

University of Washington
Faculty Council on Instructional Quality
January 18, 2005

Synopsis:

1. Discussion of Diversity Issues and Courses, Rusty Barcelo
2. Update on Course Challenge, Nana Lowell, Tony Greenwald, Debbie McGhee
3. Update on Innovation Celebration, Wayne Jacobson

Chair Jan Carline called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The minutes were approved.

Discussion of Diversity Issues and Courses

Robert Coe talked about the Diversity Report recently produced by the Office of Minority Affairs. The report deals with many facets of diversity on campus, but emphasizes the retention and success of students in degree programs, and describes the factors that inhibit retention and success. Coe suggested FCIQ might do a project on the role of instructional quality in student retention, possibly examining how classroom dynamics and climate are related to instructional quality. Coe, Susan Kemp and Wayne Jacobson are meeting to discuss this idea, but need to define their terms before they are ready to make any recommendations about the shape such a project would take. Possibly, the Faculty Senate could be used to express one of the great benefits of diversity, that a good climate for minority students means a good climate for the entire student body.

Rusty Barcelo, Vice President for Minority Affairs, handed out copies of the Executive Summary of the report, and praised the report, the reporting process, and the good work on diversity that is being done across campus. Unfortunately, Barcelo said, these efforts are not coordinated. So one question revolves around how to coordinate efforts and develop synergies around the wonderful work that is being done. Another question concerns leadership from the top – what to do, how to do it, how to hold "managers" accountable.

Barcelo said that OMA received responses from 150 departments to the self-study questions that were posed. In defining diversity, Barcelo said that respondents focused on students of color and minimized faculty and staff issues. Surprisingly, not one of the 150 respondents mentioned climate as an issue. However, this is the single issue that students complain about the most, from benign neglect to catcalls to faculty members making problematic comments, to graffiti in the halls. All of these things affect students and create an unhealthy climate for learning. Student development, Barcelo said, involves more than academic development. Students who use the OMA instructional center do better as a whole - perhaps FCIQ could have Emil Pitre come and talk about this program, which is not just about tutoring and supplemental instruction.

Student development and retention, Barcelo said, is one key piece of the puzzle; recruitment and retention of a diverse faculty is another. The new Diversity Research Institute, headed by Acting Director David Takeuchi, will work to identify the questions that should be researched to cure diversity problems in UW society. Over the next year, Takeuchi and the Institute will work to develop concepts that might be tied to the Curriculum Transformation project.

Ana Mari Cauce is pulling together a group to plan next steps in the process. Barcelo is meeting with Deans to talk about diversity. A \$400,000 Diversity Implementation Fund has been set up, and there is currently a call for proposals in the following areas of greatest need:

- Enhancing student development. How can we improve the educational experience of students? How can we ensure that admissions policies, advising and mentoring, and access to majors and educational

opportunities for all academic units encourage and support students to attain their educational objectives?

- Enhancing faculty diversity. How can we attract, support and retain a diverse faculty? What successful practices and strategies exist that can be enhanced and replicated?
- Improving campus, workplace and classroom climate. What factors contribute to a welcoming climate for students, faculty and staff, and how can it be attained? What successful practices and strategies exist that can be enhanced and replicated?

Barcelo said she would be glad to come back and talk with FCIQ about any proposed instructional quality projects – it is difficult to talk about instructional quality without talking about diversity.

Carline said FCIQ's response should be to discover FCIQ can do as a Faculty Council. Wayne Jacobson suggested that FCIQ can raise the issue with the Faculty Senate, many of whose members may not be aware of the Diversity Appraisal. FCIQ could bring in the faculty voice, in an organized way, and couch the information in a way that would allow faculty to see the benefit of it.

Nana Lowell said that OEA will be doing more work than originally thought in creating a tool to assess classroom climate. She is putting together a pilot that will be ready for Spring Quarter, but does not know how it will be used or how widely it will be used. She would like to see widespread use for at least one quarter, to establish benchmarks.

At present, there is no definition of classroom climate, though there is lots of literature on how comfortable one is in the classroom. Is it possible OEA is already measuring this in the existing ratings? Lowell said that existing ratings cannot measure a relationship between climate and the standard items of measurement. Carline said classroom climate is a variable worthy of being examined and measured, and there seems to be interest on FCIQ. Susan Kemp, Robert Coe and Wayne Jacobson will contact Brian Fabien and/or Tom Colonnese on this issue.

Lowell said that Ana Mari Cauce is already on the committee for her pilot program. Lowell will continue to work on a climate assessment tool.

Update on Course Challenge

Lowell, Tony Greenwald, and Debbie McGhee (OEA) reported their findings on the possibility of using existing student survey questions to construct an academic challenge index. The proposed challenge index for any class would be created based upon student response to items 24-29 on the student survey:

24. The amount of intellectual challenge of the course
25. The amount of effort put into the course
26. The amount of effort to succeed in this course
27. Involvement in this course (doing assignments, attending classes)
28. How many hours per week spent on this class
29. How many of the total hours spent were valuable in advancing your education?

McGhee led FCIQ members through a technical discussion of her analysis that reached the following conclusions:

- Questions 24-29 are all highly correlated with each other, but not with the rest of the questions.
- Classes taught by recipients of the Distinguished Teaching Award got higher challenge ratings than those taught by other teachers, but did NOT differ from non-DTA teachers in average grade.
- It appears from McGhee's analysis that a challenge index can be constructed from Q24-Q29.
- Greenwald encouraged bringing in some of the statistical power of the UW for help in deciding the best way to construct such an index. We already have the data, but need help in interpreting it.

- The goal of creating a course challenge index should be thought out and defined. Perhaps a set of FAQs could be created to communicate this. Perhaps an "Amazon.com" style statement such as "students who took these courses found XXX amount of challenge in them."
- Jacobson commented that McGhee's findings contradict the conventional UW assumption that teachers can get better student ratings by making courses less challenging.
- FCIQ needs to be involved in interpreting and promoting the challenge index – what the data are and how to use them.

FCIQ's ASUW rep, Angelyne Crown, was in favor of going forward with developing a challenge index. She would personally like to know what courses were most challenging, so she could seek them out. It would also be a tool students could use to balance their course load each quarter. Greenwald said Advising could also use this tool.

Carline commented that the tool would need faculty buy-in at the point where FCIQ has something to endorse. It looks potentially very promising; perhaps a timeline could be constructed so the index could be introduced sometime in the fall. Jacobson said FCIQ should decide whether the index should be validated for department use, institutional use, individual use, or all three. Departments, for example, might use it as a tool to see why students are taking (or not taking) their courses.

SOTL Showcase Update

Jacobson reported that the Showcase has been announced to all faculty, and a Website has been established for it. Applications and application criteria have been created, the room for the event has been reserved, and the logistics are in place.

SOTL is a hot topic around the country – University of Indiana has 40 pages about it on their Website, and the Second Annual International Conference on SOTL is upcoming in Vancouver B.C.

FCIQ members can help by recruiting lots of faculty to participate. Applicants do not need lots of evidence, but their applications should show careful, thoughtful work that shows:

- Here's what I learned
- Here's how I know that

Jacobson would also like volunteers to review the applications, and promises the experience will be interesting and not too painful.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45. *Minutes by Linda Fullerton, Recorder.*

Present: Carline, Coe, Kasonic, Kim, Gillis-Bridges, Mai, Greenwald, Crown, Jacobson, Lowell, Holmes

Absent: Kemp, Wenderoth, Parks, Lewis, Brooks, Trudeau, Jeffords

Guests: Barcelo, McGhee