

# Faculty Forum

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# Faculty Forum

*From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning*

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 16, No. 1

September 1, 2003

## **What's It Like To Be New At Western?**

At the General Faculty Meeting on August 14, Chancellor Bardo told us that this year's enormous increase in the number of freshmen has been mirrored by a huge growth in new faculty—this year we have 63 new faculty, nearly 16% of our faculty total. And this process may continue. The Chancellor estimates that we may reach 10,000 students by 2009. The Vice-Chancellor's office tells us that since 1996, new teachers have replaced two-thirds of our faculty. Thus, in 2003, many of us are relatively new at Western. What is it like to be new at WCU? This is a potentially crucial issue for understanding our teaching and learning environment because all these new people are joining and shaping our academic community. What kind of community have they joined? What kind of community are they shaping? What is their initial experience like? Is their initial experience helping to build the kind of community we seek? What follows is a partial description of what it's like to be new at Western. I have compiled comments from a dozen faculty who have joined us within the last few years. I want to thank all of them for their help and I invite you to add your observations and comments.

- Many new faculty have an initial and often persistent feeling that their anxieties, confusions, and sense of being "swamped" are unique to them, labelling them as deficient or inefficient in some way. The descriptions of sixty-hour weeks were common. The fact, of course, is that nearly everyone is short on time, and new faculty are often reassured by hearing this. For example, we all know that the anxieties about tenure and promotion are real and widespread. If you know new faculty members, assure them that you are struggling or have struggled with many of the same issues that now plague them.
- Most new faculty gain considerable solace in their first year from many aspects of the New Faculty Orientation Program—where they attend, as a group, numerous sessions designed to introduce them gradually to their new academic environment. However, many report that the program's "bonding" and informational values are seriously undercut by the intensity and duration of the sessions. A number of faculty members reported that they were not able to prepare sufficiently for their classes because of the onslaught of orientation meetings. In addition, most felt pressured to attend new faculty orientation and worried that skipping sessions might risk tenure or promotion. The solution may be simple: give orientation leaders your honest feedback because they definitely want the program to work effectively.
- Many new faculty join the UFO (Untenured Faculty Organization) and/or the University Club as ways of immediately finding faculty friends and rich social activities. One faculty member simply advised new faculty to "have a party and invite people."
- Many new faculty join the Mentoring Program and some report astounding value in the experience. Others report that the informal mentoring of departmental colleagues (and department secretaries) is even more valuable. One respondent said she was especially relieved when a senior colleague said that it was okay to focus on her teaching in her first year, that easing into her research and publication agenda was very common. So, if you are

new, don't hesitate to join the Mentoring Program or to ask questions of a departmental colleague. If you have been at WCU for awhile, make yourself available to new faculty.

- Some new faculty were surprised to discover that they not only had to present their subject to students but also had to teach their students how to learn it.
- One faculty member said that she felt reassured when she realized that proceeding by "trial and error" was a normal process in teaching, that she didn't have to be perfect in her first attempts. She still wondered how long it would take to see great improvement in results.
- Some said they were reassured when they learned that a disappointing class or even a disappointing course can be part of a normal process. Such teaching experiences don't necessarily mean the teachers are seriously deficient. Sometimes a strange alchemy is at work in the college classroom and temporary failures are to be expected.
- One respondent reported feeling shy about applying for an internal grant in her first year, thinking that it might seem presumptuous to more experienced faculty. But our colleague overcame her shyness, applied, and was successful, suggesting that first-year status might even be an advantage rather than a liability, all else being equal.
- Several respondents would remind this year's new faculty that they may have problems that require referring students to various student support services.
- One respondent advised: "Connect with your students; everything else will fall in place."
- A number of new faculty suggested that creating an instructional web site was time and effort enjoyably well spent. Laura Chapman in the Faculty Center "Sandbox" is the person to contact for expert guidance.
- For those faculty who have to do academic advising in their first year, one respondent suggested that becoming very familiar with the undergraduate catalogue and the student handbook would greatly facilitate this work.
- One respondent wanted to remind new faculty that they shouldn't feel guilty about finally ending a long and grueling day. "Chill out and go home," she says; "remember to have fun." She observes that with new faculty "sometimes it's hard to realize that you're not a graduate student any more."

These are some of the observations of our new faculty. Do they match your experiences? Is there anything important that we have left out? What information or advice do you feel that you needed but were not given when you were new at Western? What was the most helpful information or advice that you received in your first year? How can we better welcome our new faculty? If you have observations or opinions on this issue, send them to me at the Faculty Center by Monday, September 8. We will print your responses in the September 15 issue of notes & quotes and the dialogue will help make Western a more effective teaching and learning community.

**Terry Nienhuis, English**

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# Faculty Forum

*From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning*

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

Vol. 16, No. 2

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

October 1, 2003

## Reaching Audiences Near and Far

A football coach has many constituencies, but at kickoff of the season opener he is probably focusing attention on the action on the field. At the kickoff of the academic semester it's rational to focus most of our teaching energy on our "field"—the classroom. But whether new to Western's faculty or an old hand, it is useful to consider that a university professor has other constituencies as well.

