

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
FACULTY COUNCIL ON EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

The Faculty Council on Educational Outreach met at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, **March 20, 2002**. Chair Steve Buck presided.

Approval of the minutes

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

Discussion and acceptance of final changes to the Distance Learning Guidelines and Resources statement

Buck said he wanted to finalize the draft of the FCEO Distance Learning Guidelines and Resources statement following today's council meeting.

He distributed a copy of comments made by Richard Simkins (PSO representative from the Office of Undergraduate Education, longtime undergraduate advisor, and a key member of the Subcommittee on Admissions and Programs in the Faculty Council on Academic Standards) on the draft of the Guidelines and for the New Course Application form.

Simkins asked, "Is it essential that we use the term 'Distance Learning' to describe courses for which Guidelines are now being determined? Throughout the document, the terms 'onsite' and 'online' are used, and that might be a clearer distinction for those reading the Guidelines. Could we use 'Distance Learning' to encompass all formats, but 'onsite' and 'online' in the discussion of Guidelines?"

Simkins suggested that "the Guidelines in the design document tend to convey the message that DL courses must 'prove' themselves vis-à-vis the onsite curriculum. I wonder if that's the message we want to convey, i.e., that somehow DL courses are 'inferior' until proven otherwise." He suggested "requiring periodic review of all courses, onsite and online." As it is, once courses are approved, they are never again reviewed, "even though years may elapse." Simkins asked, "If online courses are going to be reviewed periodically, should onsite courses undergo the same process?"

Simkins noted that, in the discussion of Distance Learning to date, "the emphasis seems to have been primarily on department responsibility for such courses (and programs), coupled with some type of review beyond the department level. This formula could apply to a curriculum-wide review as well, i.e., each department reviewing its entire curriculum once in, say, ten years."

Simkins said that the NCA and CCA forms "could do with revision, even if DL were not on the agenda." He suggested several possible additions (using the current NCA form), including:

- 1) Purpose of request: Add categories (boxes) for permanent/temporary new course in an online format, etc.
- 2) Justification: Separate justification for an online course would not be needed, since justification relates to content rather than to format.
- 3) Catalog data: After the 50-word limit, add a sentence to say, "Include online designation, if applicable."

4a) Credits and hours. This is where the online-course format could be indicated. In recent years, the official contact/outside hours formula has become more flexible. Is it still necessary to state those two categories?

4c) Credits and hours. How will students be evaluated for credit or grades? This is the category probably more often questioned by the A&S Curriculum Committee than any other item on the form. Some NCA's are very vague (e.g., "exams, papers, participation"). Others are more specific, indicating what percentage of the grade will be based on various assignments/exams, plus the number of exams, etc. Perhaps a sentence should be added to this section, stating that departments should include specific information on number of exams, papers, assignments, plus relevance of "participation" (whatever that might be) to the final grade.

5a) Students. Anticipated enrollment per quarter. Add: ("Anticipated enrollment per offering for online courses.").

Reorganization of faculty councils – Steve Buck

Buck said the Rose Task Force (whose members include the chairs of the faculty councils and special committees) may be suggesting a possible integration of certain faculty councils and administrative councils or committees whose areas of interest overlap. And recommendations may be made to merge certain faculty councils. All suggestions are tentative at this stage. Buck will keep the council abreast of the Task Force's discussions.

Discussion of course approval process for DL-suffix courses: Tim Washburn, Executive Director, Admissions and Records; Van Johnson, Associate Registrar, Registrar's Office; and Matthew Winslow, Publications Coordinator, General Catalog/Curriculum

Buck informed the council's guests of the FCEO Distance Learning Guidelines and Resources statement, which the council hopes will be helpful to them, to individual faculty, to departments contemplating sets of courses that need to be converted or established, and to people involved with curriculum review.

"You have to do the real work," Buck told the guests. "If FCEO can be of any help, in any way at all – perhaps with changes on the Course Application form - let us know."

