

The University of Washington Faculty Council on Instructional Quality

The Faculty Council on Instructional Quality met Friday, November 8, at 10:30 a.m. in 36 Gerberding Hall. Chair Jan Carline presided.

PRESENT: *Professors* Carline, Coutu, Devasia, Greenwald, McGovern, Nichter, Wenderoth
 Ex officio Bowen, Bridges, Brooks, Clark, Conquest, Croft, Jacobson, Lewis, Lowell

ABSENT: *Professors* Copland, Hoffer, Kyes, Mulligan, Reinhall
 Ex officio Pitre

Carline called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

Synopsis

1. Approve agenda
2. Approve minutes
3. Revision of Autumn Quarter Start Date
4. Rose Report: Joint Governance
5. Academic Challenge Issues
6. Continue discussion of Evaluation of Teaching
 - a) Design of web page and web access to evaluations
 - b) Recommendations for use of student evaluations of teaching

Agenda

The agenda was approved.

Minutes

The minutes of the October meeting were approved.

Revision of Autumn Quarter Start Date.

(Pre-discussion excerpt of email from Tim Washburn to FCIQ: A Wednesday start date is being proposed to allow Monday and Tuesday for new student orientation and to allow more time for TA training before the quarter begins. Our original interest in beginning the autumn quarter earlier resulted from faculty complaints about not enough grading time between finals week and December holidays. This new proposal would provide a Monday-Friday finals week which would generally occur one week earlier in December than the present academic calendar.)

Carline reminded the Council that Tim Washburn wants to revise the start date for Autumn Quarter so students will have more study time at quarter end and faculty will have more grading time. This change is in response to requests from a large number of faculty.

The original proposal was that Fall Quarter start a week earlier. Council Chairs of FCAS, FCIQ, and some other Faculty Council Chairs met with Washburn - it was decided to also meet with all the Councils to get a good sense of faculty feeling on this proposal.

In general discussion, the consensus was that everyone needs a break at Quarter end and this proposal accomplishes that. The only downside of the idea is that there is less time to train TAs. Karen Brooks, of GPSS, wanted to be sure that ample time is allowed for TA training. Wayne Jacobson cautioned that CIDR does a lot of training for departments in the week prior to the present start date. Adjustments would

have to be made in this program. Mary Pat Wenderoth voiced concerns that faculty not be asked to give up part of their summers in order to start Fall Quarter early. She felt this warranted more discussion with faculty members in her department.

George Bridges added that English has a two-week TA training period. In some instances, TA appointments may start on September 1 and TAs would be compensated for the extra time. In affected departments, central funds would support this requirement.

The new start time will also allow Undergraduate Education to conduct a new two-day orientation for incoming freshmen and transfer students, where 150 faculty will be present and work with students in small groups to establish the University's expectations of them, so they will clearly understand what they need to do for academic success at the UW.

Carline commented that the Council's general sense seems to be that that this change is a great idea, with significant issues to be resolved in the area of TA training opportunities. Benefits include a longer break for students, more time for faculty to get grades turned in, and no net change in class days.

It was moved, seconded, and passed that FCIQ endorses the proposal with the proviso that Teaching Assistant training time prior to September 15 be compensated through central administration funds.

Rose Report

Carline described the work of the Rose Committee, a group of Faculty Council chairs who have been meeting to consider the effectiveness of the faculty councils and committees as presently structured.

The Rose Committee began by looking at structure, but soon identified the larger issue as joint governance itself, and how it is working at the UW. Of concern is the proliferation of administrative committees and task forces that parallel the faculty council/committees, deal with the same issues, and tend to preempt Faculty council/committee functions.

The report produced by the Rose Committee concluded that virtually all the existing councils, committees, and task forces should be disbanded and replaced with joint faculty/administration committees that would govern jointly. Carline asked FCIQ members to comment on the proposal.

At present, said Carline, the Faculty Senate has sole responsibility for curriculum, instruction, and academic programs. Faculty Senate Councils work very hard to address these issues under their jurisdiction. The administration has responsibility for maintaining and running the campus.

This proposal, Bridges said, claims - and correctly claims, he added - that units of the administration have not adequately consulted the faculty in adopting administrative changes. A good example is the change in the academic calendar. The proposal to merge administrative and faculty committees is an interesting one, because everyone would have to give up some power. Carline commented that faculty are less concerned with the apparent loss of power than they are with being ignored.

The proposed new committees would be co-chaired by one faculty member and one administration member. If the relationships are good, Bridges said, this could work well. If relationships were not good, not much would happen. At present, the only body that uses co-chairs is the Senate Committee on Planning and Budgeting - council members did not know how this has worked. As a social psychologist, Greenwald said the issue of co-chairs should be approached very cautiously.

It's also important that faculty have the opportunity to meet and discuss their own issues without administration present, said Coutu. If there were no opportunity, to do this, it would be problematic. This

may be addressed by subcommittees, said Carline. Caucuses might also be a possibility. Bowen added that it all comes down to the cast of players – the administration has to assess its cast of players to see how they're functioning. The same is true of the Senate leaders, who have to fix any people problems that arise.

