

**UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
FACULTY COUNCIL ON EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH**

The Faculty Council on Educational Outreach met at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, **November 20, 2001**. Chair Steve Buck presided.

Approval of the minutes

The minutes of the October 30, 2001 meeting were approved as written.

Voting privileges for ex officio members

Buck said he will recommend to the council, at its first meeting in Winter Quarter 2002, that ex officio members representing the Professional Staff Organization (Bruce Bennett) and the ASUW (Anthony Rose) be given voting rights on the council. At that meeting the council will vote on this recommendation.

Discussion of Distance Learning instruction with Professors Ana Mari Cauce, Rob Harrison, Steve Kerr and Gerry Philipson

Buck said the Faculty Senate passed Class B Legislation at its meeting on October 25, 2001 establishing a new category of Distance Learning. Distance Learning courses in this category will count towards graduation, and count towards the student's grade point average, similarly to traditional classroom-based courses.

Some issues concerning this new category of Distance Learning are not represented on the application form. Buck said that various colleges and departments will welcome the council's input on the new Distance Learning courses. Particularly, the council will help determine what kinds of Distance Learning courses should be approved. (For instance, what "free-standing" DL courses – courses without traditional, classroom-based counterparts – should be approved? And which DL courses that do have classroom-based counterparts should be approved?) And what kind of review process is most appropriate for the new category?

Buck said that questions he hoped the guest instructors would address are: What issues have been salient for you in creating and operating Distance Learning courses? and: What should be the minimum expectation of student interaction with faculty, and student interaction with other students?

Rob Harrison

Harrison said his introductory Distance Learning course on the environment in the College of Forest Resources is a hybrid course, with a component that uses strict Distance Learning methodology and another component that is classroom-based. It is a large, service-based course, introducing over 1,000 students to fundamental aspects of environmental problems and solutions. (It started as a lecture course, and grew to its hybrid nature because of response and demand.) Harrison said he very much enjoys teaching this course, which unfortunately will be greatly reduced in size next year (to less than one quarter of its present size) because of diminished resources in the college. The Distance Learning component is the "C" designated course; the classroom-based component is the "A" designated course.

Harrison said his Internet version of the course is not "live." He uses PowerPoint, and students download and view, or view and print out, the material. They can also use a browser for viewing purposes. Harrison said he could only record the audio version of the course, within PowerPoint, and not the visual. Students have "Help E-mail" for daily exchanges, and graduate TA's help Harrison in the course, in large measure by dealing with the enormous output of E-mail exchanges.

Many students are able to take the Internet version of the course who would not be able to take the classroom-based course for any of a variety of reasons, including schedule availability and distance from campus. With so many students taking the course online, the classroom component is made even more attractive to those students who prefer attending “live” lectures. (The classroom-based lectures become less intimidating in size.) But however the course is taken, Harrison said the “key is to get the information out,” and that can be done equally well in both components of the hybrid course.

Harrison said there are group projects in both components of the course, usually groups of two or four students. Some students who work very well together in the Distance Learning course never even meet. Some students simply do not want to come to the campus at all. They sometimes are required to take tests on campus, however, and, when possible, to work on projects.

Issues for the students in the course were: 1) learning the technology: the “Peer Review” program Harrison uses now is user-friendly, and does not require inordinate sophistication to use; 2) computer compatibility: students are viewing on all kinds of computers, some of which do not successfully “read” the course material (“Catalyst” has helped, but the software is getting “very intricate and difficult,” which will lengthen the course if the same amount of material is to be covered); and 3) developing critical thinking: many students fail to offer critical analysis of other students’ projects, which they have explicitly been asked to do: many simply compliment other students’ projects, and, as Harrison pointed out, all the projects are able to be improved.

Gerry Philipsen

Philipsen has taught two Distance Learning courses; the first was developed ten years ago; the second was developed three years ago. He has also taught a synchronous DL course in which all work is completed in ten weeks, the period in which classroom-based courses are taught.

