

University of Washington
Faculty Council on Student Affairs
Wednesday, December 13, 2006
36 Gerberding Hall

Chair Brian Fabien called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m.

Meeting Synopsis:

1. Approval of the Minutes from the 11/15/06 FCSA Meeting
2. Report from the Chair
3. Report from the ASUW representative (Erin Shields)
4. Report on the Holistic Review Process (Philip Ballinger, Director of Admissions)

1. Approval of Minutes

Due to a lack of quorum, approval of the November minutes was deferred until the January 2007 meeting.

2. Report from the Chair

Chair Brian Fabien yielded his time to the guest speaker for the day.

3. Report from the ASUW Representative

Report was deferred because the ASUW representative was taking a final.

4. Report on Holistic Review Process

Philip Ballinger began his remarks by recounting that last Spring the Regents moved to adopt a Holistic Review Process for the University of Washington.

This move has many dimensions, including a single review process (rather than the two different systems previously employed: the Admissions Index and the Freshman Admission Review); curriculum assessment, which is a big element in the Holistic Review process; and the resulting significant improvement in the diversity of incoming freshmen and transfer students.

The major challenges of the process are the need for verifiable values and the need to continually review the process with readers to keep them together and producing consistent results.

The assessment after the first year was that readers were fairly consistent. The process evolved from much work with faculty groups working to develop a way to track consistent trends. There are currently just over 50 people reviewing 17,000 freshman applications, most of which are read two times. Some (approximately the top 5% academically) are fast-tracked – and are only read once. About 4% are read by a third reader. The majority of those that are read twice and three times are assessed identically in the academic areas and are assessed at an adequate rate of consistency in the personal areas.

The first year yielded a huge class with a much greater percentage than usual of those admitted actually enrolling. And there was a significant increase in the ethnicity of the class. The number of new African American and Hispanic students was the highest it's been since I-200. Ballinger reported that 16% of the decisions would have been different if processed under the old system.

In response to a question about enrollment in other state institutions, Ballinger said that the UW's incoming class was the only one that was over-enrolled. The incoming class of all other state institutions was under-enrolled. He cautioned that it is hard to credit this entirely to the Holistic Review process and that it will require several years to effectively assess the impact on the UW – at which point elements of the process can be adjusted accordingly.

The majority of readers are professional staff. Graduate students were also enlisted, but Ballinger would like to focus on recruiting a stable staff that would return year after year. The benefit for graduate students is that in addition to the \$17/hour paid to them for this service they also receive a stipend for tuition. Professional staff do not receive an equivalent extra benefit. Twenty of the fifty readers this year were graduate students, with fifteen of those twenty being new. He estimates that an application takes 10-15 minutes to read.

In response to the question about why UW does not have a "bottom line" for admission, Ballinger argued that whereas some Universities guarantee admission to anyone with a certain GPA, the Holistic method takes into account that a 3.5 GPA at one high school can be a vastly different indicator compared to a 3.5 at another high school with a different curriculum and a different set of expectations for students. A GPA out of context is almost useless. In support of this statement, one Council member noted that in admissions at the graduate level, GPA and test scores are almost meaningless in comparison to professors' recommendations.

In response to a question about what happens to the "good old average student," Ballinger said that such a student may well have not been admitted under the old guidelines. He also emphasized that in order to achieve diversity in the student population it's necessary to balance the elements involved in assessing applicants.

Students are currently being tracked for their success through college but not after graduation. Access needs to be connected to outcome, and the study of outcomes will be very complex. The Holistic approach seeks to find students with great promise and great motivation. It is not new – just not used much in large public institutions.

Anna Batie, new GPSS representative to FCSA, suggested that it might be useful to talk with TAs, who teach a significant number of Freshman courses, in evaluating the success of the system.

Ballinger agreed and added that another influence to be considered is K-12 education. He reported that in the state of Washington, less than 800 African American students took the SAT – and of those, very few were male.

