

**The University of Washington  
Faculty Council on Instructional Quality**

The Faculty Council on Instructional Quality met Wednesday, November 14, at 10:30 a.m. in 36 Gerberding Hall. Chair Jan Carline presided.

**PRESENT:**     *Professors* Carline, Coutu, Devasia, Kyes, Reinhall, Simpson, Wells

*Ex officio* McCracken (with vote), Lowell, Bridges

*Guests:* Wayne Jacobson, Center for Instructional Development (CIDR); Tom Lewis, Educational Technology Development Group.

**ABSENT:**     *Professors* Bierne, Hoffer, McGovern, Mulligan

*Ex officio* Stromberg, Chong, Evans, Pitre.

**AGENDA**

1. Accept minutes of last meeting
2. Introductions
3. Review of last year's work
  - Legislation - [washington.edu/faculty/facsenate/senate/legislation/classc/teaching2.htm](http://www.washington.edu/faculty/facsenate/senate/legislation/classc/teaching2.htm)
  - Teaching Web page - [washington.edu/teaching/](http://www.washington.edu/teaching/)
4. New Business
  - Monitoring outcomes of legislation
  - Course Responsibility draft
  - Regent Gates and academic challenge/rigor
  - Other issues

**Minutes**

Chair Jan Carline called the meeting to order and asked that the minutes of the last meeting be accepted. It was moved, seconded and passed to accept the minutes of the last meeting.

**Introductions**

Each committee member introduced himself or herself by name, discipline, and years of FCIQ service (if any).

**New Business - Regent Gates and academic challenge/rigor:**

George Bridges, Acting Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, was invited to open the meeting with an item of new business.

Bridges related that he has for some time been in conversation with Regent William H. Gates, who has persistently raised concerns about the quality of some courses at the University. Regent Gates is an alumnus of the UW, a distinguished lawyer, and chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. He cares deeply about the University, Bridges said, and is especially concerned about the ability of UW students to engage in critical thinking, to apply knowledge to the solution of problems, and to write well. Informal conversations with students over the past few years convinced Gates that some UW courses are not challenging enough, and that academic standards should be more rigorous. Bridges described Regent Gates' original question as "Does anyone on this campus care how challenging our courses are?"

The ongoing conversation between Gates and Bridges resulted in three forums last year, which were well-attended by students and faculty, and which attempted to answer the question "Are UW courses challenging?" The answer, said Bridges, was "Of course they are, and of course they're not. Some are, some aren't."

As a result of the forums and conversations, said Bridges, Regent Gates is now convinced he's asking a question that is very difficult to answer. To pose the question to faculty, Gates has arranged to address the Faculty Council on Instructional Quality and the Faculty Council on Academic Standards in a joint meeting November 30. At Gates' and Bridges' request, Robert Crutchfield, Chair of the Department of Sociology, will also speak to the issue.

Regent Gates, Bridges said, wants the UW to formulate academic standards to spell out the minimum level of expectations for UW students. The question, of course, is whose standards will students and faculty live by?

FCIQ Chair Jan Carline commented that the Council has informally been asked by the Senate Chair to look at this issue prior to the joint meeting and asked for Council members' questions and comments. Randy Kyes asked if other UW Regents share this same concern. Bridges replied that this is Gates' issue, largely unanswered, but that the other Regents are interested.

General discussion ensued, with FCIQ members commenting that Gates seems to be interested in course excellence, and that ways of measuring course excellence vary throughout the University. For example, analyzing course syllabi in conjunction with student evaluations can reveal strengths and weaknesses in many courses. Some disciplines, such as Engineering and Medicine, are driven by the rigorous standards of accrediting bodies and have clearly-articulated guidelines about outcomes. In many other disciplines, however, that model does not apply. In any course or discipline at the University, results can also be skewed by incoming transfer students who are weak in writing, public speaking, and critical thinking.

Bridges observed that rule-based curriculum committees represent the worst of bureaucracy and constrain academic freedom. His concern is that the University protect the academic freedom of the faculty and give students good and challenging courses. Per Reinhall commented that an annual review of courses might solve the problem; Bridges pointed out that 4,000 classes are taught each quarter at the UW, so reviewing each course annually is probably not feasible. Randy Kyes wanted to know whether students have been asked how many challenging courses they have taken, as opposed to what classes were not challenging.

Jan Carline cited a practical deficiency in the paperwork required for new courses. "If you look at the course application forms for a new course, what you're supposed to supply, there's very little about standards implied," said Carline, "except 'fill in this box.' Nothing about the quality of the offering, except that there ought to be something stated about readings and examinations... nothing about how the instruction or the learning is to take place." Norma Wells agreed that changing the course application form might begin to build increased faculty awareness of standards. "The standards are out there, very well documented at the higher level. But is it happening for each student, at the campus level? Well - yes, and no."

After some discussion, there was consensus that a better course application form would be a good first step to take and that it would not be onerous to faculty.

Randy Kyes asked whether Regent Gates has a specific concern about the large 100-level intro courses where there is little requirement for writing or speaking. Bridges responded that Gates does realize that this is partly linked to funding, but still wants to tackle the issue of what can be done about it. Bridges mentioned Bob Crutchfield's classes, which typically include 500 students and where students are nevertheless required to work hard. Carline cited a professor at Stanford, Pat Cross, who has done a great deal of work to make large classes intellectually challenging and to provide avenues for student response other than public speaking.

Maria Simpson and Jan Carline both raised the issue of grade inflation that needs to be dealt with in any discussion of academic standards and outcomes.

Carline invited everyone to attend the joint meeting of FCAS and FCIQ, Nov. 30 at 2 p.m., in the Regent's Room. .