Buck "stepped back" and spoke to the council's overall perspective. "We see the course application process and related issues as being generalized to courses other than Distance Learning. Also, there should be sets of questions for particular course formats." Buck said equivalence of courses is paramount. "Distance Learning courses are not inferior courses. The Distance Learning legislation seeks to give DL and classroom versions of the same course equal status. But they are indeed different."

"We are aware that progress has shot past us even before we have the approval in place for the straight DL courses," said Buck.

Buck drew the guests' attention to page two of the "Design and evaluation of DL-suffix courses at the University of Washington," where 11 points (or issues) are expressed in the form of questions "that should be considered during course design and approval review."

"These are the issues the council wants to draw attention to," Buck told the guests. "And the issues apply to both DL and regular classroom courses. We did not separate them out."

Points 1-3, said Buck, “address issues of “justification and the role of a Distance Learning course in the unit’s curriculum.” Points 4-9 address issues about format. “The answers for Distance Learning versions may be different than for non-DL courses,” Buck noted. “But some of this applies to all versions of a course: to the overall content of a course separate from the course’s format. Though we haven’t stated that explicitly.” Point 10 addresses what should be asked on a course approval form regarding the instructor’s “preparation and training for teaching with the specified technology (e.g., online, interactive video, etc.)” Buck said this is an extremely important factor.

Washburn asked, “Would we want to incorporate these questions into the body of the application, or include it as an appendix?” Buck said “Either way seems workable, but are these issues we should be getting more information on?” Washburn said, “That will vary from point to point. For example, almost all our programs are for matriculated students. It needn’t be part of the course review unless it’s Distance Learning. We then need to know what technologies the instructor will be using to be able to get the right room for the course. Different instructors use more or less technology.”

Buck said, “In the past, it was easier to assume a mode of interaction in a course. Now, however, with more and more hybrid courses, it is time to ask these questions – about non-traditional interaction with students – even for regular classroom courses.” Treser said, “There are different kinds of questions for quality information and for trend information.” Washburn said, “Some departments have courses they aren’t even aware of, courses that are offered at one time and then not offered for another five years. It can change dramatically from course to course.”

Wells said, “We need a reason to justify courses, quite aside from whether a course is Distance Learning or not. We need to avoid redundancy.”

Buck said points 1-3 on page two (referred to above) “identify possible trouble spots. Students sometimes are forced to take Distance Learning courses. But, as we have so often pointed out in our council discussions, Distance Learning is not for every student. The problem arises when an academic program requires a DL course. Not all students even have the technological resources for Distance Learning.”

Buck said a crucial question to ask is: What role does this course play in the academic programs of its unit? “We don’t have this down anywhere at present,” he observed. “There is no information on how a course fits into its academic program. There may need to be something about this in the review process.”

Washburn said, “The curriculum is so dynamic that one might try a Distance Learning version of a course and find that it is best to go with only a DL course, in a particular program. It would be helpful to see both the existing program and a Distance Learning proposal together; we need an integrated proposal to be able to review both the classroom course and the DL course.”

Buck said an expanded description of the content of courses in the catalog could prove to be helpful. The catalog could contain “some generalizing beyond specific descriptions. A generalized content description could be created that would encompass all possible versions of a course. If it varies from college to college, perhaps it could be included as part of procedures.”

Washburn said, “There could be a single integrated application, with a fuller description.” Treser said, “We need to be able to pick it up immediately if a new Distance Learning course already has a classroom version.” Winslow said, “We’ll have a way of triggering that information. We could

add the Distance Learning information to the already existing course: a change to the existing course.”

Winslow suggested that syllabi for both versions of a course could be required. “We would then know if the content of the two versions is different.” He repeated a point of Washburn’s: “Many departments forget that they have certain courses; they only discover that they do when they apply for a ‘new program’ approval.”

Washburn said, “If what’s there is the same, can’t we design something that only requires noting what’s different because of the DL format (i.e., the content of the course may well not change at all): a supplementary page for this information, attached with the existing course information.”

Buck said, “It is desirable to make it as easy as possible for departments, but I’m skeptical that faculty always comprehend that Distance Learning courses must be equivalent to classroom courses; that DL courses must have the same prerequisites and accomplish the same academic goals as classroom courses.”

