

# Faculty Assembly

## Standing Committee on Academic Policy

### Year-end Report, 2010-2011

Chair: George Mobus

#### Charge of the Committee:

*The UWT Academic Policy Committee shall consider and, where appropriate, propose legislation to the Executive Council regarding scholastic and educational policy, including requirements for admission, graduation, and honors, and policy for the regulation of student conduct and activities. It shall also provide guidance on faculty policies to the Assistant Chancellor for Student Affairs, the UWT Registrar, and other appropriate individuals regarding the interpretation and administration of the academic regulations of UWT. The Committee shall also review procedures pertaining to the acceptance of credits in respect to admission and graduation. The Committee shall also evaluate the merits of proposed undergraduate and graduate programs and degrees, majors, minors, concentrations, and certificates relative to the academic standards of the institution. Such evaluation shall take into consideration the requirements for admission and graduation, intellectual rigor, academic integrity, pedagogical coherence, and need for additional resources. Upon approval, the Committee shall forward its recommendation to the UWT Faculty Executive Council who will bring proposals and recommendations to the UWT Faculty Assembly for a vote.*

The academic year 2010-2011 has been fairly busy for the committee. This report provides highlights from the year's activities. Basically there have been three major areas that come under the committee's charge: *Policy Recommendations, Advice to Academic Administration, Review of Proposed Programs and Revisions to Existing Programs*. Details of actions by the committee will be found in the minutes at:

[http://www.tacoma.washington.edu/faculty\\_assembly/standing\\_committees/academic\\_policy.cfm](http://www.tacoma.washington.edu/faculty_assembly/standing_committees/academic_policy.cfm)

Though not a direct part of the APC's charge, nevertheless, the issues of operating budgets have overhung the thinking that has gone into a number of deliberations. The budget situation is affecting every unit on campus and certainly has implications for what might actually be workable policy matters in the future. A most important issue facing the entire campus is to come to grips with the likely future of budget constrictions as these will impact the quality of education that can be delivered at UWT unless we plan ahead and are vigilant in maintaining our core mission of high quality education. As an example, the Chancellor has proposed a strategy of over-enrollment as a means to minimize the financial consequences of reduced state funding. On the surface (in the spreadsheet models) this might seem reasonable. However, the only way this will work is if there is not a concomitant increase in operating costs (e.g. hiring additional part-time faculty), which translates into larger class sizes to accommodate increased numbers of students. Conversations regarding how this consequence might impact the quality of education have been woefully minimal, though from public conversations on the budget situation it is clear

this idea is on faculty minds. See below for specific instances of how the budget situation might inform the advice to academic administration in the coming year.

Another major factor in the milieu of APC deliberations (as in the EC) has been the change in leadership, particularly, at least initially, the Chancellor's position. Toward the end of the year the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs announced her resignation. So at the end of this academic year we are faced with the uncertainties involved in having two of our campuses top administrators replaced. Of course the APC looks forward to working with the new Chancellor who seems to have a more direct interest in academics. But the uncertainty surrounding the appointment of a new VCAA (or interim) and what that person will attend to raises concerns in planning for the next academic year. As this situation arose at the end of the year and the APC has not had time to deliberate the implications, I, as chair would like to recommend that the new Chancellor pay special attention to the situation as it impacts the work of the faculty and the APC in particular.

## **Policy Issues Addressed**

### **Accrued Credits:**

The committee voted to continue with the current policy regarding accrued credits and registration holds. The recommendation was given to the EC and approved.

### **OUE Oversight Policy:**

Currently there is no oversight structure for the lower division courses regarding general education requirements fulfillment. The faculty code calls for faculty oversight of curriculum. Owing to the evolution of UWT to a four-year institution and the general way in which programs are set up to provide oversight of their own majors (previously only transfer students) there is not a faculty body equivalent to a program review committee for the lower division courses that would satisfy the code. The issue divides into two areas of concern. The Freshman Core courses are meant to satisfy some aspects of the distribution requirements of areas of knowledge within general education. However, given that these courses are also addressing multiple issues regarding the assimilation of freshmen into the university environment it is not entirely clear that the courses being offered fulfill the intent even though students get credit toward their distribution requirements. As currently administered, the courses taught in the Core are developed by volunteer faculty from various programs under an umbrella course rubric and not reviewed by the Curriculum committee for compliance with the intent of area of knowledge designation. Nor is there a faculty committee responsible for evaluating the efficacy of claims for a course fulfilling such intent.

The second area involves the other non-Core lower division courses that have been offered and marked as fulfilling an area of knowledge intent, but with no actual guidelines used to determine whether or not those courses actually fulfill the intent of general education. This issue has not been a problem for the Seattle campus since they started out as a four-year institution and specific departments classified as being in the areas of knowledge were assumed to have developed their service and introductory courses with completely adequate area of knowledge

content. At UWT (and as it turns out at Bothell) many of our lower division courses have simply been moved from the 300-level to fill the role of 200-level courses. The problem is that 300-level course content is much more specific than more typical service courses and introductory survey courses would be and therefore it is not at all clear that they really serve the intent of general education.

