

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
FACULTY COUNCIL ON EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

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

Approval of the minutes

The minutes of the May 18, 2001 and October 9, 2001 FCEO meetings were approved as written.

Update on Faculty Senate consideration of Distance Learning legislation – Steve Buck

Buck said the Class “B” Legislation on Distance Learning passed by a wide margin at the Faculty Senate Meeting on October 25, 2001.

The “pay-off” for the council, Buck said, is that “we will be able to provide guidance to faculty, colleges, and departments about important dimensions of Distance Learning courses: what to look for in the approval process; instantiation of “abstract ideas” related to Distance Learning pedagogy and delivery; and many other dimensions.

Buck said he expects the council to have a significant output in the development of guidelines for new Distance Learning courses. “We do not want to delay the process of implementation of new DL courses,” he stressed.

Buck lauded the work of the Distance Learning Task Force, led by former FCEO chair Roger Simpson and former and current FCAS chair Doug Wadden. Council members praised the article in University Week that clearly set forth the complex issues addressed in the Distance Learning legislation, and helped greatly to prepare faculty senators for a positive vote at the Senate Meeting. Buck authored the article, with suggestions from Wadden and others, including FCEO members. Buck said that, after the Senate Executive Committee narrowly approved the legislation, faculty senators must have decided that it represented a “reasonable common ground.”

Buck said that many of these Distance Learning issues had been recycled at least since the mid 1990’s. “Now we can move on,” he added. The proposed legislation has been sent to the president for his signature.

Strategies and timeline for developing guidelines for Distance Learning courses at the UW

The task ahead for the council is to identify issues and, if possible, to make recommendations. Buck said, “We will pass on our considerations to curriculum reviewers as soon as possible.”

Buck noted that there are some 125 C-prefix Distance Learning courses currently offered through UW Educational Outreach. There are issues related to courses in which there are two versions of the same course, a classroom-based, residence version and a Distance Learning version. Particular issues are length of the Distance Learning version of the course, equivalence of course content, qualification of the instructor in the Distance Learning version, and strain on the library system and technology access for students in the Distance Learning version. Inevitably, the two versions of the same course, regardless of “equivalence,” will have a “slightly different nature” at the least.

Difficult questions arise with respect to “equivalent” courses using different delivery modes. An example would be: How is the decision reached as to the number of credits a Distance Learning

“equivalent” course is to have? Time expenditure obviously is one factor in this decision. Buck said the council should ask: Is it best to separate categories in reaching such a decision?

The courses most affected by the Class “B” Distance Learning legislation are the present C-prefix courses, which will be phased out by 2005; instructors of C-prefix courses will have to have converted to pure Distance Learning instruction if they are to continue working with DL programs at that time. Buck emphasized that there are no “course police” to scrutinize the integrity of Distance Learning courses. Over time, he said, any course may “change in nature from what it started out to be.” The “course policing” will come from students and colleagues. If students and the department in which the course is housed are pleased with a course, no-one will hasten to “police” and question the course.

Asked about the definition of a Distance Learning course, Buck said that, according to the HEC Board, several delivery modes qualify to define a course as “Distance Learning” (in addition to the percentage of the course that is taught with any of these delivery modes). Many courses are taught with a mix of these delivery modes (Web-based, video, etc.). Buck said a proper assessment of what constitutes a Distance Learning course in the future will mean “sorting out these mixed-mode courses.” Many courses will have a classroom component while being heavily dependent on Distance Learning delivery modes. Other courses will have a Distance Learning component while being primarily classroom-based.

Asked about the issue of compensation for Distance Learning instruction, Buck said different departments have different practices: Some departments offer additional compensation for teaching Distance Learning; other departments do not. (Some faculty believe additional compensation for Distance Learning instruction is not ethical; some faculty find it completely ethical, especially in the light of the extraordinary demands on the instructor’s time. As has been frequently pointed out in past meetings, Distance Learning instruction and course preparation are immensely time-consuming in addition to being exceedingly expensive.)

