

# 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. 19, No. 1

September 1, 2006

## **Creating Connections: Applied Learning in a Public Setting The Mountain Heritage Center As a Resource for Applied Learning**

The Mountain Heritage Center is one of many campus resources that can assist faculty in providing our students with transformative learning experiences outside the classroom. The Center has welcomed university classes and individual members of the university community to its programs and exhibits for almost three decades. Thousands of Western students have learned about our region through the Mountain Heritage Center. This is not surprising—enriching our students' educational experience is an important component of the Center's mission. But our mission is much broader. The Center studies, documents, and interprets the natural and cultural heritage of the southern Appalachian region. We collect artifacts, conduct oral history interviews, create traveling and virtual exhibits, and host craft demonstrations and musical performances. We also prepare educational materials for K-12 teachers, produce books and musical recordings, and provide museum services to the western counties of North Carolina.

This service to the region adds breadth to our mission; it also creates many more learning opportunities for Western students. While most students experience our public face as spectators, there are other students and faculty members assisting behind the scenes in the design, creation, and execution of Center projects. Five recent examples illustrate the variety of activities and learning experiences our students can find at the Mountain Heritage Center:

- A biology student proposed a small exhibit on herbariums as an independent study project. Working closely with her professor and Center staff, she researched, designed, and created a display for the Center.
- Two Graphic Arts classes designed and implemented project logos for two of the Center's educational traveling trunks. These students also designed and created mailing materials and the trunks' exteriors. The students gained the experience of working with a client from the design phase through completion of the project.
- The History Department's Local History class conducted oral history research, artifact analysis, and museum and website development for a project you can view at <http://www.wcu.edu/mhc/npl/index.htm>. They also assisted with the "After the War" exhibit, on display through spring semester 2007.
- A Parks and Recreation Department class conducted research for a planned exhibit on historic and contemporary outdoor recreation in the mountains. This is a long-term project—the next phase of it has just started with the following example:



- This fall we are collaborating with the “Adventure Sports in the Mountains” Learning Community. Through our partnership with instructors in Sociology and USI 130 and the staff of Base Camp Cullowhee, students will conduct research and create materials for use in our ongoing project on outdoor recreation in western North Carolina.

In each of the above examples, students applied knowledge gained in their classes to serve an outside client—the Center. They learned to meet deadlines, meet a client’s project criteria, and stay within budget. Most had to organize the material they had learned for a public presentation—often in a variety of media. All of these students have a significant project to include on their resumé, in a professional portfolio, or as part of a graduate school application.

We are currently planning projects with faculty in a variety of departments, including: Art, Anthropology, Biology, Chemistry, Education, Engineering, English, History, Mathematics, Psychology, Sociology, and USI 130. We also co-sponsor programs with the Cherokee Studies Program, the Parris Distinguished Professor in Appalachian Cultural Studies, and Western’s Ethnography Laboratory and have partnered with Hunter Library, the university’s Special Collections, and the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching on a variety of special projects.

We are also offering a September 27<sup>th</sup> workshop on creating digital exhibits. Digital exhibits have several advantages. For faculty they may be modified to fit within the workload and time constraints of a three-hour course. They allow the Center to increase our offerings with minimal impact on current exhibits and storage space. They also lend themselves to specific class requirements more readily than a traditional museum exhibit. If you are interested in how to design a digital exhibit, please contact the Coulter Faculty Center.

The Center has worked with many undergraduate and graduate interns over the years. We are currently revising our internship program to include more professional development activities. While we unfortunately cannot offer paid internships, we are dedicated to providing our students with a quality internship experience in all other respects. We have also assisted Western interns working at other institutions, such as the Cashiers Historical Society, Canton’s town museum, and the Historic Monteith House of Dillsboro.

I and the other staff of the Mountain Heritage Center would like to discuss any ideas you have for possible collaborative projects. Please contact us at 227-7129, or email me at [philyaw@email.wcu.edu](mailto:philyaw@email.wcu.edu). Of course, you are also welcome just to visit the center, located on the ground floor of the Administration building. You will discover the rich traditions of the mountains, see the Appalachian region from new perspectives, and come away with an enhanced understanding of its land, culture, and people.

