

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
FACULTY COUNCIL ON EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

The Faculty Council on Educational Outreach met at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, **April 22, 2002**. Chair Steve Buck presided.

Approval of the minutes

Due to lack of quorum, the minutes of the March 20, 2002 meeting could not be voted on for approval.

Distance Learning course approval issues and process – Paul LePore, Director of Undergraduate Program Development for the College of Arts and Sciences

Buck distributed a copy of the “Distance Learning Course Supplement” from the University of Washington Curriculum Review Committee, as well as copies of the “New Course Application” and the “Course Change Application.” [Rev. 5/02]

Buck said LePore and will soon be receiving between 75 and 100 DL-suffix course applications. LePore said he receives 20 to 30 course applications a month. But, as Buck pointed out, those are not Distance Learning applications.

Buck said the strategy of the Curriculum Review Committee is, from all appearances, to have a single Distance Learning Course Supplement sheet for both the New Course Application and the Course Change Application. He said: “Are they asking the right questions?” He suggested that, following LePore’s remarks, those present go over the Distance Learning Course Supplement and come up with any suggestions they might have for possible changes.

LePore said, “The modality of teaching employed in courses does not matter to colleges and schools, *if* the courses are *good* courses, and their outcome goals, and actual outcomes, are equivalent. The colleges and schools have great latitude in this regard.” He said the goal of the curriculum committees in the dean’s office, in each college, is to make certain that these aspects of instructional modality are clear to students who are taking, or who might be taking, these courses.

LePore said, “The goal is to keep the Distance Learning courses *consistent* with their classroom-based counterparts, or, if there are no classroom-based counterparts, with existing ‘conducted’ courses.” He stressed that the “same amount of work should be expected from students for both DL courses and their classroom-based equivalents.”

LePore said, “The technological requirements of Distance Learning courses will mean that some students will not be able to access all the material they need to access for a particular DL course. We will have to be aware of that.” The overriding issue, when all discrepancies due to teaching modalities are taken into account, is that the learning outcomes must be identical and equivalent. “If it’s a *good* teaching modality – and students have access – that’s what matters.”

LePore said he spoke with Vice Provost Steve Olswang about what departments need to do regarding support for Distance Learning courses. “We must have support accommodations on campus for students taking DL courses. There may not be necessary support accommodations at students’ homes, in all instances, but we can provide the support that is needed on campus.” Buck said DL instructors should, in courses with a high expectancy of off-campus students, make every effort to see that those students have access to course material.

LePore said, “We are concerned about non-matriculated students. If a significant proportion of students could not get access to course material, the course for them would not be an experience equivalent academically to a classroom-based course.” He said that, in some courses, a student might be able to participate in the oral, but not in the written, part of the course. That would leave a gaping hole in that student’s experience of the course.

Buck noted that “rapid change” is overtaking the issue of access to course materials. He said many students have access to Web sites via their UW Net ID, but many still are without access to materials on the Internet and elsewhere. The changes do mean, however, that for many students, “what has *not* been feasible for access is *becoming* feasible now.”

Buck said, “There won’t be DL courses *only* for non-matriculated students; so we will be pushing to make more resources available *here*. Though this means that there will be an increased burden on UW Libraries in providing resources: a shift towards an increased load for the Libraries.”

Deardorff – the Libraries representative on the council – said, “We’ve been supplying some *free* resources all over the country that we won’t be able to keep on supplying [due to budget constraints].”

LePore said, “I do think Distance Learning courses at the 100 and 200 level become more sensible when resources are limited. This will also shift as departments think holistically about curricula. Information literacy components can be enhanced. Departments will be required to know how different courses fit together, how they complement one another.”

Buck stressed that, if Distance Learning courses are clearly labeled, and expectations of students are clearly set out, it will be an immense help to students deciding whether or not to take the courses. He said that students have sometimes found out about a particular course being predominantly Distance Learning only after the course was under way.

Buck said the “biggest issue” is that, in courses that are “mixed-mode” – where a Web-based component is *added* – this is clearly communicated to students prior to enrollment in such courses. LePore said this will show up his committee when an instructor is proposing a course. Buck said, “We are trying to alert students in advance [in Psychology]. Also, if something is not working, students will complain, and not just to the instructor.”

LePore said, “It’s ‘truth in advertising.’ Blurbs in course descriptions are *not* adequate now. We need to put in ‘key words’ that tell students what they need to know about the course: ‘key words’ such as ‘Distance Learning,’ ‘Web-based,’ and the like, and not just ‘special topics.’ Also, Faculty should be encouraged *not* to add requirements after the syllabus goes out. If departments offer a Distance Learning course, they will have to explain *why* the course is in, and *should* be in, the DL modality.”

Buck said there is a “huge domain [of courses] in the middle” that use the Web and other resources, but are not Distance Learning courses, and are not regular classroom courses that use *no* special technological components.” LePore said students themselves “are trying to figure all this out. We’re moving towards putting curricular material online, and we will now be able to provide Guidelines as well.”

Distance Learning Course Supplement

Buck said that DL2 should read, “How will most of the **non-classroom-based** course content be delivered?” [additions in bold]

Buck said DL3 is, for the most part, the wording of FCEO’s suggested Guidelines.