Washburn suggested the use of a box that could be checked to indicate: “Yes, the content of the Distance Learning version of the course is the same as the content of the classroom version of the course.”

Bennett asked if most new course applications come from faculty or departmental administrators. Winslow said, “In Arts and Sciences, most applications come from faculty; elsewhere on campus it is much more varied.” Washburn said, “We can’t dictate to departments, but we prefer a single contact person who knows the curriculum well.”

Buck said, with respect to point 9 on page two of the FCEO Guidelines (“What is the maximum time for completion of the course? What is the minimum time into which the course can fit? Could this course be offered on the standard 10-week quarter calendar without sacrificing content or student learning? Indicate the maximum enrollment per instructor.): “In the past, some instructors of these “C”-prefix courses felt that it takes longer to get through the same amount of material. It is hard to say how much this issue will go away. Some faculty think online courses *can* be done in 10 weeks; many others do not. The legislature requires that students be given information about the expected calendar – and time to completion – of any given course.” Buck added that “drops” and “incompletes” will obviously be affected by calendar and time to completion factors in DL courses. Washburn said, “We’ll have synchronous courses, and asynchronous courses, and instances in which everyone is working independently.”

Winslow asked, “How will the number of credits be determined of Distance Learning courses that have no classroom equivalent?” “That is a big question I’ll have to deal with.” Buck said, “That will be difficult to determine: a sticky wicket.” Treser said a question will be how to get beyond leaving that determination to the instructor offering the course. “The problem will arise when the instructor has not taught the classroom equivalent of the Distance Learning course.” Wells asked, “How do we re-establish credit based on the level of student we admit to the course?” Washburn noted that breakdowns of study time out of the classroom per credit hour show that a 2 to 1 ratio is about the most that one will find at present.

Washburn said, “We’ll take the council’s draft and come up with a supplemental draft and show it to the council.” He noted that “there is some question about the applicability of these Guidelines to Graduate School courses. We will want Guidelines that apply to undergraduate and graduate levels both.”

Buck said, "FCEO is eager to get our Guidelines to people who will use them. We will send them to deans and directors, but finding key curriculum people would help." Winslow said, "I'll have an E-mail list of curriculum people and will forward the Guidelines to them." Washburn said, "And tell them in a cover letter that a new form is being developed." Washburn emphasized that this should be in place for Autumn Quarter registration. "But we're not sure about whether we're going to have both printed and online catalogs this time. We may do an online catalog only. But that decision has not been made." He said Autumn Quarter registration begins May 10 and continues through the summer.

Buck said, "The current timeframe process is hard to gauge." Szatmary said, "We're asking if departments will approve Distance Learning courses without the 'C' designation." Buck said, "When the New Course Application forms are fully revised, some departments should be ready to go."

Buck explained to Washburn, Winslow and Johnson that FCEO is "not part of an actual, formal course review." He noted that the college review will be the last review stop before the University-level review.

Bennett asked if there should be a general forum, or perhaps several fora, when the Guidelines are sent out. Buck wondered if the fora should be held in particular schools and colleges, or at the University-wide level. Washburn said two or three general meetings could be held.

Szatmary, echoing FCEO's offer of assistance, said Educational Outreach could help with some of the filling out of the Course Application Form.

Washburn noted that, though most Distance Learning courses will go through Educational Outreach, some will not, especially the "hybrid" courses. "But we need to have folks possess the same security safeguards as those enjoyed by Educational Outreach."

Next meeting

The next FCEO meeting is set for Wednesday, April 17, 2002, at 12:30 p.m., in 36 Gerberding Hall.

Brian Taylor, Recorder

PRESENT: *Professors* Buck (Chair), Treser and Wells;
Ex-officio members Bennett and Szatmary;
Guests Van Johnson, Associate Registrar, Registrar's Office; Tim Washburn, Executive Director, Admissions and Records; Matthew Winslow, Publications Coordinator,
General Catalog/Curriculum.

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