

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
FACULTY COUNCIL ON EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

The Faculty Council on Educational Outreach met at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, **February 9, 2001**. Chair Roger Simpson presided.

Approval of minutes

The minutes for January 12, 2001 were approved as revised.

Consideration of issues before the Task Force on Distance Learning

Simpson said that if a Distance Learning Task Force-approved report on DL legislation could be brought to FCEO and FCAS by March 2nd, there would be time for the council to go over the report and prepare a proposal for legislative action that Simpson could bring to the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) on April 2nd. That would allow the proposal, if approved by SEC, to proceed through the Faculty Senate process in Spring Quarter, and be voted on for approval during the 2000-2001 academic year. The legislation on Distance Learning must come out of the Task Force and the two faculty councils.

The DL Task Force will assign a drafting committee for the legislation at its meeting on February 12th. The draft will be brought back to the Task Force; and what comes out of the work by the Task Force will be brought to FCEO for the council's review.

The FCEO discussion today was devoted to DL issues that keep resurfacing, and which need to be resolved before the clearest possible decisions on the drafting of DL legislation can be made.

Simpson reiterated that, with respect to "residence" (according to legislation passed in Winter 1969), undergraduate students must earn their last 45 credits as a matriculated student at the University of Washington. (Individual departments can make exceptions to this rule, and not infrequently do so.) Buck also noted that advisors in his department (Psychology) tell him that there can be a 10-credit waiver of the 45-credit minimum. This practice likewise is common throughout the College of Arts and Sciences.

As for the justification of the rule designating the undergraduate student's final year as one of full "residence" at UW, Buck said that, in speaking with many people at the University, he came to realize that one of the goals of the rule is to keep students from completing three years at UW and then going elsewhere for their final year and still receiving a UW degree. Buck asked if there could not be other ways to achieve the "residence" requirement that might be more flexible than the "last 45 credits at UW" rule. "I don't see why the 45 credits need be the last credits, as long as the student is enrolled here when finishing his or her degree," he said.

Slater said she would like to see the rule stay either as it is or, if changed, not changed in such a way as to downplay seat time, time actually spent in face-to-face interactive classroom settings. "Seat time is very valuable to students," she said, "and most students I know feel that students should be here on campus interacting directly with other students and with their faculty. To us, that is the meaning of 'residence'."

Buck said that if there were some degree of flexibility with the 45-credit "residence" minimum, students could take a mix of different kinds of classes. There could still be a period of time that students would be required to spend on campus in face-to-face classroom settings.

Treser said there could be a "core" period of on-campus time below which students would not be allowed to go. He would hate to see the classroom experience replaced. But he would also like to see the "chat rooms" and other forms of electronic interaction - which in any case are pervading universities now - take

their constructive place in the undergraduate experience. As Treser pointed out, in some instances videoconferencing, “chat rooms” and other electronic settings permit the inclusion of students - living in remote locations, or for other reasons unable to come to campus - who not only are enabled to participate in an educational experience that would otherwise be denied to them, but also broaden the scope of the “classroom” experience for the other students in the course.

Slater said this would be acceptable to students insofar as it did not allow for an online degree from UW. (This echoes the statements of ASUW officers in several other faculty councils.) Buck said he cannot conceive of Psychology granting a degree to a student who is not enrolled, not matriculated, at the time of graduation. (Though he added that there are certain credit courses that fulfill Psychology degree requirements that are offered with a DL option and that a student might want to include in the final 45 credits.) Treser said he could not imagine a “wholesale transition to Distance Learning teaching.” For one thing (and this is a universal observation of faculty who have taught DL courses), DL teaching is far too consuming both in terms of time and in terms of energy. And compensation would be a key issue for any faculty compelled to teach DL courses. Kieckhefer said she too cannot envision a general move to Distance Learning.

DeYoung suggested referring to “upper division courses” and stipulating that 45 of the last 90 credits be earned in “residence,” which would grant the flexibility to which Buck referred, while maintaining the 45-credit minimum. Buck said the “body of courses” could be defined that would be taken as the last 45 credits; then all such courses could be accepted even if, in part, they were DL or evening courses. All such courses would be required to go through the departmental curriculum committee review.

Szatmary said many graduate-level students do not set foot on campus, but this is not the case with undergraduate students, though an undergraduate student could conceivably get a baccalaureate degree without coming to campus. Simpson asked if the University could move to (or would want to move to) an “outcomes” orientation. Treser said that would be “dangerous.” The “outcomes,” he suggested, are measured by “suspect means.” He said departments and their faculty would need to assess such an issue.

