

The University of Washington Faculty Council on Instructional Quality

The Faculty Council on Instructional Quality met Friday, February 7, 2003, at 10:30 a.m. in 36 Gerberding Hall. Chair Jan Carline presided.

PRESENT: *Professors* Carline, Coutu, Wenderoth
 Ex officio Bowen, Brooks, Conquest, Croft, Jacobson, Lowell, Trudeau

ABSENT: *Professors* Copland, Devasia, Greenwald, Hoffer, Kyes, McGovern, Mulligan, Nichter, Reinhall
 Ex officio Bridges, Croft, Lewis, Lowell, Pitre

Guest: Deborah Wiegand

Carline called the meeting to order at 10:33 a.m.

Synopsis

1. Approval of Minutes
2. Changes to Decennial Review of Departments regarding teaching quality as proposed by FCAS.
3. Continuing discussion of changes to new course application form:
 Debbie Wiegand from the Curriculum Review Committee

Agenda

The agenda was approved.

Minutes

The minutes of the January meeting were approved.

Changes to new course application form: Debbie Wiegand, Curriculum Review Committee

As a first step in responding to the Academic Challenge discussions with Regent William H. Gates, the Faculty Council on Instructional Quality, the Faculty Senate leadership, and the Faculty Council on Academic Standards are looking into revising the course application forms to reflect the implied standards for new courses. Carline and Tim Washburn looked at the course application forms to see if they could be changed to document the work that faculty members do to ensure that UW courses are challenging. Debbie Wiegand has been invited to FCIQ to talk about the Curriculum Review Committee and to discuss some things FCIQ members should be considering as this project evolves.

The Curriculum Review Committee, Wiegand said, was formed in response to the overwhelming workload Faculty Councils encountered as they tried to review all new courses at the university and ensure that the course descriptions were written appropriately for the catalogue. Review Committee members are Tim Washburn, Ken Etzkorn from Office of Undergraduate Education, John Slattery from the Graduate School, Debbie Wiegand from Undergraduate Education, plus representatives from the Tacoma and Bothell campuses. Both Washburn and Wiegand are ex officio members of the Faculty Council on Academic Standards, so there is continuity in the process.

Wiegand distributed copies of the course application form, and walked the Council member through its use and the approval process delineated on the back of the form (see appendix).

The Committee pays particular attention to the justification for the course, the way students are evaluated for grades, and the course syllabus. The Review Committee feels the syllabus is very important, but they do not look at learning objectives because learning objectives are rarely included. They have frequently questioned syllabus requirements that looked odd or inadequate, but usually find that the problem lies with the way the instructor has documented the requirements, not with the actual content of the course. The review tends to focus on broader issues and consistencies, and does not try to pass on course content. The Review Committee meets once each month, and may get a 6-inch stack of courses to review. Wiegand was surprised to see the large number of new courses that are submitted for approval each month.

Wiegand said the Review Committee has talked about expanding the course description (now a 50-word maximum). This would give more information to students, and allow them to make more informed choices about the courses they take. The Committee has also discussed requiring that Student Learning Objectives be stated. The main focus has been whether the information on the course is useful to students.

Not many courses are turned down by the Review Committee, but some are sent back to the instructors for clarification or more information. For example, a class that gives teaching experience to a T/A but has no real content for students would be rejected. By the time most courses reach the Review Committee, they have been thoroughly vetted at the college and department level. However, if there is an issue that the Committee really feels needs to be changed, they do ask for revisions.

Wiegand said the Curriculum Review Committee is open and amenable to changes that would benefit students. They have been through this process with the Distance Learning program and worked with Educational Outreach to achieve their goals. The Committee is open to as much faculty input as possible.

FCIQ members, said Carline, have been discussing a new electronic syllabus template that could be used to make certain that essential course elements are included. This template could be made available online to students so they could have better information about both the content and the objectives of each course. New courses would be covered by the online template, and existing courses could be switched over to the new template as course changes are brought to the Committee for Review. The course application form could be extended to include items that should be on the syllabi.

