

Faculty Forum

Volume 20, Numbers 1-8 and Responses* (2007-2008)

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Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 20. No. 1

September 1, 2007

Let's Be Serious About QEP

This summer, I got a call from a student who wanted to sign up for 21 hours next semester. My first thought was, "21 hours? How can he take 21 hours? He must be a genius. I don't think I could take 21 hours and do a good job." I asked him if he's a good student and he said, "Yeah, I'm pretty good." Turns out he had a 4.0 last semester with some pretty heavy duty courses; he wanted to take 21 hours so he could transfer out of Western ASAP.

That got me thinking. It used to be that 15 hours was an average semester course load. A student might take 18 hours if it was necessary to graduate, but it was an extraordinary occurrence. Now, students routinely take 18 hours. Why? Is it because WCU, through our administrative policies, encourages students to take too many courses? Or is it because our courses are not rigorous enough?

Let's first look at WCU's administrative policies to see how they encourage this "way-too-many-courses-to-take-seriously" phenomenon. First, students don't have to get permission to take as many as 19 hours. (They are permitted to take 23 hours if approved by the Provost and 12 hours in a single summer session if approved by the Dean!). Second, there is no academic disincentive for students to pass courses the first time. They are permitted to replace 5 course grades: the equivalent of one semester's worth of grades. Third, there is no financial disincentive for students who fail a course. They don't have to pay to retake the course. The only surcharge comes at the end of the student's career if she takes more than 140 hours.

Let's turn to the question of whether our courses are rigorous enough. If we stick to the old rule—three hours of class preparation for every hour of classroom contact—then a student taking 18 hours is supposed to be going to class and preparing to go to class 72 hours a week. We **know** that's not happening. Even if we reduce the ratio to 2:1, then the student is working 54 hours a week both in and out of class. That's still not happening. How about a 1:1 ratio? Do we even think that students are spending 36 hours on their academics? I seriously doubt that most students do.

The foundation for our newly-created Quality Enhancement Plan is supposed to be an intellectually stimulating and challenging curriculum that teaches critical thinking skills. Through the QEP, we aspire to teach students the process of learning how to ask the right questions, how to analyze and synthesize information, and how to apply learning in new contexts.

Is it responsible for us, as a university, to advocate a Quality Enhancement Plan that emphasizes critical thinking, professionalism, and responsibility at the same time as we encourage students to take more courses than they can possibly handle?

In order to think critically, students need time to reflect. We should give them the opportunity to experiment with cross-disciplinary approaches. We should help students apply concepts learned in class to their life outside of class. We need to inspire them to become active participants in their education and to become life-long learners.

We can do this in three hours a week only if students have enough time and motivation to do the work outside of class and if professors have enough time to mentor and guide students with respect to their education.

What if, as a university, we agreed that students should prepare, on average, three hours out of class for every hour in class? What if we also agreed that students would be expected to take, on average, 15 courses a semester, with 18 hours to be viewed as an exception? Finally, what if a select number of courses/sections were designated as "critical thinking" courses and students were required to take two of such courses a semester? Would my 4.0 student be in such a rush to transfer to another school? Or would he want to stick around at WCU and see what the QEP has to offer?

Jayne Zanglein, Marketing & Business Law

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 Terry Nienhuis by the 20th of the month. Your responses will be published with the next issue of The Faculty Forum.

Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning

Responses to Jayne Zanglein's "Let's Be Serious About QEP," (9/1/07)

Jayne--Hear, hear!

Mary Ellen Griffin, Psychology, Adjunct

I knew one guy from my undergrad years at Columbia who was taking 24 hours--12 at Columbia in General Studies and 12 at the Theological Seminary. Naturally, he was an A student.

Bob Strauss, Hunter Library

Many high school graduates come to us unable to spell or to write coherently, lacking in discipline or desire, yet proudly sporting a relatively high G.P.A. from his or her high school and a sense of entitlement unequalled since the mighty coalition forces returned from crushing Granada. On the other hand WE must constantly seek ways to invigorate OUR retention strategies, revisit and revamp OUR outcomes assessment plans, whilst raising the oft-referred-to "bar." Give me a break. Is QEP just the latest in a long line of acronyms for post-high-school day care? The key to retention is students going to class and doing their home work. The key to QEP, outcomes assessment, or any other current Raleigh-speak is students going to class and doing their homework. College is, by its very nature, a form of intellectual elitism. If I am expected to spend my time doing remedial work in order to assure that no child is left behind, fine. Okay. Maybe by the time they graduate some of the students will have read Moby Dick. "Aut disce aut discede."