Next steps for the Rose plan, said Carline, would be recommendations to SEC and the administration (advisory) as to how the restructuring might be done. If endorsed by SEC, the plan would be produced as legislation to be discussed and voted upon by the Faculty Senate. A working group has been put together by Sandra Silberstein, with a charge to devise a plan for implementing the restructure, and to report back in February, 2003.

One of the questions that comes out of this, said Bridges, is how can and should the central administration be more effective in consulting the faculty before it makes administrative decisions. One of the two or three drivers of the current proposal is that the Faculty Senate has been excluded from consultations. If this restructure is not the best way to proceed, and it may not be, what are other mechanisms that could be created to ensure high levels of consultation by administrators? Sometimes it's just easier not to consult.

Mary Pat Wenderoth commented that this is an issue we should be most concerned about in the selection of a new president. Carline and Devasia agreed that the reason FCIQ works so well is that administrators attend and listen, and that the courtesy is reciprocated.

Carline invited FCIQ members to submit their comments, questions, and concerns on this entire issue to the working group for the Rose plan.

Academic Challenge Issues

George Bridges related his current discussion with Regent Gates, who has been in conversation with Bridges for two years about the level of academic challenge provided UW students by the curriculum and the faculty. Gates would like the UW to raise the bar. He would like the UW to answer the question "Do we have standards, and what are they?"

The short answer is that we do have standards, said Bridges, but they're not written down. Gates and Bridges have met with FCAS and FCIQ members, who agreed that norms would be helpful. Now the debate becomes about norms – what is good teaching and what isn't good teaching? The dilemma is to create and apply standards that are relevant to such diverse disciplines as, for example, Engineering, Communications, Biology, and Sociology. Standards are very different for all these disciplines.

The last conversation in this ongoing discussion included Bridges, Sandra Silberstein, Doug Wadden, and Jan Carline. Ideas that emerged would be applied at the department level:

- Restructure the 10-Year Review – ask departments about standards and norms.
- Address through Academic Standards – what kind of teaching is occurring?
- Do a better job of informing the Regents, who do not hear about 99% of the dedicated teachers at the UW.

Carline added that Gates' primary concern is that students are not writing adequately. There is an Arts and Sciences subgroup reviewing student writing; it was hoped that other colleges could be looked at as well. Writing courses are not always delivered well, and are not functioning as had been hoped. Bridges addressed the problem of bad teaching – he gets a distribution list of the evaluations and, with 2000 teaching faculty, there are bound to be some who need help. It would be important to improve the help extended to teachers who are in trouble.

Revising course approval forms has been suggested, so that standards are built-in to the initial course requirements. Carline asked whether FCIQ would like to take up the issue of revising these forms.

Tony Greenwald said there are indicators of the level of challenge in a class and these can be addressed and assessed in the approval request – the number of pages of assigned reading and the number of papers assigned can be reliable indicators of challenge. There will be other criteria as well – it would be good and useful to do an investigation into how some of the 100 and 200 level classes have changed over the years. Nana Lowell added that quantitative reasoning is important as well – the requirements here have actually been decreased over the years, not increased.

Coutu suggested that some time be given to defining the problem more carefully – it may be that some indicators could be added to the course request form, but a better solution can be reached if the problem is better defined. She would be willing to put some effort into this.

Carline asked Coutu and Greenwald to get together and discuss problem definition strategies with Bridges. Carline would also like to invite Tim Washburn to speak to Council about the course approval process, possibly in December.

Evaluation of Teaching

Continuing the discussion of evaluation of teaching, Carline asked Nana Lowell to discuss the emailed examples of the Web page on course evaluations.

Lowell discovered that the evaluation numbers on the Web are unadjusted, while the adjusted numbers are sent to instructors, which accounts for the differences in the numbers. The choice of items displayed was selected before her time, so she does not know what the rationale was for them.

Medians are used instead of means because the distribution is highly skewed – most courses are rated very highly, with a tail-off to the left. When you compute a mean, it's affected by the shape of the distribution, whereas a median is not. The median was chosen as possibly more representative of the class. But the mean is easier to explain.

Lowell said she would like to assume responsibility for the evaluations page, which is now maintained by Computing and Communications and is a low priority for them. She has asked about this, but has not heard back. She thinks C& C would not be sorry to see it gone.

Carline concluded that the information presented on the three-page ASUW site and the links to data may not be as helpful as they could be. ASUW rep Cammie Croft confirmed this – as a student, she said she found the site confusing and did not find all the professors she was looking for. She finally gave up on the site and relied on word-of-mouth for course recommendations. She thinks it is used more by the freshman and sophomore classes, since it is presented at orientation as a good resource. Once a student becomes more familiar with the course offerings and professors, they tend to rely more upon the student grapevine.

Bridges commented that the site needs to be a little more student-friendly. Wenderoth suggested finding out what the students want to know, and revising the displayed data to reflect that. Perhaps ASUW could do some small groups and find out what the students think. What would the Web page look like if the students could design it? Croft, Lowell, Bridges and possibly Wayne Jacobson will work on this.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00. *Minutes by Linda Fullerton, Recorder.*