

# Faculty Council on Instructional Quality

Annual Report, 2005-2006

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The Faculty Council on Instructional Quality (FCIQ) focuses on issues surrounding the quality of teaching at the University and ways to assist faculty and administrators to evaluate and improve teaching and learning. Our discussions are improved by the addition of staff and faculty from the Center for Instructional Development and Research (CIDR), the Teaching Academy, the Dean of Undergraduate Education office, Catalyst, and the Office of Educational Assessment (OEA). Topics this year have included:

- Vision for undergraduate education at the UW
- Report on Undergraduate Education
- University Vision Statement
- Faculty Conversations Project
- Pick-a-Prof, a for-profit internet based faculty evaluation system
- Curricular Information Management Proposal from the Office of the Registrar and Catalyst
- OEA proposal for a testing center to be used for course testing
- College of Education Climate Survey
- Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Forum
- Initial review of the UW Teaching Web Page

## **Vision for undergraduate education at the UW, Report on Undergraduate Education, and**

**University Vision Statement:** As part of the development of a vision for undergraduate education, the council was polled regarding our concerns about undergraduate education. These concerns included:

- We should help students think thoughtfully about choosing classes. Ensure their access into classes. A positive attribute is the quantity of different classes, but students don't always know how to find them.
- Attributes of excellence of an undergraduate experience should help students make better choices about how to reach their goals. It should help students know what things are relevant to their goals. What does the UW see as general goals for students? What should the product look like?
- We should have institutional learning goals. Imagine what it is we want students to know when they leave UW. What kinds of experiences-writing, research, environmental, global should they encounter? WE should have common learning goals like Montana State.
- For service learning, what are the terms of citizenship? What does it mean to act as a responsible adult in society? How do you get credit for that experience? It's more than just an internship; you have to understand the experience.
- What are the expected outcomes? Is the means to the end to participate in a program? Should students focus on the four legislative areas, writing, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and information gathering?
- What about student life? Would living/learning community building programs maximize social network and make the student experience richer and more productive?
- There is a community of scholars in Biology. Commuters need a space to congregate as well. A high percentage of students live in the dorm in their first year. We can learn about opportunities for mixing generations or getting faculty connected with student groups.
- Consider using groups around learning task. Foster a notion of needing community scholars to solve problems. Identify institutional goals and incorporate team learning.
- Provide resources/rewards to help faculty achieve goals and make changes.
- Can graduate TA's offer advising? Students list TA's higher than advisers for answering questions.
- It seems this topic needs further study. This committee on improving the UW undergraduate experience will need a huge champion to prevent spinning their wheels.

- Give students expectations; this is what we expect while you are here and in return the institution gives them scaffolding to achieve.
- Cultivate a culture on campus that we support students. The discovery seminar is a good example of building relationships with students and local community.
- The faculty senate is concerned that the committee on improving the UW undergraduate experience was created without input from the faculty senate.

At subsequent meetings, the council discussed the recommendations included in the published report from the Office of the Provost. The committee discussed the changing nature of the educational experience, and how this report offered an optimistic ideal, though its intent was not to suggest architecture and implementation. Some felt that the university's investment in TAs is essential, while others felt that investing in faculty was also extremely important: raising salaries and giving rewards for those that want to be mentors to students. In the future, better encouragement needs to be provided for professors who love to teach. Some members discussed how quickly the report was put together and debated whether it adequately reflected the 50% of transfer students and large percentage of commuter students, wondering if the idealized picture of student experience was truly representative of our student population. In response, other committee members explained that this report tried to tell a story of an undergraduate student and tie it back to the goals, wherein some suggested that a faculty side needed to be added to this narrative, since an implication of the report suggests that the ideal undergraduate experience is not related to the classroom. Others felt that any vision of student experience should present several types of experience that acknowledge the fact that many students have full and complex lives beyond university, and that the delivery of instruction increasingly depends on distance technology, even in many of our courses that are considered "in residence."

In a similar vein, the Council discussed the proposed University Vision statement, and made several suggestions about its content.