Stephen Ayers, Stage and Screen

I echo your sentiments concerning the inability of students to write academically (or even "coherently"). In regard to spelling, I honestly don't think it matters too terribly much anymore. Even the most rudimentary computer programs correct spelling. But spell checks aside and ignoring the plethora of what I like to call the "their, there and they're conundrums" of the writing world, it does seem, even to this young whippersnapper, that quality writing is in decline. Place the blame where you will. Apathy, ignorance, a decaying sense of academic elitism, and standardized tests serve as truly worthy targets. Suffice it to say, I understand your frustration in constantly having to revamp your policies in order to cater to the academically regressing student body. After all, you have your Ph.D., and they don't.

BUT, playing devil's advocate, isn't it equally as "entitled" and "arrogant" to assume that you (read: the erudite members of academia) have achieved some level of pedagogic perfection? As technology and educational theory evolve, do not you likewise have the obligation to, at the very least, CONSIDER the alteration of your own "retention strategies"? While I hate to play this card, aren't the students

PAYING to go to school? Paying tuition does not entitle the students by any means; in the scholastic hierarchy, teacher is king. But remembering who pays the bills should provide some form of motivation for you. Shouldn't you want to help them learn? (Notice I said help them learn, not spoon-feed them diplomas).

You are right. College comes down to going to class, listening to every word that the paid "experts" have to say, and doing your corresponding homework (preferably in a timely fashion). Amazing how straightforward it all really is. And yet, I honestly think your impatience with sending in your grades electronically is not much different from your students' reluctance to read Moby Dick. However correct some facets of your logic may be, it would be far more persuasive to argue for contemporarily viable educational practices than to insist on this pertinacious push for stasis. Or even, god forbid, a retrogression to the days of yore: sans internet but with abacuses and parchment paper aplenty.

Michael Ayers (Stephen's son), a recent graduate of Duke University

Reading Jayne's comments reminded me of a former student from last fall who emailed me this past spring asking for a letter of recommendation to help her transfer OUT of Western to UNC-A. As we met to discuss her reasons for leaving Western, I encouraged this student to compose the email I'm attaching here. Jayne raises some excellent points that are hard to ignore and she also makes points that tie in with the ongoing discussion of student retention. My former student's much needed and appreciated comments perhaps shed even more light on this discussion:

Hey Mr. Hendrix,

I wanted to go ahead and write some stuff you can share at the next group meeting. Here are some of the reasons I think Western has such a low retention rate; they are also the main reasons I plan to leave WCU. The level of academic seriousness is slim to none; I understand that this is also a "freshman" thing but I have also visited other colleges and stayed with peers there and the problem is much more evident at Western. The workload I've experienced is by no means "hard," which I'm not opposed to (ha ha), but I also think the typical workload gives off the impression that WCU is easy. When I was applying to WCU, everyone who had heard about the school had the idea that "anyone can get into Western" and that impression persists, as far as I can see. Grades and SAT scores are not always an accurate reflection of a person and I think that weak students could be somewhat reduced by an essay requirement (I'm really big on writing but I know some smart people who can't write); some other type of decision-making tool in the application process would help. At WCU, extracurricular activities other than band and sports don't have enough participation. Western has events that are not very popular and most people at WCU are apathetic about anything other than drinking and barely getting by academically. For instance, I rarely (ok, never) hear about appealing theatre events or social clubs via word of mouth, and posters are not very convincing for the most part. The professors and advising centers, as well as the overall layout and system of WCU are very satisfying; however, all of the above are ruined by the level of apathy in classes. I often think "Does anyone actually WANT to be here?" This is probably the main reason I'm leaving and it's sad because I really like WCU otherwise. I think WCU needs to be harder to get into, point blank. There are wayyyyy too many people at WCU who don't need to be in college, period, much less weighing down the classes at WCU. I feel like the ignorance and apathy of certain students is ruining what would be an otherwise perfect school. WCU needs to work with the community of Cullowhee (not Sylva) about developing more places to go for students without cars; it needs programs and

rewards that attract the more scholarly folk. If it would take care of those few major problems I would definitely consider returning to WCU later on in college. Hope that helped! Feel free to share with anyone who needs to see it. I'll stay in touch! Thanks so much for the letter!