This issue was brought to the EC by Ingrid Walker, Director of the Office of Undergraduate Education. The EC voted to refer it to the APC and our committee took it under advisement to investigate the policy implications of the current situation as well as develop a plan for addressing these issues. The APC reviewed the faculty code and wrote a resolution to the EC asking for the authority to pursue the formulation of appropriate policy with regard to coming into compliance with the code. The EC approved this resolution.

The APC discussed the issues in an open meeting with FA leadership, Professor Walker and others present. We formed an ad hoc committee to investigate the approaches that might be taken to providing faculty oversight to general education and the Freshman Core program in light of the requirements of the faculty code. That committee will be working through the summer to further identify needs and options for policy and implementation in the next academic year.

### **Changes in Policy Regarding International Student Enrollments**

Derek Levy, Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Services presented a proposal to the committee that broadened Enrollment Services ability to evaluate and accept international students to the university. The main motivation behind this proposal was to increase the number of international students admitted to UWT. It involved a reduction in TOEFL scores and other qualifications that are currently barriers to accepting otherwise qualified students. The committee found some of the proposal immediately acceptable and reasonable using normative standards (provided by Mr. Levy) from other comparable universities and recommended to the EC that these be accepted. The EC did validate this recommendation.

In the record it was noted that the principle motivation for amending these policies appears to be to facilitate the increase in enrollments of international students for financial purposes. I am on record as warning that the increase in international students will carry costs not directly accounted for in the financial records, namely costs carried by faculty in the classroom. In particular, the increased attention to language issues in communications capabilities requirements has not been address, nor even discussed. Additionally, the issues of academic effectiveness (benefits to the students) were not addressed in the original proposal. The proposal was amended to include monitoring of the success of international students to be used in determining future admission quotas. The chair of the APC recommends that this be watched very closely in the coming years to ensure that the campus is not sacrificing quality in the interest of revenue.

### **New Program Reviews**

The committee did not have any official reviews (Form 1503) for new programs this year. It did hear reports from the Business School and the Education Program regarding new programs being proposed. We also reviewed the changes from tracks to degree programs from the IAS program as well as some changes in fulfillment of requirements.

The two new programs are the Master of Accounting, Milgard School of Business, presented to the APC by Shahrokh Saudagaran, Dean of the school, and the Doctorate in Educational Leadership, EdD, presented by Ginger McDonald. The MAA is still in process but should be reviewed in a formal process by the APC next year. The latter degree represents a great leap for UWT. Chancellor Spakes had announced at an EC meeting that the state legislature had approved the issuance of doctorate-level degrees at UWT and that the EdD would be the first such degree proposed. The APC will need to address this in the next academic year as the proposal was rescheduled at the end of this year.

Discussion in the APC centered around the entire issue of PhD-level degrees being offered from this campus. The EdD degree is not particularly an issue in general, but the whole notion of developing PhD-level degrees is now on the table for the faculty at UWT. There is no specific recommendation from the APC, however, it is clear that there will be need to have very careful discussions regarding this opportunity/threat in the future of the EC. This is not a topic to be taken lightly. The door is opened and there are no precedents or guidelines in place. Judging by the evolution of other branch campuses around the country with respect to the wholesale implementation of PhD-level programs (at a time when the need for more PhDs is questionable) it would seem prudent to make this a formal discussion topic for the EC and FA in the near future.

## **Housekeeping Issues**

The APC has not been charged with several of these, but as of now there is no definitive processes for handling student appeals and several procedural issues. The APC did review a number of such appeals regarding graduation requirements, etc. and made various findings for these.

It is recommended that the APC address the rightful procedures for these actions. Namely it is recommended that the APC formulate policies regarding how such appeals should be handled on our campus. These are various in nature (see the minutes of meetings for details). Currently there is no actual policy for how these are to be handled and so it is being done on an ad hoc basis. The committee recommends that the APC review this in the near future and develop a policy recommendation consistent with the current charge.

## **From the Chairman for AY2010-2011**

This is not a requirement of the report, but as chair I will take some liberty! It has been a pleasure serving in this position simply because there has been a fair amount of actual meaningful work to accomplish this year. I would also like to thank the Chair of the EC, Marcie Lazzari and the Associate Chair, Zoe Barsness, for providing excellent leadership in a very busy and complex year of issues! I would also like to thank the committee members for their work in a particularly busy year. I offer my observation to the new Chancellor that I think the faculty leadership is ready and able to help bring this campus to its full potential.

George Mobus