the UW as "Scholarly Teaching," systematically looks at teaching as a scholarly enterprise and encourages universities to move teaching into the realm of scholarship. The initiative posits that the work of teaching is to be a scholar, gathering data, innovating and asking the questions that lead to better teaching. The scholarly question becomes "How can I transform this course?" In most tenure reviews, these efforts do not show up. It would be good to give more legitimacy to teaching as scholarship.

An online portfolio would be an opportunity to capture teaching more fully and realistically. The consensus of FCIQ members was to carry the topic over to the next year's agenda.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:47. *Minutes by Linda Fullerton, Recorder.*