Buck said DL4 is a “statement about how *much* of a class will be in the Distance Learning modality.” LePore said this is an excellent inclusion.

Buck said it is important to know if an instructor intends to put the equivalent of a regular classroom course into a 10-week Distance Learning course. Also important: What is the *maximum* time to completion of the DL course? The instructor will want to be able to say, in his course description, “This course requires X weeks for completion.” It is good to have this on the syllabus (the course description). This would also be helpful, as a reference point, to a new professor coming in to teach the same course.” It was pointed out that the last sentence in DL6 addresses this concern. [“What is the maximum time allowed for completion of this course (weeks)?”]

LePore said a particular DL course could be a “self-paced, self-determined course for a particular student.” Buck said, “Length of time of a Distance Learning course should not be prescribed, but there should be a *minimum* length of time for any DL course.”

Buck said Financial Aid could be an issue for many Distance Learning students. “Some students cannot do Distance Learning because of factors that we can’t control.” LePore said there are upwards of 700 student athletes, for instance, most all of whom cannot do Distance Learning, several other categories of students.

Regarding DL4, Buck said, “They’re not asking about technological resources here. Students need to know what technologies they’ll need to have for a specific DL course.

It was noted that the Distance Learning Course Supplement will be used in both the New Course Application and the Course Change Application. Treser said he agreed that it is essential to be as accurate as possible about DL course delineations. “It isn’t always the case that a so-called 50% DL course *is* in fact 50% Distance Learning. It could be *many* things.”

LePore said a vital question is: “What are the learning objectives, the outcomes, of a particular DL course? They *should* be the same as those for classroom-based courses.” When it was mentioned that an important component of course objectives is student interaction, the suggestion was made that students could be asked to communicate with one another via E-mail and the Internet, and in other ways, if they do not see each other in a classroom setting. It was agreed that communication between students is crucial to developing and sustaining an ‘equivalent’ DL course. LePore added that “departments have a vested interest in *not* dumbing-down their courses.”

Treser said, “If you have a three-credit DL course that looks in practice more like a five-credit course, that needs to be addressed.” LePore said, “Departments are looking carefully at that, and are doing a good job.”

Regarding DL7 (“Instruction”), Buck said, “Is this way of putting it the best way?” Treser asked, “If the Distance Learning course is *not* offered also as a regular classroom-based course, how do you guarantee the outcome of the course? You could ask how it compares to an existing

'conducted' course." Buck said, "You could start with the second sentence in DL7." ["Describe how students will receive feedback and how they will be assessed."] Treser said, "That's an important point: If students can't interact with other students, you have a significant problem. Departments might want to make sure that minimal contact with other students is possible in their Distance Learning courses. And especially, there are decided benefits in live interaction between students." [Though LePore said –without disagreeing with the importance of this point – that in certain DL courses student interaction might be less important than in others.]

It was suggested that, where live interaction is not possible, and electronic interaction is limited, lists of student questions and responses could be shared. What students *come to understand* in a particular DL course could be made available to other students. Treser said, "You could use a variety of student groups, but what groups those were would be determined on a case-to-case basis in each course." He stressed that it would not be desirable to having anything prescribed in this context. LePore said, "Departments on program forms could address the interaction issue." Treser suggested putting this into DL4.

Buck said, DL4 and DL7 ["Structural Design" and "Instruction"] "could be merged." Treser said, "Either do that or keep them *really* separate." LePore suggested putting "Resources" in DL2. Buck said, "We could take out the reference to non-technological resources in DL4 and put it in DL2." LePore said DL7 could be called "Instruction and Assessment" and include everything relevant in both those areas. Buck suggested following DL4 immediately with DL6. And it was agreed that DL8 could be eliminated. LePore said, "Make certain that the question of resources is indeed on the first page, and make it clear that it applies to 'on-campus' resources." And he said DL6 [Contact hours and credits] could be removed.

LePore said, "If we could get a course description that actually related to the course, *that* would help greatly."

Buck asked council members to send him any thoughts they may have on the Distance Learning Course Supplement. LePore said, "I'd love to show the deans your final version [based on today's discussion and suggested changes]."

FCEO members attending the May 31st FCAS (Academic Standards) meeting

Buck said FCAS Chair Doug Wadden has invited all interested FCEO members to attend the May 31st meeting of the Faculty Council on Academic Standards. The meeting will be devoted to a discussion of Distance Learning programs and tri-campus issues. Buck said there are some "interesting Distance Learning programs coming out of the other campuses." The FCAS meeting will take place at 1:30 p.m. in 142 Gerberding Hall.

Next meeting

The next FCEO meeting is set for Wednesday, June 12, 2002, at 12:30 p.m., in 36 Gerberding Hall.

Brian Taylor, Recorder

PRESENT: *Professors* Buck (Chair) and Treser;
Ex-officio members Bennett and Deardorff;
Guest Paul LePore, Director of Undergraduate Program Development for the College of Arts and Sciences.

ABSENT: *Professors* Daniali, DeYoung, Jenkins, Kieckhefer, Kim, Marcovina, Noble, Simpson and Wells;
Ex-officio members Rose, Szatmary and Weissman.