**Developing a Proposal for Faculty Conversations on Diversity:** Under the leadership of Susan Kemp and Alka Arora, research associate, the Faculty Conversations project was discussed several times with the council over the year. A near final draft of the proposal was developed by the end of the academic year, with an expected submission for funding in the fall. The proposal centers on the development of learning communities of faculty members focused on issues of diversity in the classroom.

**Pick-A-Prof: A commercial web-based system that makes course grading information available to the public:** Discussions about the University's response to this system continued during the year. Nana Lowell reported the conclusion that based on discussions with the Attorney General Office, course evaluation data cannot be protected by copyright. There is ongoing concern about errors in reporting data by the system, issues of costs to the university, and faculty responses to the publication of this data.

**Curricular Information Management Proposal from the Office of the Registrar and Catalyst:** The Councils continued concern about the availability of information to students about the nature of courses, course goals and objectives, etc. was discussed in the content of an information management system for courses proposed by the Registrar, Todd Mildon, and Catalyst as lead by Tom Lewis. This proposal was seen as one step in the process of making this type of information available and useful for students for all undergraduate courses. The council also continues to suggest that such a system become a portal for evaluation data, so that the University and its faculty can present findings about courses that are currently being cooped by Pick-a-Prof and other systems.

**OEA proposal for a testing center to be used for course testing:** Nana Lowell presented a proposal to develop a facility where examinations can be given outside of course hours, based on a facility at Brigham Young University. The facility would allow faculty members to have tests professionally proctored and at the same time free up course hours currently scheduled to tests during the quarter. The Council was generally supportive of Dr. Lowell's development of a proposal for such a facility.

**College of Education Climate Survey:** As part of an interest in investigating diversity issues in the classroom, the Council reviewed items and offered suggestions last year for the development of classroom climate items to be added to regular university course evaluation forms. Because of a number of issues, this project was shelved as a general university initiative. Dr. Lowell reported that the College of Education has become interested in the use of these items for evaluation of its own courses. Results of this implementation may lead to further discussions about a broader implementation in the University. The Council is supportive of continuing this work.

**Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Forum:** Wayne Jacobson reported that the Forum was a success this year, with 52 presenters from all three campuses.

**Initial review of the UW Teaching Web Page:** The UW teaching page was developed a number of years ago by C&C with support of the Council. Since its inception, the page has not been reviewed. The

Council discussed several issues about the current design on the page. The link should be more prominent and more readily accessible to teachers. There needs to be a defined stewardship over the page: who will take responsibility to update and improve this website. In addition, there ought to be an effort to consolidate all the teaching sites. More specific feedback to the webpage design: a viewer wouldn't be drawn to the link—it is difficult to find. CIDR needs to be added to the link. There needs to be a reason to come back to this page: quarterly calendar, announcements—something to keep it new. There needs to be a Academic Integrity website on plagiarism; a grading link to FROG. There needs to be a graduate student section. Moreover, there could be a section on teaching grants or in-house grants. There should be a link to the Teaching Academy, Distinguished Teaching awards. The website needs to have a design—a series of uncategorized links with no context is not helpful—maybe there could be an “Ask Jeeves” feature to fill in context. Largely, this webpage needs to be a successful gateway to sites that already exist, but there needs to be better navigation of where to go and why. The Council continues to be concerned about the design and utilization of this resource.

The Council conducted its last meeting on May 18<sup>th</sup>. We hope to continue the level of involvement and work in the next academic year. One last item from the previous academic year, the development of a course challenge index lead by Tony Greenwald, was not discussed this year. Specific issues for consideration in the next year include continued discussions of the following:

- Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Forum: Continuing the work with a third forum, and raising its visibility on campus
- Curricular Information Management, aka Student Course Information System: Continued discussions about efforts in this area, including concepts from the Curriculum Compass proposal
- Faculty Conversations on Diversity: Development and implementation of this effort
- Course Evaluation Work: scales of Course Challenge and Classroom Climate
- Continued efforts to increase the visibility and reward for excellence in teaching on this campus

I wish to thank the members of the council, and Whitney Thompson, the Council Recorder, for all the work and time spent this last year on Council discussions and activities.