**Scott Philyaw, Director, Mountain Heritage Center, Associate Professor of History**

*The opinions printed here belong solely to the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the editorial staff or of the Faculty Center. If you would like to respond, e-mail Nienhuis by the 8th of the month.*



## ***Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning***

Response to "Creating Connections: Applied Learning in a Public Setting, The Mountain Heritage Center As a Resource for Applied Learning," by Scott Philyaw, 9/1/06

When I first came to WCU as an untenured assistant professor eight years ago, I was strongly encouraged to attend a series of new faculty orientation sessions. The one speaker who stood out for me from those sessions was Gael Graham, who shared some impressions of her years as a faculty member at WCU. As I remember it, she said that WCU was an institution where faculty could put their creativity to use and be involved in the growth and development of the university. Her words led me to think about ways that I could help make WCU better. Perhaps, given her audience (and, it must be said, recent university initiatives), she was being overly optimistic about the role that faculty play in the growth of this university. Still, in my own experience, the unit of this university where faculty members are most closely involved in the ongoing creation of "Western Carolina University" (with the exception of the Faculty Center, of course!) is the Mountain Heritage Center. In recent years, faculty and their students have been directly involved in organizing and creating displays, exhibits, workshops, lectures, performances and just about anything else that you can think of having to do with "the mountains." It has been one of the great pleasures of my professional life to work with such a committed group of competent, enthusiastic and good-hearted people. They produce what I think are amazing results on a very limited budget. Their shared faith in the spirit of creativity, grounded in this special place, makes it happen. Hopefully, WCU will also share this spirit as we work to build a new economy in a region that all of us can call "home."

**Philip E. (Ted) Coyle, Anthropology and Sociology**





# Faculty Forum

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

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 19, No. 2

October 1, 2006

## The Vital Role of Faculty in Student Recruitment

Since October, I have helped train our Admissions recruiters, and I've served as a member of our Enrollment Marketing Committee. I've learned so much about WCU this last year, and I've come to appreciate the challenges our admissions and marketing people experience on a daily basis. I've also come to the realization that the job of recruiting students is not just the job of our admissions and marketing folks. Faculty play a vital role in the student recruitment process. The keynote speaker at a national conference on marketing and higher education recently identified students' interaction with faculty as one of the key factors in recruitment. Meeting a faculty member can be the thing that convinces a student considering other schools to choose WCU. As one new entering Freshman put it, "Once I met Dr. Smith, I knew Western was the place for me."

While I believe the relationship between admissions and faculty overall is good, the following comment from a recruiter regarding the role of faculty in recruitment gave me pause: "We work hard to get students interested in Western. It's really frustrating when we refer a student to a department and the department doesn't show much interest." When asked how often that occurred, the recruiter responded: "Let's just say I have greater confidence in what some departments will do with a prospect than what others will do." Recently, I've pondered why some departments would be more eager to respond to student leads than others. In this essay, I explore three reasons faculty might have for not being more active in recruitment, and I offer ideas for addressing these barriers.

**Reason 1: We don't need any more students!** Let's start with the vision for growth. We all know that increasing enrollment is a top priority. We also know that employees are more likely to "buy into" an organizational goal if they feel they have helped to determine that goal. This leads me to ask, then, do faculty feel they have had ample input into our goal to grow? Are faculty aware of the advantages of growth? Do they anticipate disadvantages that outweigh the advantages? Have they had the opportunity to articulate those worries and to receive answers to assuage those fears? If faculty members do not agree with the general focus of the University to grow at the macro level, it logically follows that they will be unwilling to get involved at the departmental level. It also is possible that some faculty members who support the overall goal of growth feel that they have too many students and too few faculty, especially tenured/tenure-track faculty, and too few resources at the departmental level. One wonders, then, why departments that already have more students than they believe they can effectively serve would want to



recruit more students? If there is a limited number of tenure or tenure track faculty in a department, more students means heavier teaching and advising loads for those faculty. What would motivate faculty, then, to participate in the very activity that would make their jobs more difficult? Do departments feel confident that, if they grow, they will be given resources to manage the growth? If these sentiments are present, have they been discussed and satisfactorily addressed? If not, I hope such dialogue will occur.

**Reason 2: That's not my job!** Prior to my work with Admissions, I have to admit that I felt a lot like I suspect many faculty members feel: recruiting students is not my job! I recall a colleague not too long ago saying, "Don't they pay people over in Admissions to do this?" The answer, of course, is yes, they do. However, when prospective students and parents visit campus, they've already met Admissions representatives. They now want to meet the people who will be most important in their lives in the future: the faculty. This is part of our job. We are the experts in our fields, and no matter how much training we provide our Admissions recruiters they will never be able to present our programs as well as we can. I hope we will have our very best faculty recruiting students. Moreover, I hope these faculty will be valued, which brings me to...

**Reason 3: It doesn't count.** Student recruitment is service. That's problematic because some would say we pay lip service to the value of service. It's a good thing to do, but when the votes are counted around the TPR table, service won't get you tenure. Or promoted. Or a pay raise. And, maybe, sigh, not even the esteem of your colleagues. For some, then, student recruitment is one of those things that we do in order to get along but not because we think it is valued. We can change this. We can reward faculty members for being involved in student recruitment during the AFE and TPR processes. The recent announcement of the Chancellor's Meritorious Service to Students Award is an indicator that the administration does, indeed, value work related to recruitment and retention. This \$1,000 award will be added to the faculty member's base pay. Hey, wait a minute! Student recruitment activities can get us a pay raise! A new effort to increase faculty involvement in the recruitment process has been initiated. Each department now has a faculty member designated as an Admissions liaison. This will be more work for these faculty. In the absence of release time or other compensation, I sincerely hope that departmental AFE and TPR committees will value this service and recognize that time spent helping the University reach larger goals means there will be less time for those faculty members to pursue their own professional development goals. It should count.