A student who transferred from Western to UNC-A this past spring

I've shared this student's letter with three of my four classes this semester and most of my students find her email offensive, whiny, and inaccurate. Many of my present students blamed her for not taking advantage of the opportunities that Western does offer for students to socialize, and some feel that it's the student's responsibility to seek out opportunities for activities, relationships, and learning opportunities.

Eric Hendrix, English



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

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October 1, 2007

Rating My Professor: Online Student Course Evaluations

I am interested in student course evaluations because, as part of the Office of Institutional Research, I assisted with an online student course evaluation pilot program in spring 2007 and I continue to work with the system as it is rolled out campus wide. In addition, as a part-time WCU student, I fill out faculty evaluations at the end of each semester. My experience in both realms makes me a whole-hearted supporter of online evaluations for their efficiency, consistency, and anonymity.

I've had several different experiences with course evaluations as a student. In some classes all of the students seemed to fill out the forms in painstaking detail; in other classes most of the forms ended up in the trash as students stampeded for the door. I wondered if my handwriting or word choices were distinctive enough to be recognized and heard other students echo my thoughts. How anonymous were these surveys? How meticulously was our privacy guaranteed?

As a member of the IR staff, I view course evaluations from another perspective that considers their ease of use, their efficiency, and their value to faculty and administrators. Paper forms come out low on all of these considerations. Although it seems easy enough to pass out a form in class, this does not take into account time spent in collection, transcription, and analysis of the paper forms. There is an inevitable delay of several weeks before results can be compiled and provided to faculty and department heads. As far as value, we know that student evaluations are critical on the departmental level to both faculty and department heads for tenure considerations, promotion decisions, and determination of yearly salary increases. These evaluations can also provide information at the college and university levels; however, evaluations have been difficult to compare between departments due to wildly varying formats.

When WCU decided to revamp the student course evaluation system, the university formed a task force to target inefficiency and inconsistency. The Faculty Senate generated a list of standardized questions and produced twelve different evaluation forms for different types of courses. The different student assessment instruments (SAIs) cover standard lecture, independent research, activities, ITV-delivery, laboratories, seminars, online-delivery, studio performance, hybrid-delivery, internship/practica/clinical courses, independent research courses, and hybrid courses. These forms demonstrate uniform bases for evaluation but can also be adapted to meet the unique needs of different departments

and programs. Also, each SAI instrument offers open-ended questions as well as Likert-scale ratings to provide both qualitative and quantitative feedback.

The next question concerned the delivery evaluation forms. Online evaluation forms provided many advantages in cost and convenience in administering and collecting the data, but it was difficult to find the right delivery system. WebCT/WebCAT lacked sufficient security to protect student and instructor privacy; Banner lacked the option of providing open-ended questions; and Ultimate Survey could not provide a campus-wide administration of surveys. Eventually the members of the Task Force selected an outside vendor, CoursEval, and WCU launched a pilot program during the spring of 2007.

The pilot involved five departments: Psychology, Political Science, Applied Criminology, Marketing and Business Law, and Chemistry. During the initial weeks of the pilot, faculty expressed concern about students' motivation to log-in to an online system. However, students today are comfortable with the online format and perceive online forms as more convenient and private than the paper alternatives. The literature on online course evaluation backs these observations up, and some studies also show that students tend to provide longer and more detailed comments online than on paper forms.

Another faculty concern involves the perception of the superiority of response rate with paper forms. The common perception is that paper surveys have an almost perfect response rate. In comparison to that perception, the CATeval pilot's overall response rate of 45% seems low. However, when one realizes that paper forms actually tend towards a response rate of approximately 75%, the gap begins to narrow. As CATeval becomes a part of our campus culture for both faculty and students, the response rates will only increase.

Once the responses are gathered, what are the results like? As far as quality, studies show that, in addition to longer comments online, students tend to be more candid and detailed. In the privacy of their own environment, without the time constraints of the classroom setting, the open-ended comments get more attention. It's also interesting that students seem to give more positive feedback online, which countered fears expressed by faculty that only the disgruntled students would bother to go online to log their comments. It is possible that, by utilizing a format that is compatible with the current student culture, the results will be more measured and informative.

In addition, the results provided by the online course evaluations are more usable due to consistency in format, which enables department heads and administrators to compare information across disciplines and programs. The format also allows for almost instantaneous compilation and analysis of data, which in turn allows for efficient turn-around to faculty. In short, using online course evaluations offers huge advantages over paper forms in student usability, convenience, and effectiveness. As both a student and a staff member, I rate it as "Very Satisfactory" with a chili pepper thrown in for good measure.