A teacher's first audience, of course, is students. But of additional concern is university administration and the public image that the governance of a university engenders. The wider, if variable, audience consists of general system administration, accrediting bodies, and, ultimately, the general assembly and the citizens of North Carolina. A bit broad-scoped for the semester kickoff? Perhaps. But the pragmatic use of some familiar instruments can address concerns of both our immediate and less proximate audiences.

This is worth considering because of some of the things our wider audience has been saying about us lately. Excluding the dozens of negative articles on recent tuition increases, a few samplers:

On its current Website, the Pew Charitable Trusts observes:

Why do fewer than half the students who begin college in this country graduate five years later with a bachelor's degree? When students do graduate, troubling questions are being asked about how much students have learned. Employers report that a surprising number of new graduates do not have the skills needed to compete in today's competitive market. ... Systematic change is likely to remain elusive until higher education is motivated to make the [necessary] changes.

In the widely read 'Point of View' column on the back page of the July 25 Chronicle Review the author bemoans a substantial reduction in generosity of charitable foundations supporting higher education. She cites the lack of common goals for innovation in academe, little systemic innovation, and few measurable results as probable reasons, and she observes that "if higher education is serious about embracing new ideas, we will need to become as creative in our administrative and organizational systems—in areas like faculty rewards and operational technology—as we are in the classroom. Our systems cannot remain static on the one hand and embrace innovation on the other."

And in the current issue of AAUP's Academe, authors of an article titled "The New Generation of American Scholars" ask the question, "Are [academic] departments obsolete?" and declare that "the quest for new kinds of knowledge tests disciplinary and departmental boundaries. To foster this pursuit, institutions need to rethink traditional ideas about faculty identity and support."

And these quotes are from academic-*friendly* sources.

One logical response of faculty is to participate in faculty governance deliberations. Nationally, and perhaps in North Carolina, trends towards faculty disempowerment and the commodification of education are serious concerns. But governance issues aside, there are practical ways to foster student learning while addressing wider audience concerns. Here are three:

**Use the “CC” (Composition Conditional) Grade.** According to the WCU catalog, “A student whose written work in any course fails to meet acceptable standards will be assigned a [CC] mark by the instructor on the final grade report.” Students who receive two CC grades are required to pass English 300 before becoming eligible for graduation. This is an innovative and constructive tool, especially when one considers that potential employers rank communication skills at or near the top of applicant qualification surveys. Faculty who attend career fairs are likely to hear a common plea among potential employers: “Send us somebody who can write!”

And yet, according to the WCU Registrar’s office, in the recent spring semester only 24 of 500 faculty issued a CC grade, or less than 5%. Only 71 CC grades were issued in total; so, assuming no duplications, about 1 for every 85 undergraduate students. One conclusion is that Western students write well. But a more likely explanation is that too few faculty are taking advantage of this important evaluative tool. When it is deserved, consider issuing a CC to students on final grade reports—and make it clear on your syllabus that you reserve that option. Future employers of Western graduates will thank you.

**Use Course-Objectives Matrix.** All syllabi state course objectives; but it is helpful to show how various course readings and assignments support the course’s stated objectives. This task can be accomplished by constructing a course-objectives matrix. For example, make clear which assignments help fulfill university goals of engendering “...the ability to think critically, to communicate effectively, to identify and resolve problems reflectively, and to use information and technology responsibly.” Relating course objectives to demands from a relevant accrediting body might also be appropriate. Showing how a course contributes to larger goals can make small but important contributions towards institutional efforts concerning program assessment and educational mission.

**Use Technology.** David Noble, Neil Postman and other critics of educational technology raise interesting points. But the advantages of instructional technology seem incontrovertible as a resource base, and for facilitating time- and place-independent learning. The World Wide Web provides links to real entities addressing contemporary, real-world problems and issues. If you are not comfortable putting up your own stand-alone Web site, try WebCT. This WCU-supported software facilitates teamwork, consolidates resources, provides access from anywhere, supplies functional e-mail addresses, and can help break down disciplinary boundaries.

Ideally, these elementary tactics will improve teaching, course evaluations, and our public image. Pragmatically, department heads will notice these efforts, as will tenure and promotion committees. Although faculty efforts alone cannot resolve the systemic problems of higher education, the relatively small steps suggested above can make a positive impact—both on and off the field.

**Gary H. Jones, Computer Information Systems and Economics**

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# Faculty Forum

*From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning*

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 16, No. 3

November 1, 2003

## A Short History of Technology

While reading the *New Yorker* the other day, I noticed the following advertisement for the Omas fountain pen: "Omas: The Epitome of Fine Writing Instruments, Synonymous with Excellence and Elegance, Official Writing Instrument of the 2003 New Yorker Festival."

