

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
FACULTY COUNCIL ON INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY
WEDNESDAY, May 6, 2009, 10:00-11:30 a.m.
36 Gerberding

Chair Mary Pat Wenderoth called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

Meeting Synopsis:

1. Approval of minutes
 2. Report from Catalyst on technology survey
 3. Debriefing report on UW SOTL
 4. Subcommittee report from Academic Rigor
 5. CEI- Challenge and Engagement Index
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Chair Mary Pat Wenderoth noted that this will be the last council meeting and thanked everyone for their hard work for the year.

1. Approval of minutes

The minutes for April 15, 2009 were approved with no comment.

2. Report from Catalyst on technology survey

Cara Lane, Research Scientist, Learning & Scholarly Technologies (L &ST), gave a power point presentation on the 2008 Faculty, TA, and Student Surveys. Wenderoth noted the importance of technology in helping us through the tough times and that its use is where we are headed. Lane explained her position in L & ST and that she would present highlights and data trends in the data from the 2008 surveys done. A complete report is available online.

Lane outlined the survey goals, noting that they regularly conduct these surveys in order to make informed decisions about technological needs of the university community and where best to invest time and resources, especially in the current budget situation. She identified the survey project partners and the number of faculty (547), teaching assistants (233), and students (656) who participated. Lane noted that separate surveys were given to teaching assistants so that the results would not be skewed.

Lane explained how the survey was designed this year to assess how technology is used in specific contexts. Most respondents indicated technology is used in the classroom context. Lane explained how the survey was designed to allow them to make comparisons, and what they found was that there are a lot of similar uses across all contexts. For instance, the technology cited as used most often was email. Wenderoth asked about the use of email among students who seem to favor other social networking tools. Lane replied that students seem to use email primarily to communicate with their instructors.

Lane next outlined the results on questions asked about desired infrastructure improvements. She noted that faculty indicated the highest priority was reliable, consistent software in all classrooms whereas students indicated they wanted reliable wireless access. Lane explained the finding about point-of-need support, or who faculty, students, and teaching assistants turn to when they need technology help. Wenderoth noted her own experience using a text-based online help was cumbersome and that a new technology she recently encountered that explained the site to her was a more valuable tool. Lane noted that the lack of time was rated highest as the obstacle to learning new technology.

The survey included sections on the need for integrated and flexible technology, and support challenges facing faculty, students, and teaching assistants. Lane shared that they were surprised to find that on questions about technical expertise faculty, students, and teaching assistants fell along the same point on the scale, with a mean of 3.3. A discussion began about the use of technology and what groups are most likely to lack expertise. Wenderoth noted her surprise that students who are highly competent on web based tools have a difficult time researching something like a biology concept.

Eugene Edgar noted the low response rate (16%) and that there is a lot of competition to fill out surveys now, and a general lack of time to complete them. Wenderoth underscored the main take-away that faculty would like to learn more about technology but don't have the time or the support. Tom Lewis pointed out that there are durable patterns in the responses to classroom infrastructure priorities. Lane noted that the main issue for FCIQ is the lack of understanding of how to use the technology tools available to faculty, students, and teaching assistants.

Wenderoth thanked Lane for her presentation.

3. Debriefing report on UW SOTL

Wenderoth gave a brief report on the recent Symposium on Teaching and Learning which had over 150 people in attendance and more than 50 posters presented. She noted that SOTL's future is not clear because of the budget cuts taking place and that there is talk of partnering with local schools as a way to share costs. Wenderoth explained the associated costs of hosting SOTL and how it might be possible for UW to become the host for other local colleges to showcase their scholarship.

4. Subcommittee report from Academic Rigor

Don Janssen gave a presentation on the "Final Report FCAS-FCIQ Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Quality and Rigor." He noted that the summary of datasets that will be provided as appendices to the report must first have names redacted from them. The work group looked at the level of quality and rigor in three types of classes: regular, special topics, and independent study courses. They also examined the Challenge and Engagement Index (CEI), a UW tool added as an item to student course evaluations several years ago. Janssen explained that a survey of 53 departments showed a departmental mean range from 3.7 to 5.3, with many scores falling between 4 and 5 on index. The subcommittee identified "outlier" courses if their CEI score was 1.5 deviations below the department mean or greater. Janssen explained that the intent was not to use the CEI as punishment, but to start a discussion at this point about the need to elevate courses not viewed as challenging or engaging. The subcommittee recommended that department chairs and deans should receive assessment materials for the outlier courses along with the quarterly teaching assessment information. It was pointed out that with the exception of attendance-based

seminars (1-2 credit courses), the CEI index seems to be measuring the perceived challenge and rigor of courses.

Janssen suggested that a possible action for FCIQ would be to encourage the 10 year review process to utilize this data. Wenderoth noted that the final report would be posted on the council web page. Janssen felt that FCIQ could also encourage including the outlier cases to chairs and deans along with the quarterly reports.

Janssen next explained how both special topics (ST) and independent study (IS) courses are problematic. While the subcommittee saw the value in these kind of courses it also found evidence of their overuse. Neither special topics nor independent study courses receive the same faculty oversight as regular courses. The subcommittee's recommendations include having a course syllabus for each ST course reviewed and approved by department faculty, converting a ST course offered multiple times into a regular course, and limiting the number of ST courses students can apply toward their degree. Eugene Edgar raised an issue about whether there is a need for more rules and regulations. Nana Lowell noted that the two primary issues are how many special topics students should take, and how often a course can be offered as a special topic as a way around a department's curriculum committee.

Janssen reported that there is less control with IS course credit. A red flag for the subcommittee finding students with excessive amounts of IS credits (one with 45 credits) and faculty members who were supervising large numbers of IS students. A suggested action item was to have deans and chairs made aware of the high number of IS courses, taking note of an IS course with more than 12 students, limiting students to the number of IS credits that can be used toward the degree, and having students sign a contract when taking IS courses.

Janssen asked members to please read through the report and send him any comments.

5. CEI-Challenge and engagement index

There was no time to address this item.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:37 a.m.

Minutes by Melissa Kane, Faculty Senate, mmkane@.washingon.edu

Present: **Faculty:** Allen, Egdar, Janssen, Salehi-Esfahani, Wenderoth (Chair)
 President's Designee: Sahr (for Taylor)
 Ex Officio Reps: Raftus, Nguyen, Zarelli, Nkeze
 Regularly Invited Guests: Lewis, Lowell, Sugatan
Absent: **Faculty:** Underwood
 Regularly Invited Guest: Jacobson
Special Guest: Cara Lane, Research Scientist, Learning & Scholarly Technologies