Kirsten Huscusson, Social Research Assistant, Institutional Research and Planning

Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning

Responses to Kirsten Huscusson's "Rating My Professor: Online Student Course Evaluations,"
(11/1/07)

I was part of the pilot online student course evaluation project last semester. I anticipated that students would not go online to evaluate me, a logical assumption, I thought, given that most of the students did not even take the time to do the homework assignments. I was quite surprised when I discovered that the response rate was much higher than I expected, about 33% if my recollection is correct.

I also found that students were allowed to evaluate the course until after the exam day. By then, they all had received 85% of their grade and should have had an excellent idea as to whether they would pass or not. That particular semester, about one-third of the class received grades below a C-. One student wrote on the online evaluation form that, although according to the grades his classmates had received so far it looked like most of the students would fail, he predicted a miracle would occur and the currently-failing students would pass. Why? Because, as he said, the professor was on a tenure track and could not afford to fail so many students.

This raises several issues. First, why do students think that a "miracle" will occur? Grades are calculated mathematically--it's not an art. I do not curve grades. Sometimes, it is true, I grade easier than other times, but the final grade is always the sum of the student's semester-long grades.

Second, and more relevant to this discussion: should students be able to continue to evaluate faculty after the students have completed all of the coursework and can predict their grades? Will their perceptions of the professor be influenced by their expected grade? Will they lash out and "penalize" a professor by giving lower evaluations?

I worry about the "power" students believe they can exercise over a professor's career. Anonymous electronic evaluations may be more convenient for the administration, but they also may invite comments that would not be made "in person" or "on paper." They also invite students to band together outside of class and target a teacher they don't like or appreciate. It's not that outrageous to imagine a bunch of disgruntled students getting together to rant about a professor they don't like.

Most of us have felt the sting of a bad evaluation. We understand that it is a tool designed first for self-reflection and evaluation and second for faculty assessment (not course assessment, as it is called). But, we need to be careful of how the assessments are used and of the potential for abuse.

Jayne Zanglein, Business Law

Kirsten Huscusson has offered a clear and thorough explanation of the newly implemented CatEval system of student course evaluation. My response addresses the question of instructional improvement. The new CatEval is a one-size-fits-all procedure. (I know, future plans to enable instructor and departmental input are in the works, but they are not in place yet). One of the most constructive purposes of student course evaluation is the information provided to instructors for the improvement of teaching and course design. A one-size-fits-all instrument fails to accomplish this because the learning intentions (procedural and substantive) of any particular course must in major measure be unique and

therefore not measurable in a single instrument that applies commonly to all courses, even categorized by delivery type.

My point is to urge my colleagues not to view the CatEval as an expression of faculty development because it is not, or at least not much. Other procedures are needed to tailor data-gathering to particular aims that a course is “purposed” to achieve. There are countless ways to do this, and the Coulter Faculty Center is prepared to help with some of them. For example, the Small Group Assessment program helps gather purposeful information about teaching and course quality in face-to-face settings. The Online Course Assessment Tool offers similar help for online teaching. This is just the start of several ways that the CFC recognizes and assists WCU faculty examine their own unique pedagogy in a manner that prizes purpose-driven teaching and course design.

John LeBaron, Faculty Center



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

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Due Process Before Discharge

Western Carolina University is part of a 16-member University of North Carolina System, along with schools like UNC-Chapel Hill, UNC-Charlotte, and Appalachian State University. We are all governed by the UNC Policy Manual (our rules and regulations), a subset of these policies known as "The Code," and by the General Administration (GA) of this state university system. In June of this year, a GA committee recommended, among other changes to the Code, that post-tenure review procedures be more explicitly connected with faculty discharge proceedings.

In August, the executive committee of Faculty Assembly, an elected group of faculty delegates representing each of the 16 institutions of the UNC system, responded to this GA committee recommendation by composing its own revision to selected portions of the Code. This proposed revision, in part, kept post-tenure review procedures procedurally distinct from discharge procedures. Under current policy there are three grounds for "discharging" tenured faculty: incompetence, neglect of duty, and misconduct. The GA proposal suggested that a fourth ground, "unsatisfactory performance," be added. The Faculty Assembly revision included addition of this language but suggested that it be considered a part of "incompetence." Thus, the Faculty Assembly committee proposed the maintenance of the existing three grounds for dismissal of a tenured faculty member, and, most importantly, insisted on maintaining a clear separation between post-tenure review and discharge for cause. Further, the Faculty Assembly revision suggests that the terms "neglect" and "misconduct" be more precisely defined and, to the extent that post-tenure review and discharge procedures are implicitly connected, that tenured faculty members under review should be given a reasonable length of time to remedy any finding of "significant, sustained, unsatisfactory performance."