At the end of a frustrating day with viruses, worms, and patches, this ad reminded me of my first brush with technology in school: the Shaefer fountain pen. In grammar school, eons before computers and the Internet both simplified and complicated my life, the nuns ruled with rules and rulers, demerits and God, and we Catholic school children sat straight-backed in our seats, feet flat on the floor, with half-pint bottles of navy-blue ink, ready to start the day. By 6<sup>th</sup> grade, ink cartridges had replaced the messy inkwells and bottles, and by high school, ballpoint pens, previously considered for Protestants only, were permitted. I went to public school for the first time in my junior year and took typing, not an option at St. John's, but the most useful course in my high school curriculum. At least, I still use it today.

In college, I typed papers on a portable Royal typewriter, often in duplicate or triplicate, through messy carbon paper, lifting each layer to make corrections. Later, "white out" made my life simpler and I dispensed with the carbons; instead, I covered up mistakes with the miracle substance. Futuristic electric typewriters, with correct-tape--way too expensive to own--foretold an increasingly convenient and efficient world. During my early years as a public school teacher, I learned about the new world of educational technology--teaching machines designed for film strips, programmed lessons, instructional videos, and the like. These devices were bad; yet, it was said that they were going to replace human teachers.

I came to WCU in 1989, at the dawning of the age of a PC on every desk and easy access to the Internet. At the time, no one in my department knew how to use computers for anything but rudimentary word processing. Over the next five years, we became adept at and dependent on these technological marvels. No longer did the secretary type tests, duplicate purple copies or enter grades by hand. And the past 10 years have seen a virtual technology explosion. Suddenly, a new, updated computer was available every other year. Power-Point reared its ugly head and some faculty, trying valiantly to keep up with technology, formatted all their class lectures as Power-Point presentations. Pretty soon, textbooks came with ready-made Power-Point. Faculty web pages started to surface. Course software became readily available, and I actually set up all my courses on Blackboard.com (before they started charging and WCU decided to use WebCT instead). I downloaded full-text articles, inadvertently conspiring with my students to quit using the library. And, of course, I used email. I used email to contact students, friends and the faculty next-door. And many of my colleagues jumped right into distance learning. Approaching the new millennium, WCU was dubbed the Most Wired Small Campus by Yahoo, adopting the "high touch, high tech" slogan, and every first year student was required to have a PC. Billboards in Raleigh now portray WCU as a university high in academics and technology.

This summer, with much trepidation, I decided to put a course on WebCT. Well, I should clarify: Linda Venturo skillfully walked me through putting a course on WebCT. And walked with me all summer. It was what is called a "web-enhanced" course. I was definitely not ready to try a totally web-based course. As this semester got underway, I was surprised by the sheer number of technology problems I encountered, and I sometimes wonder if it's worth all the effort.

Scenario #1: My students have to demonstrate technology competence, so I figured it was high time for me to be a good role model. I decided to rejuvenate my web page and Laura Chapman sat patiently with me for hours in my office and later talked me through questions on the phone. After spending hours setting up web and course pages, I got to my 5:00 class in Asheville, ready to project. It turned out that although my room was wired, it did not have a projector. The projector could not be installed until a theft-proof cage and lock were installed. But Nick, the graduate student, was immediately at my service with a portable cart. He plugged in all the wires, and I was ready to roll, again. I eagerly clicked on my web page. The computer message said: *Page not found*. I had some students click on their webpages which appeared instantly. I somewhat frantically called Laura, from my cell phone, and asked, "Where's my web page?" Since I always have a Plan B, (an old public school teacher trick) I taught my class with chalk that night. The next day I found out that the "VMS system" (whatever that means) was down. Laura came back and helped me put my webpages on the "PAWS system." It will take hours to change all my links over to PAWS, so right now my webpage is a two-system hybrid.

Scenario # 2: I tried to send my freshman seminar some links on research about small schools. I clicked on Cybercat Pipeline, composed a message and sent it to my class. It would not go. I wasted an hour trying to send the links, only to find out, once again, that the system was down. I finally linked it to my paws webpage but forgot to tell my students about my new webpage address. And, in class the next day, half of them reminded me that their WCU email accounts had not yet started to function.

Scenario #3: I planned to show a video documentary to my freshman seminar, but the TV in my classroom is only 19 inches wide, too small for the students in the back of the room. I scouted all the classrooms on the hall, and confiscated the biggest one. After untangling and plugging the wires in, I found that it played only video disks. I had to start the hunt all over, but, luckily, I had started the search 15 minutes before class began and found one not being used.

These are just a few of the technology frustrations I've had this semester. I know the ITS department has been overwhelmed with 5000+ service calls, and the viruses, worms, crashes and glitches are not unique to WCU. Every time I've had a problem, the technology faculty have been remarkably pleasant, very competent, and always helpful. I think it would behoove us all, though, to start early, always have a Plan B, and remember that technology is no substitute for pedagogy; unlike chalk, technology is unreliable.