We have an exciting challenge ahead of us. If you have concerns or other reasons that prevent you from being involved, I hope you will share them. If you have suggestions for ways faculty can become more involved or examples of recruitment activities that have been successful for your program, I hope you will share those, too. Faculty are vital players in the student recruitment game. I hope you'll join and/or support the team.

**Dr. Betty Farmer, Communication, Theatre & Dance**

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# *Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning*

Responses to "The Vital Role of Faculty in Student Recruitment," by Betty Farmer, 10/1/06

After 33 years of helping recruit and retain students at WCU, I would like to put my slant on Betty's comments.

1. We don't need any more students! I agree with Betty that faculty need to buy into growth and be assured that future resources will appear. However, if we don't "build it" now, then nobody "will come." There is a leap of faith involved here. If we have no confidence that growth in a given major is desirable and possible, then maybe we need to reinvent the major—look at what Philosophy and Religion has accomplished. Only a few students enter WCU knowing what major they really want, so we need to be helping them explore their individual possibilities and build on their strengths. Tenured professors supposedly know not only their own disciplines and the career options open to their majors but also have circulated sufficiently so that they can refer students to faculty in other majors for further guidance. Maybe one major "doesn't need any more students," but let's at least bring them into WCU and help them find a satisfying career path.
2. That's not my job! I remember the days before our professional Admissions staff was large enough to do recruitment activities on their own, and faculty were invited to join the show. Since the potluck didn't always draw potential students for our own majors, we had to be flexible enough to talk with almost anybody who showed up. We became **very** familiar with the WCU catalog. Now we sit at our computers or phones or in our offices and respond only to students interested in our majors. Helping to sell our programs is indeed our job.
3. It doesn't count. Why do we limit our perspective on recruitment to being "just service" (even if it carries monetary rewards)? I think that engaged faculty are doing applied scholarship in career science. We are alert to cues from students, especially in the presence of parents who focus on the major **they** want for their children. We discover what students really enjoy (or don't enjoy) in and out of class and help them turn those preferences into a practical course of study. We help them test the realities of their decisions and point them to needed resources. We don't pretend to know everything, but we know where to find out about everything, and that is scholarly activity.

**Dr. Sharon Jacques, Nursing**

## Make WCU's Slum a Field of Dreams

Recruitment and retention are problems that have been plaguing us for years, and Betty Farmer's Faculty Forum makes a good case for faculty involvement in recruiting students. One recruitment obstacle that University leaders should revisit is the "college town" problem. Cool college towns appeal to students. Old Cullowhee Road, which winds through the back of Cullowhee could be very cool. However, it's now an embarrassment and an eyesore that gets worse every year. Many of the establishments on the old road look like they are about to fall down. The dirt mine is like a billboard announcing, "Tear down the mountain." The other day, I heard an administrator say that people being recruited to WCU should be kept away from the back of campus during their visit. I would like to see



our administration tackle this problem, recruit people to renovate and replace the ugly buildings, and rebuild a town that takes advantage of the river and access to campus. It would take commitment, vision and know how. A cool downtown Cullowhee could have a very positive effect on recruitment and retention. It could be beautiful. Right now, it's a slum.

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

I'm in my twenty-eighth year in the music department at WCU. During the first few years, there were several of us who made personal contacts (visits to schools, phone calls, letters) with prospective students. Over the years, this activity has increased greatly to the point that now, virtually every music faculty member makes these contacts. We would get very few students in the music field if we simply waited until they showed up on campus. The result of this consistent effort is manifest in the growth of our department.

**Bob Holquist, Music**

After reading Dr. Farmer's cogent Faculty Forum piece, I was immediately reminded of my own experience as a sixteen-year-old high school student attending Legislator's School at Western eight years ago. During my three-week stay on campus I enjoyed the scenic beauty and contemplative atmosphere of Western, but it was not until I was noticed by a faculty member that I thought of Western as a place for me.

While volunteering on an erosion control service project on the Blue Ridge Parkway, I serendipitously encountered a new history professor, Dr. Scott Philyaw, who overheard me talking about history with my fellow teenagers. He not only augmented my reflections on Thomas Jefferson and the Civil War but also encouraged me to come by his office to discuss majoring in history. A week later, I had a half-hour conversation about Western and the history department with my future department head, Dr. James Lewis.

Both of these experiences were so formidable that I never gave serious thought to attending another school. I attended, in April 1999, however, an Open House, during which I explored another major interest—political science. Though I only walked by the political science table casually at first, Dr. C. Don Livingston approached me and invited me to visit his department after the information fair; I did so, and spent two hours in the Chan Carpenter Library talking with him and his graduate students about politics and our favorite books. Dr. Livingston's intense interest in helping me succeed remains vivid in my memory today. Although I did not major in political science, I did take Dr. Livingston's upper-level course on the American Presidency as a freshman and benefited immensely from his teaching and counsel.