At its September meeting the full delegation of Faculty Assembly unanimously passed a resolution affirming support for the faculty-composed revisions, expressing substantial concerns with several revisions proposed by the GA committee, and requesting that any future proposed changes to the Code that directly affect faculty be undertaken only with extensive faculty input and involvement.

Similar resolutions are being put before faculty senates across the system. To cite two major supporting institutions to date, the NC State Faculty Senate (Executive Committee) expressed strong opposition to some of the GA committee proposals in a document dated Aug. 16, and UNC-CH passed a resolution similar to the Faculty Assembly's in mid-September. This month, the WCU Faculty Senate will begin its deliberations on the GA

proposals, including the controversial proposal governing faculty discharge. Western's Faculty Senate will be considering the passage of a resolution of its own, likely to be very similar to the resolution passed by UNC Faculty Assembly. It is probable that a number of non-controversial items will be agreed to and that proposed procedures relating to discharge and definition of grounds for discharge will command most of the debate. You can influence this debate by contacting your closest WCU Faculty Senator or by attending the Nov. 7 Faculty Senate meeting yourself.

Given the general tenor to date of faculty-administrator interaction across the state on these proposed Code revisions, it would appear that most areas of disagreement are resolvable before this issue goes before the UNC Board of Governors. For example, in accordance with most faculty development guidelines (and an insightful AAUP document on the subject), it is extremely unlikely that UNC faculty discharge proceedings (which are punitive) will be allowed to be legalistically wedded to post-tenure review procedures (which are developmental). The BOG passed a set of revised guidelines on "Performance Review of Tenured Faculty" this past June (available on the Web), and GA Senior Vice President Harold Martin has stated publicly that he considered revisiting these guidelines "off the table."

For those intending to visit the Web site, note that the UNC "Policy Manual" and the "Code" are different entities. The Policy Manual is broad in scope and consists of 14 chapters, numbered 100-1400 (post tenure review is covered here, beginning in 400.3.3). On the other hand, the subject of all this discussion, the "Code," consists of 16 chapters (I-XVI) relating principally to the Board of Governors and is accessed by clicking on 100.1 of the Manual. Note that the link to recent updates to the Policy Manual is located at the top of the Web page.

For annotated links to documents related to this discussion, please follow the following URL to the appropriate page on the Faculty Assembly website:
<http://uncfacultyassembly.northcarolina.edu/html/meetings/2007-08/Sept2007/sept2007ANNOTATED.htm>

Gary H. Jones, Vice-chair, UNC Faculty Assembly
Business Administration and Law, Hospitality and Tourism, Sport Management

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Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning

Responses to Gary Jones's "Due Process Before Discharge," (11/1/07)

Post-Tenure Review: Is it doing its job?

The UNC General Administration is concerned that Post Tenure Review (PTR) is not holding tenured faculty to a high level of achievement. They suspect that dead wood is absorbing high salaries without reflecting well on the System. They do not believe that faculty colleagues are rigorous enough in their demands for continuing quality. They may be right.

Part of the problem has been with the initial tenure process. The Faculty Senate revised our tenure document, which is being held up as a model for the UNC System. Provost Carter is encouraging departments to be much more specific and measurable in their criteria for reappointment, tenure, and promotion. Departmental TPR committees ask what evidence there is that a colleague can be expected to maintain and even expand desired contributions once tenure is granted. We are claiming and improving collegial review.

The problem may begin during the hiring process. There are good reasons for moving from job to job in an academic career, but the candidate who leaves each job after five years without achieving tenure should receive careful scrutiny. Anybody applying ABD should expect to negotiate a clear plan, timetable, and allocation of resources for completion of a required doctorate. We have all seen the dissertation take a back seat to the tasks (and the enjoyment) of creating new courses and even new programs.

Let's say the hiring was appropriate and tenure was well-deserved. Does the department have a culture of mutual enthusiasm for the ongoing improvement of teaching skills, scholarly activity, and community service? Are release time and extra money distributed with faculty input? Are there opportunities and funding for interdisciplinary development outside the department? Is there constructive feedback aimed at improving the department's cohesive function and reputation?