I love the computer and technological conveniences--when they work. On some days, though, I'd just like to go back to fountain pens, talking to people face-to-face, and mechanical clocks. But then I look at the clocks in Killian and see that it's 9:45 on the first floor, 11:15 on the second, and 10:30 on the third.

**Mary Jean Ronan Herzog, Educational Leadership & Foundations**

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# Faculty Forum

*From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning*

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 16, No. 4

December 1, 2003

## On Cherokee Land

In its role as a regional university, Western strives to serve the communities of the region. One such is Cherokee. Significantly, our campus was built on important Cherokee land, a place with religious significance that had been occupied for thousands of years before we came. The most visible vestige of the importance of Cullowhee to the Cherokees was a mound on campus leveled by road graders in 1956 to make way for athletic fields.

Over the past few decades, WCU has developed a strong, though low-key, personal connection to the Cherokee tribe, and we are now positioned for strengthening future connections. For example, due to the vision of a handful of faculty, Western has an MA track in Cherokee Studies in the History Department, along with an interdisciplinary minor in Cherokee Studies in the Anthropology Department, superb archival resources, and an outdoor Cherokee "garden" library of traditional medicinal plants. Most impressively, Western has had for nearly twenty years a physical presence on the Boundary, the WCU Cherokee Center, located in Cherokee on tribal land and built with volunteer labor. Today it is thriving under the leadership of Roseanna Belt (see <http://cess.wcu.edu/conted/cherokee/index.html>).

From the Cherokee perspective, the last ten years have seen significant changes, but the Cherokee community is seeking even more active engagement with the University. This movement, in part fueled by income from the casino, led several years ago to the creation of the Sequoyah Professorship—funded with major contributions from the tribal community, NEH, and others. However, WCU still competes for students, programs, and resources with the University of Tennessee, other UNC schools, and even Ivy League schools, which offer special incentives (such as state grants of resident-tuition) for Eastern Band students. UNC-Chapel Hill has just followed Western's lead, a decade later, and created a new BA minor in Native American Studies; the first student to enroll is from Cherokee. But Western's Cherokee language courses remain the only such university program east of the Mississippi. Western's interdisciplinary Cherokee Studies program, directed by Dr. Jane Eastman, involves over 14 faculty, including three teachers from Cherokee. (See more at [www.wcu.edu/cherokeestudies](http://www.wcu.edu/cherokeestudies))

Western has a tremendous opportunity for developing relationships in Cherokee. The current Principal Chief, Michell Hicks, is a Western graduate, as are many other tribal officials. Nearly a hundred Eastern Band students are enrolled at Western, and close to another hundred students--Lumbee, Navajo, and other tribes--are enrolled as well. Students' majors are scattered across the departments and colleges, with no one predominating.

The first step we must take is to sign a guidance document, akin to a memorandum of understanding, between the tribe and the university. With this we will affirm the special relationship between the tribe and Western and the mandate for creating new programs. There is potential for more than a new professorship, scholarship, or academic programs, though each is important. Academic programs like Western's Cherokee Studies program will thrive only if there

is an across-the-board university commitment. All aspects of the university are involved: faculty, the Board of Trustees, alumni affairs, admissions, financial aid, counseling, student life, outreach, contracting, and even physical plant in the stewardship of campus cultural heritage sites. "Building bridges between universities and tribal communities is difficult," as Dr. Margaret Raymond of the Cherokee Nation emphasized in her charge to our planning group.

One particular challenge is an undeniable clash of values—those of a traditional culture and ways of knowing with disciplines born out of the western tradition. Indian people have always walked this tightrope. As Roger Buffalohead has suggested, "Too often American Indians, like Blanche Dubois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, have relied on the kindness of strangers to write their history. In the literature piling up in our libraries, the missing ingredient is often an American Indian perspective. Indian history through Indian eyes is still the exception, rather than the rule, and no one should be surprised that a similar circumstance prevails in higher education as a whole. By and large, scholarly studies of Indian performance in higher education has been done by outsiders, reflecting an institutional point of view that only rarely takes into consideration the perspective of the Indian community on higher education. One might say that the institutional viewpoint often dwells on Indian student failure—such as the lack of adequate preparation, self-esteem issues, or cultural conflict—as the crux of the problem. On the other hand, Indian community members emphasize institutional barriers as the most critical factors influencing Indian student performance in higher education, and there may be truth in both points of view. However, we must realize that cooperation between the higher education institution and tribal government is the most logical first step in bringing parity to Native American students. Wiping away the tears of the past takes courage, strength, and willingness to reconcile our different paths to the present. The first American Indian to graduate from Harvard University was killed on his way home by other Indians who mistook him for a white man. By working together to make higher education parity a reality for American Indians, we are doing what is right and long overdue."