One of the first things I did upon returning home from that Open House was to discard my application to UNC-Charlotte; Western Carolina University was the only school I applied to, and I do not regret the decision. Only years later did I realize what a powerful effect these three individuals had on my education, my life, and my future. A few kind words, friendly gestures, and encouraging conversations can make the *entire* difference in a young person's life.



Responses to "The Vital Role of Faculty in Student Recruitment," by Betty Farmer, 10/1/06

As Dr. Farmer lucidly reminds us, faculty should not underestimate their recruiting power; my personal example is but one of hundreds. Faculty can, and should, have a role in recruiting students at their most impressionable stage, especially when young Americans are so eager for affirmation and votes of confidence.

**Brandon A. Robinson, Hunter Library**



# ***Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning***

*This is a response to Mary Jean Ronan Herzog's, "WCU's Slum a Field of Dreams," (10/15/06), which was itself a response to Betty Farmer's "The Vital Role of Faculty in Student Recruitment," (10/1/06).*

## **Revitalizing Old Cullowhee**

I am surprised that no one has followed up on Mary Jean's article about the sorry state of the old Cullowhee "village" area. Surely, a "vibrant village" just off campus that is walking distance from the residence halls would make a big difference for recruiting and retention. I am convinced that a well-planned development with walking and bike trails, coffee houses, student hang-outs, and shops would make THE big difference for both marketing and for retention. The "village" location is perfect for student access as it is walking distance with no four-lane to cross.

With all of the university's resources and connections, couldn't we change what is an embarrassment to something that we could be proud of, at the same time improving everyone's quality of life? I can imagine just about everyone on campus getting behind such a venture.

Could this be a showcase project for the Institute for the Economy and the Future? Looking at the dilapidation right now doesn't put WCU in a good light economically, and unless we do something significant the future looks grim for our back yard. Realistically, though, this would be a major project to give it the ambiance of the University of Minnesota's "Dinkytown," or downtown Sylva—more the reason that we should think big and do it.

Such a project would demonstrate our ability to achieve a significant goal in economic development while actually helping the university. It could be used as a marketing piece while removing a marketing problem for WCU. Currently it has to be difficult to convince people that we are the economic engine of Western North Carolina while strolling through Cullowhee. It also has to be difficult to explain to parents and prospective students why the area is so run down.

It could be very different.

**Maurice Phipps, Health and Human Performance**





# Faculty Forum

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

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 19, No. 3

November 1, 2006

## **Do You Know About Net Op in the EC's?**

A few years ago, WCU began to ride the crest of its reputation as an unusually "wired" campus, a university where educational technology significantly enhances the teaching and learning environment. Today, we have even more hardware and software, along with Instructional Technology Services to help faculty use technology in their courses and classrooms. As a faculty member, are you taking advantage of this?

For example, did you know that WCU has 10 electronic classrooms (EC's) spread between Belk, Coulter, Forsyth, Killian, and Stillwell? In each EC there is a computer for each student and a computer station for the teacher. Each computer has access to the Internet and to a networked laser printer, and each room has access to a color scanner, a VCR, a DVD player, and a hardcopy overhead presenter, all interfaced with sound capabilities and a large color-capable screen. Faculty may teach their classes in these rooms after they have reserved the rooms through IT Services.

If you already teach in electronic classrooms, you are familiar with its inherent classroom management problem: students not on task during class but cruising the Internet, playing solitaire, or chatting and/or e-mailing with friends while you are trying to keep everyone on task. Did you know that three years ago IT Services installed software called NetOp in each of these EC's? With NetOp, in addition to being able to view what each student is doing on his or her computer, you can disable or enable the student computers as you deem necessary, depending upon the curriculum you are teaching. You can turn off all the computers when class starts. You can leave the student computers on but, when the class starts, disable each student station by clicking on two buttons in the NetOp Teacher console. You can also use NetOp to isolate and turn Internet access off and on, leaving other software operable. When the time comes in your curriculum for your students to do five minutes of research on the Internet, with one click you can enable all the computers again. After five minutes, you can temporarily disable the computers to regain control of your class. Then you can select one student at a time and display what that student has found during his or her five minutes of research.

If you would like to get each student in your class to critique one paragraph of a specific paper you can "pass the chalk" to each student and have an individual annotate what is exceptional and what could be revised and improved. If you have a PowerPoint slide of an animal cell, you can "pass the chalk" to each student to identify each of the



different parts of the cell. These are simply two examples of how NetOP educational technology can enhance your classroom learning environment.