What is the role of student feedback in PTR? It is not unknown for faculty going up for tenure to seek glowing endorsements from their students, only to reveal their dark sides once they are secure. Student reports cannot be ignored, but they must be substantiated by peer observation and review before either positive or negative decisions are reached.

PTR must remain a collegial function to help faculty improve if they are not maintaining agreed-upon standards. If they do not improve, then it becomes administration's job to wield the axe.

Sharon Jacques, Nursing



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

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NSSE: What Is It and Why Should We Care?

The results of the 2007 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, pronounced "Nessie") are in, and your students gave Western high marks on all five of the benchmark measures. In many cases, we exceeded similar measures for our Carnegie peers and the national average for more than 500 participating colleges and universities. What does this mean to you and why should you care about our NSSE results? The NSSE is an attempt to reintroduce the idea that colleges and universities should be judged by how well and to what extent our students engage in activities that we know contribute to *learning and development*. This is a relatively rare notion in higher education today with university systems, state legislatures, and state and federal bureaucracies all demanding accountability on the one hand but proposing measures that are, at best, indirect reflections of institutional quality on the other.

The tax-paying public and a variety of college and university constituents are demanding more information on institutional quality and performance, but how we conceptualize quality among our colleges and universities is shifting away from the triumvirate notions of institutional wealth, selectivity, and prestige to that of an institution's actual contribution to student learning and development. Examples abound that reflect this shift. Regional accrediting agencies have moved en masse to affirm the primacy of student learning in their standards over that of traditional institutional inputs. University presidents and chancellors are publicly questioning the value and validity of high-stakes ranking schemes such as the annual *U.S. News & World Report* college rankings guide. And, in 2006, the U.S. Secretary of Education convened a national Commission on the Future of Higher Education with the explicit charge to consider how best to ensure that our colleges and universities are graduating students that are well prepared to fulfill future workforce needs. A prominent recommendation from this group was for more transparent mechanisms for colleges and universities to report on student learning.

In this context, many institutions have sought standardized measures that will allow comparisons *between* institutions as well as a meaningful measure that can be used *within* institutions to guide programming and services. Enter the National Survey of Student Engagement, organized conceptually around five benchmarks of effective educational practice:

1. level of academic challenge
2. active and collaborative learning

3. student-faculty interaction
4. enriching educational experiences
5. supportive campus environment

The survey is administered to first-year and senior students only, representing points of entry and exit from our institutions.

WCU participated in NSSE in 2001, 2004, 2006, and 2007. The early administrations indicated we were performing fairly well in most benchmarks, but anemic response rates and a general lack of interest resulted in little use of the results at an institutional level. In 2006, however, WCU's NSSE results came to the attention of the campus committee charged with developing our Quality Enhancement Plan. WCU's NSSE results figured prominently in the identification of areas in which we could have a significant impact. In 2007, a concerted effort to advertise the survey among students resulted in a significant increase in our response rate, which increased our confidence in the representative nature of the NSSE results for WCU.

The table below provides you a quick comparison of WCU benchmark scores relative to our Carnegie peers and that of the total 2007 NSSE cohort.

	Benchmark	WCU	Peers	Total NSSE 2007
First Year	Level of Academic Challenge	52.6	49.7	51.7
	Active & Collaborative Learning	48.1	41.4	41.2
	Student-Faculty Interaction	40.2	33.8	32.8
	Enriching Educational Experiences	28.4	25.4	27.1
	Supportive Campus Environment	62.0	59.7	59.8
Senior	Level of Academic Challenge	55.7	54.4	55.6
	Active & Collaborative Learning	54.7	51.9	50.1
	Student-Faculty Interaction	46.7	42.8	41.2
	Enriching Educational Experiences	39.8	37.9	39.9
	Supportive Campus Environment	58.3	58.0	56.9

As you can see, WCU scored as well as and, in most cases, better than our peers and the national cohort on all the benchmarks for both first year and senior students. Of particular note is how well WCU scored on the two benchmark categories most attributable to faculty: Active and Collaborative Learning, and Student-Faculty Interaction. Indeed, these scores qualify WCU as a strong national performer in these benchmark categories. And, that is something every faculty member on this campus should care about and of which all can be proud.

Melissa Canady Wargo, Office of Assessment



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

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WCU on iTunes U

You may not have noticed them at first. They were introduced just a few weeks after September 11, 2001. Only a few hundred thousand were sold that first year. But even now with monthly sales in the millions, you still have to look closely to find them—they are usually tucked away in a pocket. However, there is always the telltale sign: those little white earbuds. It's the iPod.