Real commitment is hard won. We have it today. And through their own quiet triumph of will, the Cherokee people remain in the place where they and their ancestors have been for many thousands of years. Western, as a newcomer, can play a vital role in meeting the needs of the Cherokee community. Gretchen Bataille, the Vice President for Academic Affairs at UNC, reminds us of Cherokee wisdom:

"There is a proverb that says when planning one year ahead, plant grain. When planning ten years ahead, plant trees. But when you are planning fifty years ahead, you must educate the people."

To learn more, stop by The Cherokee Center, Acquoni Road, in Cherokee, 828-497-7920, or stop by the Cherokee Studies Office at 105 McKee Building, 227-2306. The October meeting report and the full text of remarks by Dr. Raymond and Dr. Bataille are on our website. A new brochure on the prehistory of our campus landscape is also available at 105 McKee.

**Tom Hatley, Sequoyah Distinguished Professor in Cherokee Studies**  
**Roseanna Belt, Director, Cherokee Center**  
**Jane Eatman, Director, Cherokee Studies Program**

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# Faculty Forum

*From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning*

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 16, No. 5

February 1, 2004

## **What Role Should Students Play in Evaluating Their Teachers?**

How should student course evaluations be used to evaluate faculty? What are students capable and incapable of evaluating? Do administrators use student evaluations fairly in personnel decisions? What do students themselves think of course evaluations? Can student evaluations be used in a way that will improve teaching and learning at Western? These are questions we should probably be asking ourselves.

A few years ago, General Administration asked Chancellor Bardo about WCU's process of evaluating teaching, specifically whether it was uniform across all departments. In response, the Faculty Senate Council on Instruction and Curriculum charged the Instruction Committee to study our teaching evaluation process, recognizing that faculty should have a strong voice in creating a process that will affect student learning and faculty careers at WCU.

Those on this committee realized that our formidable task, in a nutshell, was to recommend a uniform teaching evaluation process, including a student course evaluation instrument, that would accomplish two separate but equally important goals:

- 1) To help instructors improve their performance in the classroom
- 2) To ensure that faculty receive fair pay, tenure, and promotion based in part on classroom performance

Some faculty believe that effective teaching can't be measured, that no one can define the characteristics of effective teaching. Thus, our first task was to read the scholarly research. We discovered that more than 15,000 studies have been published on some aspect of teaching effectiveness. Peter Seldin, a nationally recognized authority on the teaching evaluation process, lists some of these characteristics in his book, *Changing Practices in Evaluating Teaching*. He concludes that "from this body of research arise reasonably consistent findings on what constitutes effective teaching." More specifically, our committee found that while student ratings are a key component of the teaching evaluation process, research shows that student course evaluations should not be used as the single instrument to measure teaching effectiveness. Based on the research, student ratings can be useful to improve teaching (formative evaluation) and to make personnel decisions (summative evaluation) when they are part of a broader assessment process.

However, at most colleges and universities, student ratings are being used almost exclusively to measure faculty performance. Based on a survey of over 40,000 department chairs, William E.

Cashin concludes that “many college and universities rely heavily, if not solely, on student rating data as the only systematic source of data collected to evaluate teaching.” Cashin suggests that successful evaluation of teaching involves several areas—such as mastery of subject matter, curriculum development, course design, and administrative requirements—that most students cannot judge with confidence.

All the studies we found conclude that universities should use several different sources in the evaluation process. For example, many studies suggest that self-assessment is an invaluable tool for evaluation. If teaching is a process, can the instructor assess his or her own performance and find areas of strength and weakness? Other sources might be evaluation by other colleagues and review of syllabi and exams. Peter Seldin advocates the use of a teaching portfolio, similar to the one compiled to compete for a teaching award, in which numerous class materials, student ratings, classroom visits by outside evaluators, and other documents might be gathered. Seldin believes that a variety of materials provides a more accurate view of what goes on in the classroom. On the other hand, he emphasizes that professors must provide evidence that they are accomplishing what they set out to do. He writes, “if they say they have helped students write better, then they should include samples of student writing in the teaching portfolio. If they say students are scoring better on tests, include the scores.” He further explains that “there are some folks who just think it’s inappropriate to try to measure teaching. But my notion of measuring teaching is whether someone is reasonably effective, not whether they are a 4.8 on a 5.0 scale.” Seldin’s comments reflect a changing perception that teaching evaluation should focus on student learning rather than faculty performance.

Our committee asks that you participate in a dialogue this spring about teaching evaluation on the campus of Western Carolina University. After hearing from faculty, we will present our recommendations to the Faculty Senate, including our recommendations for a standard student ratings instrument. Make your voice heard. Please mark **Tuesday, February 3**, on your calendar: from 2 to 5 pm, **Peter Seldin**, Distinguished Professor of Management at Pace University and expert on the evaluation of teaching, will conduct a workshop in the Hospitality Room at the Ramsey Center on “**Assessing Faculty Teaching Performance**.” In addition, you will have the opportunity to discuss these issues further at two open forums scheduled for **Thursday, February 12**, and **Wednesday, February 18**, both 2:00 to 3:00 pm in UC 232A.