The potential for NetOp to assist you in the teaching and learning process is almost limitless. Decide first what you want NetOp to do for you and then become familiar with the use of the software. Below is a list of the most common uses of the software:

- Disable or enable student stations
- Display what is on the instructor's station to each student station
- Display the exemplary work of one student to the entire class
- Provide a class assignment where each student participates in the project
- Distribute a digital copy of an assignment to each computer in the room
- Collect a digital copy of the completed assignments
- Send a computer message to a single student to please get back on task
- Temporarily disable the browsers to limit Internet use on the computers
- Restart all the student computers when the class starts
- Shut down all the student computers when the class ends

The Coulter Faculty Center and Information Technology are offering three workshops this fall on how to use NetOp. During these sessions, you will see how to perform the tasks listed above as well as have an opportunity to work with the product yourself. Please go to <http://www.wcu.edu/it/workshops/display.asp?qryid=NetOp> to register for one of the NetOp workshops. If the sessions listed do not fit your schedule, please call Sue Grider (2279) or e-mail her at [sgrider@email.wcu.edu](mailto:sgrider@email.wcu.edu) for a one-on-one session.

If you already use NetOp and have discovered a use for it not covered in the list above, please respond to this Faculty Forum piece and share your knowledge with the rest of us. If you are intrigued by the description of this technology but are completely new to it, sign up for one of the IT workshop sessions. Get involved. (Did you know that in addition to the EC's, Western has over 120 demonstration classrooms which have an instructor station and large projection screen at the front of the room?) Use WCU's technology to make your job and the students' work easier and more productive. If you haven't already started making technology work for you, why not start today?

**Sue Grider, Instructional Training Specialist, Coulter Faculty Center**

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# ***Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning***

Response to "Do You Know About Net Op in the EC's?," by Sue Grider, 11/1/06

I need to make a point of clarification. If a faculty member wants to use an electronic classroom for the entire semester, that faculty member needs to let his or her administrative assistant know this so that the administrator can input the information into Banner/Resource 25. If a faculty member wants to use an electronic classroom sporadically, then the faculty member needs to contact Traci Settlemyre with the specific date, time and class information.

**Sue Grider, Instructional Training Specialist, Coulter Faculty Center**



# Faculty Forum

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

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 19, No. 4

December 1, 2006

## **Simply Put: A QEP FAQ**

### ***What is the QEP?***

The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is a new reaccreditation requirement of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The plan must focus on some enhancement of student learning.

### ***What is the topic of WCU's QEP?***

"Synthesis: A Pathway to Intentional Learning at WCU." The plan is to enhance student learning as it relates to synthesizing the university experience. The plan will encourage undergraduates to develop learning and career goals by reflecting on how academic and co-curricular experiences come together to lead to the achievement of post-graduation goals.

### ***How was this topic chosen?***

The QEP Committee worked for over a year to solicit topic ideas from across campus and then winnow the great variety of topics down to one. The process began with a large open forum in September 2004 that collected some 150 topic ideas. Throughout 2005, the QEP Committee focused on choosing a topic, soliciting more ideas/feedback from across campus as well as making visits to over 30 academic and staff units. In November 2005, the present topic was adopted by the committee.

### ***What does the topic mean?***

Let's consider a true tale of two students (names have been changed).

Kate came to the university and quickly settled on a pre-med major. By the end of her first year she planned to go to med school and then do her residency at Vanderbilt. She chose her major with her goal in mind and she achieved the high GPA that she knew she would need to be competitive. She chose her classes in light of the preparation she would need for the MCAT exams. Most of her university experiences, including service learning experiences, related to her major and her med school goals. She graduated from WCU, went on to med school, and completed her residency at Vanderbilt.

Don came to WCU with a nearly perfect SAT score and had the objective of a high-profile career in politics. He chose a major that had nothing to do with politics. He was fitfully involved in a few community service projects. He made A's in some classes and failed others. He took a lot of classes that had no relation to his major or minor. He considered changing majors several times but never did. After six years, Don graduated with a GPA that would not get him into graduate school even though in his last semester at WCU he decided to enroll in a graduate program. Short of getting into a graduate program, he had no idea what he might do after graduation.



The QEP means to enhance student learning that leads to a university career and outcome like Kate's. Students like Kate know how to synthesize the various aspects of a university experience (academics and co-curricular activities) into a coherent whole that leads to a goal. This synthesis of experience that flows in a clear direction is similar to what a TPR committee looks for in a candidate's agenda for teaching, research, and service.

***What are the specific learning outcomes?***

1. Students will identify their aptitudes, abilities, and interests and articulate their future goals and aspirations.
2. Students will modify behaviors and values in response to knowledge and skills gained from their academic and co-curricular experiences.
3. Students will recognize the synthesis of their university experiences and evaluate those experiences relative to their future education and career plans.