Apple's iPod wasn't the first portable music device; it wasn't even the first MP3 player. It was, however, the one that changed the music industry. And, today, it is poised to help change the face, or at least the ears, of education. How can those little white earbuds change education? With the help of a technology called podcasting.

In 2005 "Podcast" was named the word of the year by The New Oxford American Dictionary. The term podcast is a combination of iPod and broadcast. Podcasting is the process of delivering an audio or video file over the internet via a subscription model. You merely subscribe to the feed, and when a new podcast is available it is automatically downloaded to your computer. In June 2005 Apple began to list podcasts inside of the iTunes Music Store, and iTunes soon became one of the most popular tools for subscribing to podcasts. Podcast files can be audio, enhanced audio (which is audio with embedded graphics), chapters and web links, or video.

There are many ways you could use podcasting in your course. I will give you some examples and I hope that you will come up with some more on your own.

Record your lecture during class. This is the most basic use of podcasting for a college course. You just record your regular lecture and post it as a podcast for your students to download and review outside of class time. This gives your students the ability to go back and listen to what you said in class again, allowing them to focus on what you are saying, as opposed to trying to write everything down on the first try. Recording in the classroom also has the benefit of being able to capture any class discussion that might take place. Digital voice recorders are available for checkout from the Hunter Library Circulation Desk.

Record your lecture before class. Take the time to record your lecture in your office before class. Your students can download the podcast and listen to it before your class begins. During your face to face class time, you can have a more meaningful and insightful discussion about the lecture material because your students have had time to think about the content. Recording can be done on your office or home computer using a simple USB microphone.

Give a virtual tour. If you have been to museums lately, you may have taken an audio tour. You are given a device with pre-recorded audio. You walk around the exhibit in the museum and listen to the audio that accompanies the different displays. By using the enhanced podcast, you can record your audio and include pictures that are viewable on either a computer or an iPod. You don't need to limit your tour to an art exhibition or other museum display; you could just as easily give a tour of the human body for an anatomy class or a walkthrough of a construction site for an engineering course.

Digital Papers. Have your students create a video or enhanced podcast instead of writing an essay or paper. They will have to complete the same research and be able to tell an engaging story. They can then share the file with other students in the class and with their parents and friends.

Podcasting is being embraced at universities around the country using these and other scenarios. Students at the University of Michigan Dental School took it upon themselves, with the permission of the faculty, to record and then post the class lectures for further review. It is even beginning to catch on at WCU; there are faculty in every college creating podcasts for their students. How are we handling these podcasts? With a little more help from Apple.

In 2004 Apple began a pilot program with six universities to test a customized version of the popular iTunes Music Store geared towards the distribution of educational podcasts. This program grew into iTunes U and was made public in 2006. iTunes U is accessed using the popular iTunes software which works on both Windows and Macintosh. You can download podcasts for free from Universities such as Stanford, UC Berkley, MIT, Duke and many others by clicking on the iTunes U link inside the iTunes Music store. While you are there, be sure to check out all of the free content that is available in the Podcast section as well.

WCU applied for our own custom iTunes U site and we finished implementation during Spring of 2007. By the end of the Fall 2007 semester, there were over 620 podcast files in more than 60 courses available for download from WCU faculty. In fact, we had nearly 10,000 unique downloads during the Fall semester. Login to WCU on iTunes U by visiting <http://itunes.wcu.edu> and see what your colleagues are already creating.

If you would like to create a podcast for your course or would like a class setup in iTunes U, please contact me or Laura Chapman at the Coulter Faculty Center. We will create your accounts and help teach you the most effective methods for delivering your content to your students. I also invite you to join in a conversation on creating a Digital Campus, by visiting <http://wiki2.wcu.edu/groups/digitalcampus>.

Neil Torda, Coulter Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

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Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 20. No. 6

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International Faculty at Western – An Untapped Resource

We often hear the terms *globalization* and *internationalization* used interchangeably, but in fact they refer to two different phenomena. As defined by a perennial scholar on the topic, globalization is the “the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas ... across borders” while internationalization involves “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education.” To frame this distinction more plainly, globalization is the inevitable context that WCU students face upon graduation; internationalization is the urgent work we must undertake to prepare them for this context.