As to how the council will proceed in its deliberations, Buck said there are three distinct categories of issues to consider: issues for DL versions of classroom courses (including the conversion of C-prefix courses to DL courses); issues for “pure” Distance Learning courses with no classroom counterpart; and “broader issues” for departmental and university support of DL courses. The council unanimously agreed that it would be especially helpful to hear directly from faculty who have recently taught, or are now teaching, Distance Learning undergraduate courses offered through their home department. The council would also appreciate hearing from instructors of present C-prefix Distance Learning courses. Faculty and instructors who have four or five years’ experience in these programs would be preferable. And everyone agreed that it would be a very good idea to hear from students who have had positive Distance Learning experiences.

Buck distributed “The Spring Distance Learning Online Course Experiment: July 16, 2001,” from the Office of Educational Assessment. He asked council members to peruse the assessment of this experiment in preparation for the next council meeting.

Buck said it would be helpful to hear from someone at UW Educational Outreach who is involved in helping instructors set up C-prefix courses. Those who are interested in the conversion of C-prefix Distance Learning courses would be interested in what that person has to say. DeYoung said it would be informative to hear from someone at Computing and Communications. The council concurred.

As for breaking up the council into small groups or subcommittees, which Buck suggested as a way of focusing with greater intensity on the separate Distance Learning issues facing the council, most members said that, insofar as it is possible, they would like to stay as one large group. Otherwise they would not be involved in the process of developing guidelines, except in the area of their own subcommittee, and would only hear the results of other people's deliberations.

The question was asked: Will departments be expected to offer Distance Learning courses? Treser said, "No, but most departments will be using Distance Learning components." DeYoung said the question: When should students be in a classroom, or in a lab? is crucial. In the humanities, lectures and the discussions that follow are obviously of great importance in a classroom setting. In the health sciences, showing students what to do in a lab setting is no less important. (Faculty who have given video lectures unanimously admit that the lack of personal eye-contact with students precludes a myriad nuances of communication, to say nothing of interaction, that are only possible in classroom settings.)

As for the report the council is to write, at the conclusion of its deliberations, on the development of guidelines for Distance Learning courses, Buck said it may prove best to have small groups work on particular aspects of the report, then coalesce those efforts into a final overall report.

And having heard suggestions for guests to be invited to council meetings, Buck said there are five possibilities: 1) instructors of Distance Learning courses, preferably those with several years' experience; 2) Distance Learning course designers; 3) students who have had positive Distance Learning experiences; 4) a representative from Computing and Communications; and 5) UW librarians.

Buck said it would be best to start with Distance Learning instructors, Distance Learning students, and course designers, and to focus on Distance Learning course approval guidelines.

Szatmary said some of the people the council wants to invite as guest speakers already may be serving on the Distance Learning Committee appointed by the president. Buck said FCEO and the Distance Learning Committee will meet for a joint session if it can be arranged. He also said the council should have a list of "Distance Learning dimensions that we will want to know about," to give the meeting with the Distance Learning Committee as sharp a focus as possible. "We want our guests to focus on issues important to us," he stressed.

Buck distributed a list of "Resources on Distance Learning guidelines and practices." The list includes "brief overview reports of publications and new developments in Distance Learning," "guidelines and best practices for distance-learning courses and programs," and "issues associated with Distance Learning." Szatmary also made a couple of suggestions for further reading.

Buck said the focus in the strategies for Distance Learning guidelines will necessarily be kept on undergraduate programs. (All faculty councils are devoted exclusively to undergraduate issues, though the councils are aware that graduate-level issues often overlap with undergraduate issues. Partly because of this, GPSS representatives serve on faculty councils along with ASUW representatives.)

"If we can identify issues facing pure Distance Learning courses, we will have a good start towards identifying problems in mixed-mode courses," said Buck. DeYoung said the council "will need to define elements for synchronous learning (in pure Distance Learning settings)." It is her experience that "the more you can make a course synchronous, the better the course will

meet the varied learning needs of students.” Deardorff said he could give a report on the Libraries’ position on these issues. He and Nancy Huling (his predecessor as ALUW representative on the council) have worked on many committees over the last decade devoted to Distance Learning issues.

Next meeting

The next FCEO meeting is set for Tuesday, November 20, 2001, at 11:30-1:00, in 36 Gerberding Hall.

Brian Taylor, Recorder

PRESENT: *Professors* Buck (Chair), DeYoung, Marcovina, Noble, Simpson, Treser and Wells;

Ex-officio members Deardorff and Szatmary.

ABSENT: *Professors* Daniali, Jenkins, Kieckhefer and Kim;

Ex-officio members Bennett and Weissman.