

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
FACULTY COUNCIL ON EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

The Faculty Council on Educational Outreach met at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, **April 14, 2004**, in 36 Gerberding Hall. Chair William Erdly presided.

Approval of minutes

The minutes of the February 25, 2004 FCEO meeting were approved as written.

Review section updates for Draft 1 of FCEO Strategic Initiatives Document

Erdly said, “We’re trying to create a document to move on to several significant groups and individuals at the University of Washington, including the new president: a document that identifies important areas in educational outreach, and strategic initiatives that will improve and enhance the quality of these areas. I’d like to have the voice of FCEO ‘out there’.”

Erdly identified 10 review sections for the council to focus on: 1) Bottleneck courses [Wilkes]; 2) Summer Quarter [Berger]; 3) Knowledge Management Strategies [Erdly / Johnston]; 4) FCEO Communication Plan [Warbington]; 5) Start-up funding / staff development [Erdly]; 6) Library [Deardorff / Warnick]; 7) EO Strategic Planning – Faculty Involvement [Erdly]; 8) Impact of performance contracts [Erdly]; 9) FCEO / HEC Board – Issue Awareness Strategy [Wells]; and 10) EO Critical Issues – Faculty Perspectives [Eberhardt].

Bottleneck courses – Jeffrey Wilkes

Wilkes’s report noted that “one of the most common complaints from undergraduates concerns so-called ‘bottleneck courses’: required courses, often prerequisites for core courses in their degree program, which are consistently hard to get into due to enrollment limits. In some cases, such courses are offered infrequently, and students are forced to wait a year or more before they can attempt to register again. Departments are unable to add sections or increase enrollment limits because of our chronic shortage of classroom space, and limited availability of faculty. Students may need to take several bottleneck courses, and then find themselves stymied by time schedule conflicts, which force them to postpone enrollment even though space may be available. They may soon be caught in a new double bind, as we introduce time-enrolled and total-credits limits for undergraduates. Nor is the problem limited to underclassmen; many seniors find themselves scrambling to get into courses required for their imminent graduation. On the Seattle campus, over 60 courses had 50 or more students denied registration in Autumn 2003, and 24 courses have been identified by the Office of the Registrar as perennially overbooked. The attached table lists some of these bottleneck courses, which span a wide range of colleges and departments.”

“Bottleneck courses cause more than mere frustration,” Wilkes’s comments continued. “Students forced to extend their undergraduate careers by a year, or even one term, suffer a significant financial impact. Such unanticipated costs are not soon forgotten by the students – or their families. Worse, they may acquire the false impression that the University is not working hard enough to meet their needs, diminishing taxpayer support in a critical period for UW and state-supported higher education in general.”

“Offering bottleneck courses on a distance-learning basis can be a simple and cost-effective solution,” Wilkes’s report observed. “Classroom space and schedule conflicts are no longer issues. Once course materials have been developed, and an effective course website has been created, faculty can devote more of their instructional time to mentoring students via online or

phone conferencing, or email. Since students submit most materials electronically, it is often easier to delegate routine class-management and grading duties to staff or TAs than in a traditionally-taught course.”

“However,” Wilkes’s remarks noted, “transition from the familiar course structure and teacher-student relationships of a classroom-based course to effective distance-learning means much more than simply writing website content. It is generally understood that converting a course to distance-learning requires faculty relief time for content development, just as it would be required to develop any new traditional-format course, but the story cannot end there. Faculty must also be given adequate time allowances and staff support to properly serve their students *every term*. While one office hour a week may suffice for a classroom course, where students have frequent opportunities for quick, informal questions and discussion, faculty teaching distance-learning courses must spend substantial amounts of time *every day* responding to email, course-chat postings, and telephone communications from students.”