Philipsen first developed a Distance Learning version of his Speech Communications 102 course: a large, introductory survey of human communication. Originally, he had one TA for a 430-student class; he now has a TA for every 90 students, plus an instructor. After the first course was well under way, Philipsen developed his second DL course: a study of various cultures and their use of language. “I teach both these courses in a Distance Learning format,” he noted. He said they were originally developed as “traditional correspondence courses.” He then learned more about course development.

At first, Philipsen believed reliance on a textbook was harmful; he much preferred to rely on primary sources. But he was required to use a textbook. Eventually he found a good one with which he felt comfortable. “Economics and format drive much of the Distance Learning modality,” said Philipsen. “Form can affect the content of a course.”

He found that the “Distance Learning process was a good one.” He also found that “teaching with a good text book has been a positive experience.” He said “students can take in, and apply, a lot of information.”

Comparing his experience in Distance Learning instruction with traditional classroom instruction, Philipsen said that in the latter setting students varied greatly in their capacity to absorb and apply the definitions and other material: all the way from 0% to 100%. In the Distance Learning setting, however, those who finished the course knew the material at a high level. “They retained a great deal and showed that they could apply the knowledge.” (Approximately 30% did not finish, he conjectured, and some enrollees never came at all.)

Philipsen said having to prepare fully for Distance Learning instruction “is a positive thing.” It allows for “intellectual flexibility.” Last spring, thorough preparation significantly helped his synchronous Distance Learning course succeed. “The chat room worked very well in that course,” he noted, and added that,

“basically, I had that course ‘wired,’ figuratively speaking.” The course “almost taught itself.” He did not have to alter the course to compress it into ten weeks. Nor did he have to compromise; he used a “difficult scholarly book.”

For his Distance Learning courses, students “do not need sophisticated technological skill.” They do not need to construct Web pages, for instance, as they would in other DL courses.

Steve Kerr

Kerr said much of his work in Education, over the last several years, has been concerned with designing and developing Distance Learning programs and methodologies. His initial experience as a DL instructor came two years ago: a certificate program through Extension in winter, spring, and summer quarters, 2000. He has been sole instructor in two DL courses, and joint instructor in another. “In large measure, that experience proved the value of good infrastructure,” he said.

In many respects, the kinds of support available in the Distance Learning courses “mirrored the kinds of support that students have in classroom courses.” And it proved the value of “quick turn-around communications.” He said there were often 20 or 30 “postings” a day. All this “demonstrated the importance of technical support.” Kerr said he had “highly technically-literate students and even they had their problems technologically.” He said it is crucial that “modalities and technology that are not too difficult” are used in Distance Learning courses.

Kerr said training students to know exactly what is expected of them in Distance Learning courses is “intricate,” but must be done to avoid confusion. He said motivation is “extraordinarily important” in Distance Learning. “Students put up with difficult tasks when they’re strongly motivated.” Thinking through beforehand is critical, and is the “invisible part” of an instructor’s teaching. “We need to know what common difficulties students have in developing their thinking in a field, and what kinds of metaphors will help students learn,” said Kerr. He suggested that DL instructors “call on [their] own understanding of how students think best, and incorporate that into the structure of [their] DL courses.” Kerr noticed that students “formed a cadre among themselves,” and that this helped them give each other support.

Asked about problems in Distance Learning instruction, Kerr said there are different expectations regarding the interface of particular computer systems. This can present obvious problems and inconveniences. (Buck said, “We hope to proselytize to get better technology to help Distance Learning programs at the UW.”) Kerr said, “Many kinds of Web programs – and Web-based tools – are being developed.” He said the “Peer Review” program used by Harrison is one of six or more programs developed by UWired/Catalyst that can be used by instructors to address different, but related, aspects of Distance Learning.

Kerr said that, in addition to the excellent support provided by University Libraries, many other library systems are available to students in Distance Learning courses at the UW. He added that it is “good to have a well organized online library” in any DL course.

Ana Mari Cauce

Cauce said she taught a “low-tech, correspondence-like” Distance Learning course – 305 Abnormal Psychology – that turned out to be a much more positive experience than she had thought it would be.