#### **Granting Vote to ALUW Representative**

It was moved, seconded and passed to grant voting rights to Peter McCracken, ALUW Representative.

## **Review of Last Year's Work**

### 1. Teaching page on the Web

Last year, FCIQ worked with Tom Lewis and Wayne Jacobson to publish a teaching page on the Web. Jan Carline asked for discussion of where we are with the Web page, and whether we are happy with it.

Lewis spoke to the structure of the Teaching pages - the new graphics developed last year were abandoned in favor of faster loading and better accessibility for people with disabilities. But the information architecture remains the same and is very nice. Between 10,000 and 17,000 unique individuals visit the site, so they didn't want to change the architecture too much. CIDR wants to know whether some subset of FCIQ wants to be involved in continuing to look at the site, and who that might be. Jan Carline asked FCIQ members to look at the site and email any comments to Wayne Jacobson.

Now that the structure of the page is set, Carline called for volunteers to form a Technology Subcommittee to regularly review page content and look at some of the emails that come in from faculty. Wayne Jacobson will collect items of concern and look into them. (via a later email, Randy Kyes volunteered to serve on the Teaching Web Page subcommittee).

### 2. Class C legislation on rewarding high quality teaching

This Class C legislation was passed last year, after George Bridges asked FCIQ to explore ways to reward high quality teaching. The initial proposal was to make the award a permanent pay raise. However, this idea was deemed not likely to be successful last year, and this year's budget concerns make financial reward even less likely. The communications ideas did pass, however. FCIQ will continue to improve communications between teaching award recipients, to publicize teaching awards through campus periodicals and academic publications, and to encourage departments to institute new awards. To these ends, Loveday Conquest, director of the Teaching Academy, will be asked to continue her participation on the Council.

Carline asked for a motion to support a subcommittee - one person each from FCIQ and FCUR - to work with University Relations about once a quarter to publicize both the teaching award recipients and the awards. It was moved, seconded, and passed to appoint such a subcommittee. Peter McCracken volunteered to be FCIQ's representative on the new subcommittee, to be known as the Teaching Excellence Publications Subcommittee. Wayne Jacobson will work with McCracken on the subcommittee.

## **New Business**

### 1. Monitoring outcomes of prior legislation

Jan Carline commented that the Dean of the Graduate School is seeking to endow a mentorship program award for the Grad School. Carline cited the Brotman Awards as an example of similar awards that financially reward teaching excellence. The Brotman Awards for Instructional Excellence were instituted in 1998 to recognize the accomplishments of programs and departments in advancing excellence in teaching and learning among undergraduates, and are funded by a generous gift from Jeffrey and Susan Brotman. The Awards are given to academic units or groups of people who have achieved excellence in teaching and fostered excellent learning throughout a program of study. Programs, departments, or groups of faculty and/or staff within the University of Washington are eligible to receive a Brotman Award. Each year, a total of \$35,000 is available for the awards, which range from \$10,000 to \$35,000, depending upon the number of awards given in a year. The award money can be used in any way that improves undergraduate education at the University and that is consistent with the general spirit and intent of the Award.

Carline suggested that he and George Bridges talk to the Graduate School to move the issue forward. After discussion, there was general consensus that this was a good avenue to explore. While endowments depend on what donors want to achieve, Lisa Coutu observed that FCIQ should do a better job of letting the Development Office know what kind of programs and funding FCIQ would like to see. Carline said he would invite the Development Office to come and talk to FCIQ about the best way to work with them to obtain funding.

## 2. Course Responsibility Class C Draft

Jan Carline drew Council members' attention to the draft Class C Resolution entitled "Institutional Responsibilities in Courses with Teaching Assistants," which delineates the faculty's position on issues that would be encountered in the event of a strike by Teaching Assistants and Research Assistants. Members should read the draft thoroughly and email Senate Chair Brad Holt their concerns.

## 3. Student Evaluations/Merit Increases

Carline asked whether Council members have encountered problems with student evaluations being tied to merit increases. There is a sense by some faculty, Carline said, that they're being misused by the student ratings. Issues include faculty concerns about how well students can rate a course, coupled with department chairs who don't know how to evaluate the ratings or who rely on student evaluations too heavily.

Maria Simpson commented that this issue may be related to Regent Gates' issue. Carline said that, in his department, merit decisions are left to the Chair. General discussion revealed divergent practices and opinions; Carline will ask Brad Holt to speak to the Council about student evaluations and expected raises, and the relationship between them.

Per Reinhall noted that student evaluations are made public and asked if they should be, since evaluations are partially dependent on personality and course choice. Nana Lowell responded that the evaluations are public information, but that there may be a better way to provide the information. Carline asked Lowell to bring a copy of the reports sent to department chairs so FCIQ can evaluate them. Lowell said there is no faculty-specific information on the reports; she will bring a sample to the next meeting. Brad Holt, Senate Chair, will be asked to attend the next FCIQ meeting to discuss this issue.

## 4. Lecturers and Senior Lecturers

The Faculty Council on Faculty Affairs has taken up the issue of Lecturers and Senior Lecturers, and is drafting legislation that will clarify and codify some of these issues. Lisa Coutu reported that, among other things, FCFA is recommending that Lecturers be eligible for Distinguished Teaching Awards.

At the next FCIQ meeting December 12, Senate Chair Brad Holt will speak on student evaluations. If members have other agenda items for the meeting, please email them to Jan Carline.

All Council members are encouraged to attend the November 30 joint FCAS/FCIQ meeting with Regent Gates.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05. *Minutes by Linda Fullerton, Recorder.*