“A number of initiatives at UW help faculty create distance-learning courses, or adapt existing courses,” Wilkes further pointed out. “For example, Stephen Kerr (Assoc. Dean in the College of Education) won the UWEO 2004 Faculty Award for Distinguished Contributions to Lifetime Learning Award in part for his role in creating the UW Center for Research and Development on Distance Learning (CRDDL). Jonathan Brock (Assoc. Prof., Evans School) developed The Electronic Hallway, an online repository of teaching and curriculum materials for faculty teaching public administration, public policy, and related subjects. The innovative UW Catalyst program has of course been a prolific source of tools and models for faculty adding web presence to their courses. These and other initiatives demonstrate that we already have, in-house at UW, cadres of experts and existing resources for distance learning course development.”

“However, such initiatives and programs can never replace the oldest but still most important element in all teaching: faculty effort,” Wilkes strongly emphasized. “As many studies have shown, the common mantra that ‘distance learning is cheaper’ is *not* correct. For most courses, distance learning is actually *more* expensive than traditional classroom delivery, in terms of faculty effort per student. Of course our motivation should not be to cut costs without attention to quality, any more than we can afford to ignore ways to reduce costs without impacting effectiveness. Still, any plan to relieve bottlenecks that affect undergraduate education through distance-learning alternatives must accept the need to budget realistically, if quality of instruction - our most important asset at UW - is to be preserved.”

Among bottleneck courses identified by the Office of the Registrar are: [Perennial bottleneck courses] Biology 180, 200, 220; Chemistry 142, 152, 162; Communications 201, 202; Economics 200, 201; English Composition; Mathematics 111, 112, 120, 124, 125, 126; Phys 114, 115, 116, 121, 122, 123.

Courses with more than 100 registration denials in Autumn 2003 include: Sociology 275, Communications 202, Art 190, Sociology 222, English 131, Music 185, Architecture 150, Classics 101, and Chemistry 162.

Brock said, “Often, students going to Medical School wait a year or more to get into a course. This creates tough financial consequences for many of these students, and others who are experiencing the same delays.” And several council members corroborated Wilkes’s point that distance learning, however effective, is *not* cheaper than traditional classroom-based instruction. And everyone agreed that the time and effort on the part of distance learning faculty is considerable.

Szatmary said, with respect to bottleneck courses, that the provost has created several committees related to areas comprising the FCEO Strategic Initiatives document, including: a committee to assess tuition and fees; another to assess enrollment; an ad hoc committee to assess fee-based operations; and several other committees. Szatmary said the faculty is represented on all these committees. “The enrollment committee is looking at bottleneck courses,” he noted. “Sometimes, there *are* seats in a course, but students choose *not* to go at a certain time.” As for high-demand courses, Szatmary said they are rated on a 1-3 basis according to the seriousness of the bottleneck in each individual course. “It depends in part on whether the course is a prerequisite,” he noted. Thus, it may be that *certain* distance learning courses may be more necessary to develop than others. He said the committee is looking into the possibility, and desirability, of the development of Summer Quarter courses as well.

Deardorff asked, “Is there any metric on students waiting around for classes, and taking *other* courses?” Wilkes said, “I’ve talked to many students who have been in that situation. There must be a large number of such students overall.” Wells said, “There are some 2,500 pre-major Health Science students on campus waiting to get into classes they must take.” She also said that “some professors won’t accept the place that transferred credits are coming from, which creates a big problem.” Erdly said, “Yes, we experience that in the inner sciences as well.”

As regards the issue of majors, Szatmary said, “Professional schools – Engineering, Dentistry, etc. – place a cap on the number of students who can get into their programs. Students *flow* into, say, Economics because they can’t get into Business, or some other major. There are lots of juniors hanging around, trying to get into majors.”

Berger said, “It’s worse now. The sciences should be carefully considered because of the prerequisites involved. And the same for those in pre-Med.” Szatmary said, “We looked at the development of a fee-based pre-med series of courses and found that we would have to charge \$300 per credit because of costs (laboratories, etc.), as opposed to the \$166 charge per student for state-funded Arts and Sciences programs.”