***How will these learning outcomes be assessed?***

The outcomes are recognized as being developmental. A pilot study will assess student learning and the impact of the QEP at first-year, sophomore, junior, and senior levels. Presently the QEP Committee is considering a structure that might involve four (100, 200, 300, and 400 level) special USI courses or a similar structure embedded within a department's major curriculum.

***Will all students at WCU be involved in the QEP at the start?***

No. At first, the pilot study will be small (possibly beginning with as few as 100 students). As the QEP Implementation Committee members learn more about the best structure and how to better assess the QEP learning outcomes, more students will be involved in an ever-strengthening structure.

***It looks like the QEP involves only traditional undergraduates on the four-year path—what about transfer, graduate, distance education, or non-traditional students?***

SACS expects the QEP to be focused; in fact, lack of focus is a typical problem with Quality Enhancement Plans. After careful consideration, the QEP Committee chose to focus on traditional, residential students. As part of its implementation, the plan calls for a grant program to encourage the involvement of other student populations over time.

***When will the QEP begin?***

In the summer of 2007, after feedback from SACS has been received and the plan is in its final form, implementation will begin. The present QEP Committee will dissolve and a QEP Implementation Committee will be formed, charged with monitoring the plan's progress and making adjustments as needed to strengthen the plan's outcomes. Key advisors, staff, and volunteer faculty members (instructors in the first pilot study) will be trained. The first group of students will participate in the pilot study in 2007-2008.

***Will the QEP be another "unfunded mandate"?***

No. SACS requires that the QEP be adequately funded to achieve its goals. After five years and then ten years, SACS will examine WCU's QEP to be sure the university is making good progress on the plan.

***Will the assessment of learning outcomes really matter?***

Yes. SACS requires a clear assessment plan for the QEP, to be sure the plan is being reviewed and improved as it goes on. Most important, SACS reviewers need to see that the university is committed to enhancing a particular aspect of student learning and therefore can measure that the stated enhancement is occurring.

***How do I get a copy of the latest draft of the QEP or learn more about it?***

Simply email Scott Philyaw or Brian Railsback, QEP Committee Co-chairs, or Carol Burton, WCU SACS Director, and ask to have an electronic copy of the latest draft emailed to you. If you have comments or suggestions regarding the QEP, please contact one of them.

***So really, why should I care about the QEP?***

Our university's reaccreditation partly depends on a successful Quality Enhancement Plan. If the plan is successful and over time involves higher numbers of students, we can expect some improvement in retention and graduation rates. Perhaps most important, over time fewer faculty members or department heads will have that conversation with a WCU senior that goes something like this: "So, you graduate next semester—what do you plan to do next?" The student's reply: "I don't know."

**Brian Railsback, Honors College**

*The opinions printed here belong solely to the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the editorial staff or of the Faculty Center. If you would like to respond, e-mail Nienhuis by the 8th of the month.*





# Faculty Forum

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

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 19, No. 5

February 1, 2007

## **Service: If We Don't Do It, Who Will?**

For a long time, there has been a good deal of informal discussion at WCU regarding the role of "service" in the AFE/TPR/PTR process, much of it suggesting that service is of minimal importance in relation to scholarship/creative activities and teaching. The Faculty Senate, through the Collegial Review Council, is working on what will be a major revision of the broad university guidelines for the whole AFE/TPR/PTR process. The language in the current, working draft (which has been tentatively approved by the Senate) states:

Faculty members at Western Carolina University are expected to be effective teachers, to be practicing scholars in their disciplines, and to provide meaningful service to the university and the community. The particular mix of these activities expected will vary as a function of departmental missions and the role of the faculty member in the department. Tenure-track or tenured faculty members should be active in all three areas.

This is, essentially, the "three legged stool" that has been a part of Western's stated AFE/TPR/PTR process for many years. I do not suggest that being good teachers and creative, productive scholars is not important, but what happens if we focus only on these two legs of the stool and minimize/deemphasize service? The implications as we move forward may be graver than we realize. Service, of course, can refer to a wide range of activities including advising, community engagement, student recruiting, departmental and/or college committees, administrative assignments, faculty governance, and any number of other activities which are a part of the role we all should be playing as citizens of the campus and community. If we suggest that these activities are of little or no importance, it seems to me we are suggesting that it is not important for each of us to be an active participant in our academic community. That seems an unwise choice.

When we restructured the Faculty Senate a few years ago, we established that there are three areas of major concern to the faculty and that we wish to exert considerable influence in them. These are curriculum and academic policy, general working and environmental conditions, and tenure, promotion, reappointment and evaluation. The idea was (and is) that faculty should have the strongest voice in these areas as they are of the greatest concern to us. In approving and accepting this restructuring of the Senate, the university administration has acknowledged that these are the areas in which the faculty's



voice should have significant influence. If, then, we suggest that service on the committees and councils which deal with these areas lacks importance, what we are really saying is that we do **not** wish to exert influence in these areas, that we will be happy to have others (the administration) making the decisions regarding them.