She said this kind of course is “good for students who are motivated, who stay with it.” (She guessed the percentage of students who dropped out of the course to be similar to that in Philipson’s course: 30%.) Cauce had a good text-book for the course, which she said makes a significant difference, as there is more

reading in the DL version than in the classroom-based version of the same course. As to the length of the course, few finish it in 10 weeks; some take much longer.

Cauce said the Distance Learning course appeals to different students than those who are primarily matriculated, on-campus students in classroom-based courses. The majority of Distance Learning students have completed their baccalaureate education (many have completed graduate-level work), and are embarked, and sometimes well-embarked, on their professional careers. They are serious, focused students who have very real goals in taking Distance Learning courses. (A not-uncommon goal is to enhance one's knowledge base to improve one's career opportunities.)

In the case of the 305 Abnormal Psychology course, Cauce said many students have already completed their education and are taking the course because it is required by the program they are in. (The course is required by many different programs.) Though many students are from Washington state, there are students in the course from outside the state as well. There have also been several in-state UW students who have taken this course while studying or traveling abroad.

Some students in Abnormal Psychology have a personal motivation in taking the course; some may have mental illness themselves, or a close family member may have mental illness. Cauce said that, out of the 30 students in the course, she "gets to know three or four beyond the class." (She may or may not ever meet these students in person.) The on-campus, face-to-face version of this course has upwards of 200 students; thus the Distance Learning version, if less intimate in one respect (the students are not physically present), is more intimate in another respect (the 30 students obviously get more individual attention, however "distant" they may be physically).

"The feedback, which is constant, is excellent for these students," said Cauce. She said the "average student in this Distance Learning course learns the material at a very high level, better than most students in the face-to-face course." The students not only get various "readings" on the chapters they peruse in the course's textbook; they also get Cauce's perspective, which may not corroborate the textbook's perspective. "My view on psychology would come across the same in Distance Learning or the face-to-face equivalent," Cauce said. "It is easier, however, to deal with students with disorders in a Distance Learning format." She said this is partly because students in the DL format "self-reveal" much more freely than they do in the face-to-face format.

"I've really liked teaching this Distance Learning course," said Cauce. "But it does not work for all students, especially the less-gifted students."

Buck asked the guest DL instructors if they receive comments from students comparing Distance Learning and face-to-face courses? Cauce said some students miss the direct interaction of face-to-face courses.

Asked if matriculated students do better than non-matriculated students in Distance Learning courses, Cauce said her most interesting students are, for the most part, the non-matriculated students. "They are not necessarily better students, but they have more life experience. There is more sparkle in students who have had rich life experiences."

Buck noted that, with respect to student interaction, any course that does not have students going through it at the same pace faces problems in this area. Philipsen corroborated this; his synchronous 10-week Distance Learning course made student interaction "more possible, but it's not always more desirable." He added, "We can't *assume* that student interaction is better for students' performance just because it occurs in a face-to-face setting. Sometimes it is; sometimes it is not."

As for the possibility of complete Distance Learning baccalaureate programs, Cauce said, “At this point I’m not in favor of traditional, four-year students going through an entire baccalaureate program only in Distance Learning.” Cauce also added that she think there was a place for Distance Learning, perhaps as a limited option or add-on to in-person learning. The one experience she could not see offering through Distance Learning was some kind of in-class presentation. Although she normally would not have an in-class presentation in a 200-person class, she usually does have them in smaller classes and thinks they are a good thing.

Next meeting

The next FCEO meeting (with the Distance Learning course design group) will be held on Tuesday, December 11, 2001, at 11:30-1:00. Once the room is known, the council will be notified.

Brian Taylor, Recorder

- PRESENT:** *Professors* Buck (Chair), DeYoung, Marcovina, Noble and Treser;
Ex-officio members Bennett, Deardorff, Rose, Szatmary and Weissman;
Guests Professors Ana Mari Cauce, Rob Harrison, Steve Kerr and Gerry Philipsen.
- ABSENT:** *Professors* Daniali, Jenkins, Kieckhefer, Kim, Simpson and Wells.
Ex-officio members Bennett and Weissman