

**University of Washington**  
**Faculty Council on Instructional Quality**  
**February 26, 2004**

**Present:** Carline, Coe, Cooper, Greenwald, Kemp, Lowell, McGovern, Trudeau, Wenderoth, Jacobson, Lewis

**Absent:** Bowen, Copland, Conquest, Bowen, Pitre, Brooks

**Guest:** Bill Shirey, Gerry Gillmore

**Synopsis:**

1. Status of the curriculum information system. Nana Lowell and Gerry Gillmore
2. Grade inflation work. Tony Greenwald
3. Classroom scheduling issue raised by Gary Handwerk, English
4. Future activity

Chair Jan Carline called the meeting to order at 8:35. Carline announced that he received an email from Gary Handwerk (English and Comparative Literature) with concerns about the enforcement of a new class scheduling policy.

In 2001, a special committee headed by Ernest Morris looked into classroom scheduling and found that most scheduled courses take place between 9:30 and 1:30 and that this caused major problems with access to classrooms. The committee wrote a policy that mandated that, by 2004, 20% of undergraduate courses or student credit hours from each department would be scheduled after 1:30. The policy further mandated that courses of longer than 50 minutes could not be scheduled between 9:30 and 1:30.

This policy has caused problems in the English department, which has gone to two-hour courses, and has spread these throughout the day so English majors could take more than one course per day in their major. Handwerk was told by the head of classroom scheduling that allowances could be made, but found that the actual scheduling process was not at all flexible.

Carline talked to Max Winslow, Assistant Registrar, who said that the rule would be enforced for classes of 90 minutes to avoid having a classroom sit empty for a half hour, but that a two-hour class could be accommodated in the morning.

After brief discussion, it was decided to wait for a couple of quarters to see if this is a widespread problem that truly affects instructional quality or whether it's more of a convenience issue. Carline asked that council members be alert in their departments for complaints that may need to be revisited in Fall Quarter.

**Status of the curriculum information system – Nana Lowell.**

Nana Lowell distributed a handout entitled "An Integrated Educational Information System: Purposes and System Elements," which synthesized the ongoing discussions about revisions and upgrades to the existing curriculum information system.

Lowell described the ideal system as one that would

- Help students get into courses (locate and obtain information about courses)
- Help them while they are in class
- Help them after they have completed the course and left the University
- Facilitate course planning and student advising
- Facilitate communication with students

- Facilitate coursework and allow for feedback
- Facilitate review and evaluation of student portfolios
- Provide class lists
- Facilitate the grading process
- Assess the impact of instructional programs

Gillmore envisioned a uniform, integrated, Internet-based tool that helps faculty and students to do their work, and brings various kinds of information together. It should be useful and not too burdensome, should specify the goals of learning, and should collect feedback on how well the goals were achieved.

The Enhanced Curriculum database presented by Bill Shirey calls for learning goals, which might come from the University as well as from schools or departments. These would be captured as part of a new course approval form or course change form, which would be maintained by the Curriculum Office.

This database would be updated on an exception basis (when information changes), would be linked to the time schedule, and would include a course-finder search tool. This tool will search the text of the course descriptions and Instructor Class Descriptions, allow selection based on preferred time schedule, and would return integrated search results.

Tom Lewis commented that this is a parallel effort with a couple of others – run by Mike Eisenberry and George Bridges - that have just discovered one another. There is also another iteration of MyUW, called "integrated collaborative environment (ICE)," in the works. FCIQ may want to look at these projects.

There will be an Arts and Sciences Chairs meeting in Spring Quarter to encourage development of student learning goals, which will include the offering of development grants. Should the tool be developed first, or should the goals? How will outcomes be measured? Is it possible to identify which level of objectives each course meets? How would the reports be populated?

Carline asked for ongoing updates on these projects as they develop.

### **Grade inflation - Tony Greenwald**

Greenwald wants to create a method of grade measurement that can be generated from student grading forms, and that would be connected to stated goals. To ensure adequate challenge in courses, there should be a set of items on every student rating form that have to do with challenge and work – how many hours effort are required, comparison with other courses, how much effort is required to complete the course. These things could be constructed into a challenge index and, if promoted to prominence, will have an effect on behavior.

At present, departments and instructors who are high on challenge level are less liked because students know they are going to get a lower grade. Science, math and engineering departments will welcome an index of challenge that shows up in student ratings and is well understood. Greenwald asked how, and whether, the council would like to proceed on this issue. Is this a grade inflation issue, or are we actually challenging students as much as we should?

After discussion, it was decided to move ahead by looking at the data, and then doing case studies drawn from the departments of faculty who are council members. It might be also interesting to study the two most and two least challenging courses at the University. This project can be moved along in Spring Quarter.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:51. *Minutes by Linda Fullerton, Recorder.*