Is this true? Do we really want non-teaching members of our community to be developing academic policy and determining all aspects of curriculum? Do we not wish to at least have a say in making decisions on such things as pay raises, the control of intellectual property, recruitment of new faculty, searches for major administrative positions, etc? Do we have no interest in the standards and processes by which our work (and, hence, our continued employment) will be evaluated and rewarded? **I don't think so!** These concerns form the major portion of the work of faculty governance and, hence, of a significant portion of the service area we have been discussing. We said that we wanted to at least have input in these areas, that they are **OUR** job! And our jobs, and job satisfaction, depend on them.

If this is true, we are saying that service **DOES MATTER!** If **that** is true, then who should be engaging in that service? There are only two major groups of faculty on this campus who **can** do this: tenured and tenure-track. It appears that some tenured faculty, who make the decisions regarding who will be allowed to join their ranks (by engaging in service on tenure and reappointment committees), wish to discourage tenure-track faculty from "wasting their time" on service and suggest that only teaching and scholarship should be of value in the tenure and promotion process. This clearly says that service doesn't really matter, at least to them.

It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that untenured faculty should perhaps focus their non-teaching efforts on research and other scholarly activity. But that should not be taken to suggest that these folks should be allowed to ignore service or even that, perhaps, service should not be their major emphasis. If we discourage service for untenured faculty, it is then up to the senior (tenured) faculty to perform those service activities which are important to the life of our university.

We, the faculty, can either do this work or let someone else do it. If we want faculty to do it and we don't want junior faculty "wasting their time" on it, there are only two options left: 1) we, senior faculty, spend some of our time and energies (probably an increasing portion as our seniority increases) doing it; or, 2) we abdicate our influence and judgment to others with a different perspective (and less specific disciplinary expertise) than we have. I see no other options.

I think it **IS** our job. The decisions **WILL** be made. **IF WE DON'T DO THIS WORK, WHO WILL?** The implications are very clear. If we don't consider them, we are likely to end with a situation we won't like. We **can** make the changes to see that this work is valued. It **IS** our right and our responsibility. I believe we **must!** It is **OUR** job!

**Richard S. Beam, Communication, Theatre & Dance**



# ***Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning***

This is a response to Richard Beam's, "Service: If We Don't Do It, Who Will?," (2/1/07)

Richard Beam's item is challenging and thought provoking. It is tempting at times to give up the Jeffersonian legacy and hire professionals to do the work of faculty governance, yet the problem is that we would no longer have faculty governance or, for that matter, tenure. Would academic culture deteriorate in favor of administrative culture without service through faculty governance? Administrative culture would mean administrators define the issues and what is important at a university. Also, are scholarship and service sometimes integrated? For example, those holding national offices in professional associations have responsibilities for national journals and meetings where academic scholarly papers are presented. What is the price for faculty governance and academic freedom and scholarship? I have recently felt a lot better about the current faculty senate simply because it has been a check and balance on administrative culture. I spent three years in administration and tried to think of myself as a faculty member and I resigned to return to the faculty. I can say with the certainty of experience that nothing would have worked well without the concepts and practice of faculty governance and the check and balance of faculty influence. A university corporate culture, in my opinion, will neither protect scholarship nor academic freedom and so we must thank those who take the time to meet in committees, serve in the faculty senate, or enable scholarship and journals to continue through service in associations and service to the larger community.

**Gordon Mercer, Professor and Director, Public Policy Institute**





# Faculty Forum

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

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 19, No. 6

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## **Systemic Challenges Require Systemic Solutions (or, "Fore!")**

Consider three issues: **(1) Students Can't Write.** *Solution:* The Composition-Condition Mark (CC grade). *Status:* A brilliant bureaucratic innovation is languishing. **(2) Student retention and graduation rates are too low.** *Solution:* Perhaps hiring a consulting firm, but more than that. *Status:* Potential progress. **(3) Faculty service/engagement is undervalued.** *Solution:* Reexamination of the faculty roles-and-reward structure. *Status:* Progress.

**(1)** Employers consistently rank poor communication skills as among the worst deficiencies that recent college graduates display. UNC President Bowles has recalled his dismay, back when he was an executive in the private sector, at the inability of recent college graduates to write a coherent paragraph. Fostering in students the "ability to communicate effectively," or words to that effect, occurs in most university mission statements. One way to approach this challenge is to spend five or ten thousand hours of faculty time instituting a "Writing-Across-the-Curriculum" program. Here at Western, we already have the formula for a more efficient and effective approach, the Composition-Condition Mark: *A student whose written work in any course fails to meet acceptable standards will be assigned a composition-condition (CC) mark by the instructor on the final grade report.*

Students who receive two such marks before earning 110 credit hours must take an additional English composition course. This procedure represents a brilliant institutional solution to a systemic problem. The responsibility for identifying student weakness is distributed to all faculty who give writing assignments but this requires no additional work on their part. Regrettably, this savvy systemic solution is languishing. Many faculty are either not made aware of, or not reminded of, the Composition Conditional checkbox on the final grade report and so do not take advantage of it. Worse, with the recent implementation of Banner, the "CC" option no longer appears on faculty electronic grade sheets. Fortunately, both the office of the registrar and the office of the provost are working to correct this procedural setback. Western Carolina may not be blessed with the strongest students in the UNC system, but it could shine a bright light down Cantwrite Alley—to the long-term benefit of the student, the institution, and the state.