Erdly said, “Are there bottlenecks *within* majors?” Wells responded, “Yes, there *can* be. Faculty feel they need more substitute courses because of the number of students [enrolled in specific courses]. The substitute course ‘selective list’ is working well. The *time* at which a class is held can be a problem. But the *space* is most often there.” Wilkes said, “Students often don’t know until late in their undergraduate career *what they want to be*, and change majors. Then they are confronted with a double bind due to the new total-credits limits. This is a significant issue.” Wilkes also suggested that late afternoon classes could be looked at, “though that’s when seminars take place, which can present a problem for faculty.”

Erdly said, “There is a lot of information on bottleneck courses, and a lot of committees looking at this issue.” He also observed that “students say we’re not offering the variety of specialty courses that we might, and Educational Outreach and Distance Learning could possibly offer some of these courses, with 10 or 15 students in the courses instead of the usual 30.” Erdly noted that “there are many topics faculty would like to offer but cannot for lack of the necessary number of students.”

Erdly said, “There will be two sections with these categories [in this category, as in others in the FCEO Strategic Initiatives Document]: 1) What is the state of art now?, and 2) What can be done?: What action is possible?”

Summer Quarter – Arnold Berger

Berger said, “We’re under pressure to accept more students. How could we utilize Summer Quarter in a way that would help allay this pressure? There is no FTE credit for Summer Quarter.” Szatmary said the University of Washington Summer Quarter fee-based program is the second largest in the country. “We can put as many courses up for enrollment in Summer Quarter as there are students to take the courses,” he stressed. “The University as a whole gets a fair amount of net revenue in Summer Quarter. The question is: How do we *grow* Summer Quarter programs? The students just aren’t *there*, at present, to do so.”

Berger said, “We want classes to be taken when they *count*. If we teach in Summer Quarter, we lose students autumn through spring. That’s the way it is now, at any rate.” Warnick said, “This seems to be an unfortunate, and correctable, situation.” Berger said, “We *lose* money because we’ve used the artifact to increase profit.” Wilkes suggested that “if departments could count FTE’s in Summer Quarter, that would help.” Erdly said, “Some faculty might want to, say, do Autumn, Winter, and Summer Quarters for their nine-month academic year. As it is, it’s a disservice to students, who are ready to take courses that are not available.” Szatmary said, “You *could* do an experiment. You could go to a dean and say, ‘Let’s try this [course] in Summer Quarter, and see if it *does* affect other quarters’ enrollment.’ At Bothell and Tacoma, I think students would *want* to take Summer Quarter courses. Summer Quarter enrollment has held steady, but revenue has increased a lot because of non-resident tuition fees. It would be good to get FCEO’s ideas on possible new directions for Summer Quarter programs.”

Szatmary noted that a significant and persistent problem with students *generally* – and this is something that affects every part of students’ academic careers – is that they *cannot write*. To suggest the severity of the problem, he recalled George Bridges, Dean of Undergraduate Education, saying that some students “write sentences that have no verbs.” He said there is a need for “a special five- to ten-week intensive Summer Quarter program for incoming freshmen” on the rudiments of writing. Szatmary asked council members to give him any other ideas they might have “on how to use Summer Quarter *creatively*.” Warnick said, “Some bottleneck courses could be offered in Summer Quarter.” Szatmary concurred.

Knowledge Management Strategies – William Erdly / Norman Johnston

Johnson said there is a need for greater availability of non-degree courses. “It would make a positive contribution,” he stressed. He also stressed that “it adds a dimension of integrity to a course to have seniors and emeriti involved in its membership.” He further suggested that emeritus faculty “could take on temporary teaching duties” in certain instances, and that the experience they would bring to such work would be invaluable.

Erdly brought up the issue of research for credit, and the coordination of research for Summer Quarter courses. “How does this work? And could we not link students into this process?” Szatmary said that Debra Friedman “linked undergraduate students to faculty research,” but pointed out that “it’s not a part of Educational Outreach. We would have to consider the funding element.”

Erdly said, “We want to consider the actual management of *lessons learned* in Educational Outreach. Websites, of course, are one basic way to manage such lessons. And we could have a faculty guide, linking all of this to departmental issues.” Erdly asked: “Would it be worthy to develop an infrastructure of the processes [of knowledge management] and of the knowledge itself? What ways are there to share *content*? To have a shared University-owned resource to manage intellectual capital?”