As for performance in Distance Learning courses, Slater said it has been shown that students who do not want to be engaged in Distance Learning do not do well in such courses. Szatmary said older students, who comprise the preponderance of DL enrollment, traditionally fare better than younger students in DL courses. Their motivation is exceptionally high (most often they are seeking knowledge they need to enhance their careers, which are already under way), and their discipline for this kind of coursework is well-developed (DL courses require intense discipline; the drop-out rate is very high in most DL courses).

Simpson said individual departments will have the final say; faculty are cautious about Distance Learning. Simpson distributed a handout showing “residence” requirements, online course identification in transcripts, and DL course inclusion or non-inclusion in GPA, in nine peer institutions and the University of Washington. Four of the institutions (UC-Berkeley, UCLA, UCSD, North Carolina, Oregon, Indiana University, Illinois and Iowa State University are the peer institutions cited) require 45 credits at the senior level; four require 60 semester hours, and two are “not sure.” In three instances, distance learning courses are identified with “IS”; UW identifies with “C”; and six institutions do not identify distance learning courses in the transcript. Nine institutions count DL courses towards the student’s GPA. UW alone does not do so. An earlier suggestion was reiterated: that DL courses at UW should count towards the GPA if they undergo a full departmental curriculum committee review and meet the same requirements that “residence” courses must.

As for the “C” designation on the transcript, Treser said he sees no significant reason to keep it, but he is aware that some people find it helpful to know the delivery mode of a course. Slater said students would like to see DL courses designated on the transcript because to them it is important to distinguish between a

directly interactive classroom course (“the essential university experience”) and courses involving indirect interaction, whether that indirection takes the form of “chat rooms,” of videoconferencing, or of any other remote delivery mode. Several council members said the delivery mode of every course offered at UW should be specifically designated on the transcript. (Slater, who has taken evening courses at UW, said they are “seriously different in the experience they offer” from regular daytime courses.) Kieckhefer asked: “How do you designate courses that have a mix of regular and Distance Learning delivery modes?” (This is a question asked frequently in FCAS discussions of Distance Learning.)

Asked about the existing “oversight” process at UW for new programs (colleges and schools have the greatest influence in the current curriculum review process, though all programs must be approved by the FCAS Subcommittee on Admissions and Programs and by the council itself), most council members expressed satisfaction with the process as it is. The question was asked: If a department wants to develop a DL course, where do they find the expertise to do so most effectively? DeYoung said individual departments do not know what is most needed for DL quality; they need that expertise. Though the Extension office is available, most departments cannot afford to pay for its services. CIDR (the Center for Instructional Development and Research) provides superb assistance in an unofficial capacity. And Buck said UWired helps faculty develop technical pedagogic methods. (Though even if faculty learn new technical methods for teaching, they often are unable to bring them to bear in the classroom because of lack of funding.)

Overall, there is a need for better official, affordable assistance in setting up DL courses. Simpson said there does not seem to be a central place on campus where Distance Learning is studied in any depth. Buck said a review of the Distance Learning course format is needed, in the form in which it will be taught. Treser said the delivery mode should be looked at for appropriateness, and for quality and effectiveness. And Kieckhefer asked: “Can the DL course be done effectively in this specific delivery mode?” Slater added: “The interaction factor is crucial: how a course is taught.”

Buck said he is concerned about compressing DL courses into 10-weeks (the normal length of a course at UW). He said the DL courses presently offered were designed and reviewed by the department for a longer period; compressing them so drastically could not help but compromise their content. Kieckhefer agreed: “If a course is not specifically designed for ten weeks, there’s a definite problem.” And the question with DL courses, because of their complicated logistics and the drawn-out intercommunication inherent in this delivery system, is whether they can be designed effectively for ten weeks instead of the normal minimum of six months. Szatmary said compressed DL courses do have larger completion rates.

Spring Quarter Distance Learning Pilot Program

In a one-time experiment, three Distance Learning courses (each of which has a regular “residence” equivalent being taught at the same time) will be offered in Spring Quarter 2001 without receiving the customary “C” designation, and with grades that will be included in the student’s GPA. These DL courses will be taught in the same ten-week period in which all “residence” Spring Quarter courses will be taught.

Buck said an originally-proposed fourth DL course in the pilot program - from Psychology - was withdrawn. He said Psychology was poorly informed about the pilot program in the first place, and that now there is not enough lead time to address departmental concerns, including a review of the 10-week format.

Next meeting

The next FCEO meeting will be on March 2, 2001, at 9:30 a.m., in 36 Gerberding Hall.

Brian Taylor, Recorder

PRESENT: *Professors* Simpson (Chair), Buck, DeYoung, Jenkins, Kieckhefer and Treser;
ex-officio members Marcovina, Slater and Szatmary.

ABSENT: *Professors* Daniali, Jorgensen, Kiyak and Zoller; *ex-officio member* Huling, Rogers, Root