These upcoming events provide the opportunity for you to be informed and then to make your voice heard. The recommendations made by the committee will affect your teaching and your career at Western Carolina University. We are speaking on your behalf, so please let us hear your voice. Members of the committee are Gayle Miller, Mae Miller Claxton, Brian Gastle, Dale Carpenter, Walter Foegelle, Hollye Moss, Betty White, and Will Peebles. Currently, we meet on Tuesdays at 3:30 PM in Coulter 419. Please visit our website for more information at <http://paws.wcu.edu/bgastle/teacheval/index.html> and send your responses to Terry Nienhuis in the Faculty Center to be printed in the next issue of notes & quotes.

### **Mae Miller Claxton, English**

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# Faculty Forum

*From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning*

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 16, No. 6

March 1, 2004

## **Open Access To Scholarly Publications**

WCU has an opportunity to join a revolution in scholarly communications taking place around the world. This revolution, the Open Access Initiative, focuses on providing free access to scholarly publications. In recent years journal subscriptions have become prohibitively expensive, thereby compromising the very purpose of journals: the dissemination of knowledge. The fact is scholarly publications have been hijacked by rapacious publishers, who are reaping considerable profit at the expense of scholarship. The proposed changes will allow academia to reclaim scholarly output for the academic community.

In the early 1990s scholars working on the Human Genome Project were struck by the paradox of making human genetics data freely available while still paying considerable amounts for access to the articles being published using this free data. The incongruity of this situation gave birth to the Open Access Initiative. The Open Access movement's rationale is that most scholars publish articles with the intent of sharing new discoveries or insights with colleagues in the field, not for the purpose of making a profit. To the scholar, it is an article's impact on the discipline that matters and not its potential to generate revenue. In fact, requiring that the reader pay for access lowers the work's potential impact since it limits the information to those who can afford to pay subscription fees. Librarians are also concerned about the negative effects of the traditional publishing model. From 1986 to 2001, the cost of serials generally increased by 215%. As a consequence, since 2001, Hunter Library has cancelled approximately 500 academic journals to keep up with inflation. It is obvious that the resulting long-term impact on library collections is unsustainable.

The basic tenets of the Open Access Initiative are: toll-free online access, free copying, free linking, and retention of copyright by the author. To further these aims, the Open Access Movement advocates a two-pronged strategy to be pursued concurrently. The most visible effort relates to the proliferation of Open Access journals either as new titles or by switching subscription-based journals to the new model. There are now nearly 700 peer-reviewed Open Access journals freely accessible to any interested reader (see: <http://www.doaj.org>). Established publishers such as Oxford University Press are experimenting with the new model and others, such as Elsevier, find themselves on the defensive due to warnings of lower profits from competition with Open Access journals.

The second part of the Open Access strategy encourages the creation of Open Access repositories. Open Access repositories are digital collections/archives of an individual's or group's scholarly output which could include articles, syllabi, conference presentations, data sets, etc. These can exist at a personal level, with each scholar making his or her own output freely

available on the Internet, at an institutional level, and at a national level. Personal open repositories are already widespread. In the U.S., institutional repositories are gaining popularity, the most famous of these being MIT's D-SPACE. In Europe it appears that national repositories are gaining popularity, as England, France and Germany move to require all scholars who receive national subsidies to make their output freely available.

It is important to note that the movement recognizes that the traditional publishing roles of editing, formatting, and peer-reviewing articles are still critical in scholarly communication. Fulfilling these roles in the Open Access environment continues to require a costly operating infrastructure. Thus, publishing in the Open Access model still costs money. Numerous Open Access funding models exist. The most common model in Open Access journals requires authors to pay for the published article. While this represents new ground for the social sciences and the humanities, in the sciences such charges (called "page charges") are well established. Funding models for repositories are based on costs being underwritten by the institution or government that maintains that particular repository. In both cases, the funding model represents important changes requiring both researchers and institutions to rethink their strategies and priorities.

While it is not yet guaranteed that the Open Access movement will attain all its objectives, the rate with which it is growing and the level of international support it already enjoys are remarkable. The consequences of its success are wide-ranging: (1) The movement provides free access to scholarly materials that currently cost the institution an increasingly unsustainable amount of money; (2) Although it is unlikely that commercial journal publishers will disappear in the near future, they are bound to feel the pressure of free access and perhaps the journal inflation rate will decrease; (3) The impact factor of our publications has the potential to increase considerably; (4) We will be able to retain intellectual copyright of our work; (5) A WCU repository would be a novel way to showcase the university's faculty research output.

But for these consequences to become reality the WCU community will have to (1) Publish in Open Access titles; (2) Create a WCU repository; (3) Promote Open Access; (4) Recognize Open Access publications for what they are in the TPR process, namely, legitimate venues for scholarly communication; and (5) Seek university financial support for funding Open Access Initiatives.