**(2)** Western's freshmen-to-sophomore retention rate is about 70%. Our four-year graduation rate is about 24% and our six-year rate about 47%. Although this graduation rate is at about the national average for similar institutions, both the provost and the chancellor, supported by the President Bowles, have stated unequivocally that these



numbers must be improved. To focus on just one of these statistics, Western's six-year graduation rate, 47%, has remained unchanged over the recent 10-year period for which data are available (Western is not the only UNC school with no improvement here). Some may blame Cullowhee, but we can't blame the mountains. Over the same 10-year period Appalachian State improved this statistic by 4 percentage points (to 64%), UNC-Asheville by 11 points (to 53%).

In his State of the University address Chancellor Bardo announced the ambitious goal of raising Western's six-year graduation rate dramatically, to 65%, with no reduction in academic standards. Obviously faculty will play a critical role here. But meaningful institutional support is also crucial. While meeting need-based financial aid goals, the institution can improve incoming freshmen class profiles. Western can also cultivate community college connections, support the summer bridge (orientation) program, and ensure that the early alert system has the resources it needs for meaningful intervention and follow-up. And, as the chancellor discussed, also important are both continued work towards better integration of academics and student affairs, and progress towards the development of a "campus downtown."

(3) The importance of service has been well-addressed by Senate Chairman Richard Beam's commentary in last month's *Faculty Forum*. Faculty service will always take a back seat to quality teaching and appropriate research or work-product, but must it be the malnourished step-child? Campus-wide e-mails touting yet another service "opportunity" are not the answer—but recent institutional initiatives offer hope. First, the chancellor has announced supplemental funds that will be made available, in the form of "significant" stipends, for each course that a faculty member teaches "using a recognized integrated engagement model." More precise description, as well as procedural guidelines, are being worked out. There has been some concern expressed that we are borrowing from Peter in order to pay Paul—with specific reference to reduced QEP funding. Faculty should be cognizant of the trade-off here, and may want to refer to the specific language of the chancellor's speech on the Web.

Second, the chancellor announced that by next year deans and department heads will be formally evaluated on, among other items, "management and leadership effectiveness." In this connection we might agree that one dimension on which such leaders should be evaluated is to the effect that: "*the administrator takes concrete steps to ensure equity of faculty workload—across the combination of an appropriate weighting of teaching, research, and service.*" The chancellor did not go so far as to suggest that faculty would take part in these evaluations—as is routinely done in some other states—but this is certainly an important step forward towards documenting administrative accountability and achieving institutional goals.

I am fond of golf metaphors, but then somebody has to be the club, which has negative connotations. Perhaps we could just imagine that the ball is on the tee, the fairway stretches out before us, and the swing is in motion. Now for the follow-through.

**Gary H. Jones, Business Communication (BCIS/E)**



# ***Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning***

Responses to Gary Jones's, "Systemic Challenges Require Systemic Solutions (or, 'Fore!')," (3/1/07)

Over the years, the university has researched the retention problem in many ways, including the gathering of information from students who leave before they graduate. However, that process has sometimes proved to be more difficult than one would think. As part of the withdrawal process in Student Affairs, students were asked to complete a survey form asking the reasons why they were leaving the institution. Most of the reasons were highly personalized (illness, money, etc.) to the individual. Factor analysis of the data did not provide any specific factors why students left the university. Also, most individuals were in a hurry to complete the form to exit the university so the data was questionable. Studies of university students withdrawals administered nationally found the same results. Students did not always give the real reason for leaving but identified the most acceptable one in order to finish the check-out process. The Office of Institutional Research also prepared a report for many years for General Administration concerning students who were initially enrolled at Western with good standing but later failed to return. Response rates were so dismal from most UNC institutions that General Administration eventually stopped the requirement. It is very difficult to receive a statistically significant response rate from students after they have left the institution, move on, and no longer have ties with Western. Does that mean we shouldn't try to collect data from students that are leaving or have withdrawn from the university? NO!! It just means that we need to think of better ways of obtaining the data but not reinvent the wheel.

**Renee Corbin, Director of Assessment, College of Education and Allied Professions**

On issue number 2, retention, I agree with Gary: we can't blame the mountains. ASU has Boone. UNCA has Asheville. WCU has a highway at its front door and a slum at its back door. Check out the back door at "Welcome to Cullowhee" at <http://picasaweb.google.com/mrherzog/WelcomeToCullowhee02>.

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