If the course applications were created online, course design would be much easier. More information about the course and student learning objectives could be included, and course changes could be made more easily than on a paper document. Colleges could more easily specify what objectives they want courses to include, and prompting could be built in to encourage instructors to show that they are paying attention to course content and learning objectives. An online template could be a tool to help instructors more easily organize their thinking about how their courses are structured, what they include, and what they want students to achieve.

Wayne Jacobson said it may be helpful to step back from language about "student learning objectives" and ask simply "What will students be able to do after they finish your course?" and "How will you be able to assess this?" References to pedagogical terms such as learning objectives may elicit technical responses that would not be as helpful to students.

The problem Mary Pat Wenderoth sees how to create a ripple effect so there is actual change in the course, instead of just another form to fill out for accreditation. The goal should be to get the faculty member to think about the learning objectives, bring them into the classroom, and begin to implement them. Those are two different objectives. College Committees would have to start asking for SLOs, so people would begin thinking about them and using them.

Carline observed that the current SLOs are very general and relate to general skills and objectives. They don't have the same impact on a course application as do as very specific content-related objectives. He has heard concerns from English Department faculty that the SLOs don't fit and don't make sense in the teaching of English.

FCIQ would like to move forward with changes to the course application forms and an online template. Wiegand suggested that FCIQ draft a revised form to get discussion started. The Course Review Committee will help, but it would be important to get a draft for people to respond to.

Nana Lowell reported that she is a member of the Advisory Committee on Accountability (ACA), which was established as the Advisory Board on Accountability (by legislative mandate) by Debra Friedman to supply some of the required numbers that were needed in Olympia. Friedman had intended to turn the Advisory Board over to the faculty, but it is now one of the two "test case" committees designated to implement the Rose plan (joint faculty/admin councils) on a trial basis. Since Friedman developed the SLOs to meet accreditation requirements, she will explain the SLOs to the ACA and provide some history to the group.

Lowell has some reservations about the current SLOs, since they are at a very global level. There are a variety of issues to be resolved, among them global objectives versus specific objectives. It is important to make the objectives useful for course planning and integrate them into what departments do, so they will serve as a useful tool in course planning as well as for accreditation purposes. At the catalogue level, all faculty members must agree on the objectives for a specific course and those objectives must relate back to the general objectives for the department. But there needs to be freedom for faculty to implement the class as differently as individual faculty do.

Mary Pat Wenderoth, Nana Lowell, Debbie Wiegand, and Jan Carline will meet and draft ideas for a new course application form. Jacobson of CIDR will also be involved in looking at the form. As soon as a draft form is created, the subcommittee will involve someone from Arts and Sciences and look at involving different schools and colleges.

Changes to Decennial Review of Departments regarding teaching quality (review FCAS proposal).

The Council reviewed the FCAS proposal for changes to the guidelines on Decennial Review Self Study (see appendix). FCAS would especially like FCIQ to review the changes in Section B.

Council members noted that the changes improve the self study document by including more classes of faculty and by adding the new section on teaching. Jacobson would like to see language about student learning added, since it is inseparable from teaching. Coutu suggested wording such as "In what ways do you address student learning attainments?" J.Ray Bowen commented that there should be a place for a focus on the department, since much of the document is focused on the individual. How does the department endorse and promote self-assessment?

Council members applauded the effort as a good idea. Carline will respond to FCAS with the Council's recommendations and approbation.

CIDR Webpage on Evaluation of Teaching

Jacobson asked for the Council's comments on the new CIDR page he is developing. What other pages could he link to, to consolidate teaching resources in one place? Other comments?

Carline said the page should be clearly labeled as to its intent, which is for administrators. Coutu hoped that FCIQ, FCAS, and OEA could be clearly identified throughout the page instead of referred to by their initials. Wenderoth said it would be helpful to take a task-oriented approach – if the department wants to

accomplish a certain objective, it should go to this or that page. Carline asked that Council members email any additional suggestions to Jacobson.

For next meeting:

- The course application subcommittee will meet and try to have something ready to present.
- Debra Friedman will attend to talk to the Council on accreditation issues.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:57 a.m.. *Minutes by Linda Fullerton, Recorder.*