The WCU community has options concerning this revolutionary movement. We can wait on the sidelines until this movement is full blown, or we can take the initiative and help shape the movement ourselves. Since taking the initiative is not a matter of financial resources as much as institutional will, there ought not be a lack of resolve. There are no reasons to wait. This semester the library will be making a campus-wide push to publicize the movement. We hope that the WCU community will join the international Open Access movement to regain control of its own scholarly output. Sharing your comments in notes & quotes is your next opportunity for involvement.

**Pongracz Sennyey, Krista Schmidt, Nancy Newsome, Jill Ellern, Tim Carstens, Library**

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# Faculty Forum

*From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning*

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 16, No. 7

April 1, 2004

## **What Role Will You Play in the Selection of the New Provost?**

The search process is well underway for a Provost, our new chief academic officer, and I urge each of you to get involved in the selection process. This person will have the potential to impact faculty lives in significant ways—on a day-to-day basis even more than the Chancellor. We have the right to participate and the responsibility to do so. I know that a number of faculty and staff have become disengaged and that some have even chosen disenfranchisement, but most still hold on to their dreams for what they would like to see in the future for this institution. The newer faculty, I am convinced, have high hopes for both Western Carolina and their particular programs. Many have full careers ahead and have already invested much in the choice to come to Cullowhee.

Surely, we must all realize the Provost will have responsibilities beyond those of the previous Vice Chancellors for Academic Affairs and will likely be the second most influential person on this campus. As usual, the Provost will oversee activities and oversee staff whose duties are not directly tied to our classroom work. However, the greatest number of people, other than students, that the Provost will impact will be the teaching faculty. It is imperative, therefore, that this Provost be faculty friendly and have the best interest of our academic pursuits in mind. I have learned in the past quarter century in higher education and through more than three decades of studying organizations that nothing is sacred. A chief academic officer "can giveth, and a chief academic officer can taketh away." We have seen this at Western and many have experienced it firsthand.

So, how does the faculty collectively present its views and be heard? First, we must get ourselves mobilized to read about and meet the candidates. Next, we must make damn sure we are heard. One opportunity to exercise our right to influence the selection is behind us. Several weeks ago the faculty had an opportunity to meet with Ted Marchese of Academic Search Consultation Service, the firm WCU is paying to provide recruiting assistance. The faculty turnout was pitiful. I was able to count on one hand the number of faculty in attendance and didn't even get to my thumb! Members of the search committee outnumbered us! So did the staff! Say what you will, this was a sincere effort on the part of the recruiting firm to listen to faculty, and I am convinced what was said *will* play into the search process. One opportunity to exercise a right is behind us.

However, there will be more chances to influence the process. Candidates will eventually visit campus and I am confident we, the teaching faculty, will have opportunities to meet them and have our say through the search committee. Okay, some faculty believe that the search

committee is a sham: the Provost will affect hundreds of faculty and there are only five "regular" faculty members on the committee of seventeen, one from each of the undergraduate colleges and the library. Newt Smith, Chair of the Faculty will also serve. I know all of the committee members except the students, however, and I have worked alongside virtually every committee member on at least one important activity. All care deeply about the University, do exceptional work, and are people of character.

The eight university offices represented on the committee are crucial to the campus and should have a say in the selection process, but so should the Honors College, the Coulter Faculty Center, the Graduate School, and other Academic Affairs constituents. Many other offices have a perspective that faculty do not, but there are ways for them to be heard other than representation on the search committee. I certainly do not advocate a larger committee, so the faculty voice is at risk of being diluted.

If the current search committee is to work to its potential, it must engage in dialogue of the truest sense and each and every faculty member must attempt to influence this rich process. How can hundreds of us from the classroom be heard? I am not convinced that it will be easy with the minimal faculty representation on the search committee, but I am convinced we can certainly try. I know for a fact that Newt Smith, Tim Carstens, Jerry Miller, Aaron Ball, Jerry Kinard, and Beth Tyson will carefully listen to whatever we say. We must speak out, but we cannot say anything unless we get out of our offices, examine the candidates' credentials, meet them, and consider their talents alongside our dreams for Western and our day-to-day needs. We must inundate the search committee with input.

I am also concerned with the impression we make on the candidates and especially that individual who is ultimately offered the position, serves as chief academic officer, and joins us as a member of the faculty and a tenured member of an academic department. Who knows, that individual might someday be teaching alongside you. Furthermore, it is in the best interest of the new Provost to learn firsthand during the course of the selection process about Western's faculty.

We all have a significant investment in this search. If you do have dreams, take advantage of your right to be heard and fulfill your responsibility to influence the Provost selection. If you don't have dreams, you must admit that as a faculty member you have rights. With rights, too, come responsibilities, and, as Amitai Etzioni said, "Claiming rights without assuming responsibilities is unethical and illogical." It won't be long before a decision will be made that will unquestionably impact what it is like to be a faculty member at Western Carolina University. I hope to see you when the candidates come to Cullowhee. Why not?