Wilkes said, "Staff support would be valuable in this Web-based material; it's a problem of maintenance." Erdly said, "There *are* computing standards that help to improve this process." Wells said, "Yes, faculty create, but can't *maintain*. There aren't funds for that kind of help." Szatmary said, "We could have students help somewhat. The issue of technical support is a problem that varies considerably from department to department. Some departments have technical people who do all sorts of this work." Wilkes, however, said he was "talking about basic maintenance: secretarial support. Tech support is a different issue."

Start-up funding / Staff development – William Erdly

Erdly said he wrote an executive summary on this issue. "I'll send that out to council members. And I'll add the administrative challenges associated with allowing us to do outreach programs."

Library – Deardorff / Warnick

Deardorff's report to the council stressed that "the Libraries provides many services that are used by Educational Outreach (EO) students, but as the number of EO students increases the Libraries will be hard pressed to support the additional demands of these students."

With respect to database access, "the Libraries provides access to a wide range of databases that can be used remotely. Currently a number of problems exist with use of the proxy server that should be resolved with the implementation of EZProxy, a UWNeID authentication system that will be implemented soon. EZProxy will still require some support from library staff."

Concerning Collection access / Document delivery, Deardorff noted that "most library units provide evening and weekend hours to facilitate access by non-traditional students in Evening Degree Programs or Distance Learning courses. Suzzallo and Allen Libraries are open 7:30 to 10:00 on weekdays and OUGL is open 24 hours a day from Sunday at 1:00 p.m. to Friday at 6:00 p.m. during the regular school year. For students not able to come to campus, the Libraries provides books and photocopies to EO students at cost." In response to a question, Deardorff said, "The Libraries is open less long now due to the budget cuts the Libraries has had to make."

Regarding Reference / Consultation services / User instruction, Deardorff said, "The Libraries have a live Web-based reference service available most days from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. to support student needs. The Libraries also supports e-mail, phone and mail requests. The Libraries provides a consultation request form for students who have more in-depth research needs. Most instructional classes are taught on campus. Reference staff are available in Suzzallo Library until 9:00 p.m. weekdays and OUGL staffs the reference desk until 10:00 p.m. when open."

As for Development of EO classes, "Library departmental liaisons sometimes work with instructors to make sure that library resources are available to EO students. The Libraries would like to work more collaboratively with instructors developing EO classes."

Finally, with respect to coordinating EO support and publicizing information to EO students, Deardorff noted that "most universities of our size have a librarian dedicated to Educational Outreach. These positions serve a valuable role coordinating and developing services for DL students and by serving as a central access point for EO issues. In addition they can promote library services to both EO students and instructors that can facilitate teaching and learning. The Libraries has requested money for this position in the past and has not been funded."

Deardorff informed the council that the Libraries "has liaisons in every department of the University to contact," if assistance is needed in any of the areas discussed in this report.

Szatmary told the council: “If *you* can help us learn what your *heavy-use programs* are, that would help us considerably [in Educational Outreach].” And he added: “If you want to help me frame a report on fee-based activity, that would be most helpful.” Erdly said of Educational Outreach: “This is the growth area of the University, to be sure.”

Erdly told the council that he would bring hard copies of reports on all areas of the FCEO Strategic Initiative document to the May 12th council meeting. Also, Wilkes offered to set up a catalyst site to store and manage draft sections of the document for FCEO.

Next meeting

The next FCEO meeting is set for Wednesday, May 12, 2004, at 9:00 a.m., in 36 Gerberding Hall. Brian Taylor, Recorder

PRESENT: *Professors* Erdly (Chair), Berger, Brock, Warnick, Wells and Wilkes;
Ex-officio members Deardorff, Johnston and Szatmary.

ABSENT: *Professors* Collins, Eberhardt, Goldsmith (on sabbatical) and Kim;
Ex-officio member Warbington.