**Terry L. Kinnear, Management and International Business**

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# Faculty Forum

*From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning*

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 16, No. 8

May 1, 2004

## **Freshmen and the Faculty Who Teach Them Need More Support**

When a colleague tells us that his or her classes consist primarily of freshmen, many of us respond with either pity or dismissal. Some faculty even consider freshmen the “unwashed horde” of WCU and think that teaching them day after day can only be regarded as drudgery. Don't all teachers yearn for the opportunity to enlighten *real* students in the major? No. I love teaching freshmen. They are, without question, the most important students on this campus, and more people need to start thinking as I do if Western's commitment to responsible growth and retention is to have any impact or success. Instead of throwing up our hands at the prospect of having to teach freshmen, we should be fighting over who gets the *privilege*.

Traditionally, those at the bottom of the teaching pyramid—the lecturers and “visiting” instructors—have shouldered most of the First Year load. This, I believe, is mostly as it should be; senior faculty should spend more of their time and energy on students in the major. Lecturers and visiting instructors, hereafter “First Year Faculty” or FYF, should remain on the front lines and act as a kind of infantry. The first year of college creates much confusion for students, and FYF have the unique and arduous task of fighting through this chaos and steering freshmen toward their goals and their identities. Unfortunately, both First Year students and faculty suffer at the bottom of a caste system that prevents their receiving much support in this battle.

We have had a lot of good news about teaching freshmen lately. Recent improvements include the standardization of lectureships so that most FYF now receive medical and retirement benefits, and the Faculty Center has sponsored two activities this year that focused on teaching freshmen—the Summer Institute for Teaching and Learning and a Faculty Learning Community on Teaching First Year Students. Other news and developments in the First Year battle include the reintroduction of Learning Communities (a successful experiment that will expand this fall) and the abiding and growing awareness by all of the outstanding quality of instruction at Western.

But the battle rages on, and the fact remains that most FYF are under-prepared and ill equipped to handle the challenges we face. First Year courses are extremely labor intensive; the classes are large, and the grading is tedious. These classes are also repetitive, especially when an instructor teaches multiple sections of the same course. In addition, FYF devote our few spare moments to scholarship, and though few FYF are required to serve on committees, most of us choose to do so once we realize that questions which directly affect what we teach are being decided without our input.

Regardless of their level of involvement outside the classroom, FYF hear constant reminders about retention, growth rates, and the need for faculty involvement. We feel this pressure very keenly, and often feel guilty that we cannot do as much as senior faculty. With all

this on our minds, the fact that we actually manage to *educate* anyone could be considered a small miracle—one accomplished with a fistful of cheery determination, twelve feet of shared office space, fourteen hundred bucks a month after taxes, and joint custody of a computer assembled during the Pleistocene Era.

Every teacher on campus could lodge similar complaints about the pressures of the job, regardless of how much we're paid or how lofty our titles may be. My purpose in reminding faculty and administrators about the First Year teaching experience lies in raising awareness about our *students*. Any discussion regarding faculty should be student-focused.

The tendency to disregard freshmen and to cram them into classes taught by harried, overworked FYF can only be attributed to a lack of concern or respect for the First Year student. We assume that advisors, housing staff, and FYF will scrub behind freshmen's ears and that only when these students select a major or begin to take upper level courses will they be worth our time. But if a department doesn't have as many majors as it would like or if faculty want to bemoan the apathy of the student body in general, they cannot do so without admitting that they have little or no commitment to actively and enthusiastically participating in the First Year experience. First Year students will feel no safety with and no affection for their education without encouragement and a sense that this institution has a cohesive plan for them. If we fail in this plan, we can expect high transfer rates, plenty of empty stares in the classroom, and a traffic jam on I-40 every Friday afternoon.

If Western truly wants to improve retention and increase enrollment *responsibly*, the experience of FYF needs to be addressed in accordance with the experience of freshmen. I am certain that my wide-eyed freshmen would be a lot happier and more productive if their professors weren't too overwhelmed themselves to identify their students' needs.

I don't just want smaller classes, higher pay, and a comfier office chair. If all three of those wishes were granted, I would initially be much happier to teach back-to-back sections of English 101, but I would quickly realize that in spite of my best efforts, I still don't always know how to deal with the myriad social and academic factors on campus that affect freshman performance. Most upper-division faculty do not have a clear understanding of how to prepare students to emerge from the turmoil of their first year because we neglect to set clear goals for the lower-level courses being taught in our departments or to effectively equip and entuse the people teaching them.

If WCU provided FYF with better supplies and equipment, continued the fair examination of salaries and benefits, and actively sought to represent First Year instructors in the Faculty Senate, every student and university employee would benefit. We must make a concerted effort to appreciate and share with First Year Faculty and to delight in and eagerly await the arrival of every freshman class. Join our Faculty Learning Community this summer or fall and help us and WCU meet these challenges. Contact Alan Altany in the Faculty Center to express your interest in this noble work.

**Leah Hampton, English (and the Faculty Learning Community on Teaching First Year Students)**

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