Western has already made strides in this direction. International student enrollment is up by nearly 50 percent, a record number of students are studying abroad, and students now have the option of graduating with a dual degree from Western and an overseas institution in a number of disciplines. Meanwhile, the Department of Modern Foreign Language continues to expand its offering of courses. Enrollment in Japanese has grown to 200 students in just five years, and new courses in Mandarin Chinese appear to be attracting strong numbers as well. Perhaps most notably, the Provost’s recent establishment of an endowed fund for studying abroad makes it clear that our leadership is giving more than just lip service to the notion of international education.

But as we move forward, we must not overlook a tremendous resource in our own backyard—the growing community of international faculty who call Western their home. By recent estimate, WCU has between 30-40 international faculty members representing at least a dozen different countries and cultural backgrounds. Some are naturalized citizens, others are permanent residents, and a few are here on short-term stay. All of them bring a wealth of ideas, knowledge, and values that have the potential to transform the old paradigms through which our students view the world. Although the experience of studying abroad cannot be replaced, positive interactions with an international professor can stir a spark of discovery leading toward this end. And although popular books like Friedman’s *The World is Flat* may get people talking about globalization, there’s nothing like hearing the first hand life experiences of a world scholar to bring home the point that our education system is asleep at the wheel.

Unfortunately, undergraduates tend to be far too nearsighted to recognize the value of an international scholar in their midst. For example, students complain about not understanding a “foreign accent” and fail to recognize the value of building cross-cultural communication skills. Rather than viewing international instructors as gateways to new ideas and ways of thinking, they see only hurdles in the way of a quick grade. Even worse, a class will all too often display higher incidents of rude and inappropriate behavior when they perceive that their professor is a relative newcomer to the US college scene. Imagine

for a moment having to deal with this amid all the other pressures of teaching on a new campus! While obviously not a silver bullet, freshmen orientation is one place we should start in our attempt to reverse this provincial mindset.

But the responsibility does not lie only with undergraduates. All of us need to find ways to help our international colleagues see that they are more than a statistic of diversity in a region where the term is usually associated with mollusks, mushrooms, and millipedes. Last August, the Faculty Center took an important step in this direction by establishing the International Faculty Learning Community (IFLC). Already 20 members strong and still growing, this group of international and non-international faculty members is working together to make Western a more attractive and rewarding place for those from diverse cultural backgrounds. On top of a long to-do list is the development of a website and virtual resource center through which incoming international faculty can obtain crucial information and make connections with other international faculty members across the university. Plans are also being made to integrate these resources into future new faculty orientation events. If you would like to join the IFLC or be part of the listserv that is dedicated to international faculty issues, you can contact me at blake@wcu.edu.

Even if you don't have room in your schedule for another monthly commitment, you can join the efforts of the IFLC by looking for ways to integrate the knowledge and ideas of international faculty in your college or department. Need some quick starters? Try learning how various education rituals such as the TPR process are conducted in their home countries. Can our existing models be adapted and improved in some way? Pry into their minds to see how issues such as student recruitment and retention are addressed (or not addressed) abroad. See if you can gain insight into why the math scores of elementary students in many other countries are several grade levels beyond those of our own children. Learn more about the steps they took to become bilingual speakers. Are there alternative ways to encourage bilingual preparedness among our own students? While the responses to these and other questions may not seem immediately straightforward, careful dialogues may yield information that has enormous potential for transforming the way we do business— both here at Western and in the local context we serve.

We must remind ourselves that internationalization is more than mission statements, programs, and initiatives; it involves personal effort at the grass roots level to ensure that all individuals are acknowledged for what they bring to the global (and regional) table. Thank you international faculty for your tremendous contribution to this university—and Happy Chinese New Year to our East Asian colleagues!

Christopher Blake, Department of English, Faculty Fellow for Global and Cross-Cultural Communication

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Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

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What Should We Tell the New Faculty Members?

So many new faces on campus. I hear a very large number of faculty members have joined us in the last five years. What advice should old timers like me give them about being successful at WCU? Here are two alternative scripts.

Model #1. Teaching is primary. The enabling legislation for the University of North Carolina says so. Be willing to teach a wide array of courses in your discipline. That will help out your department. Work hard to improve your courses. That will help your students. Make students work hard, giving them interesting things to read and assignments that make them think and write. Provide substantial feedback to your students on their papers and exams. Read broadly in your discipline, keeping up with the new advances and also keep up with what is new in the pedagogy of your discipline. Collaborate with your colleagues to develop an effective curriculum and to share ways of improving your teaching. Help give the university a reputation for challenging, effective instruction. Take your expertise out to public venues whenever appropriate. Do modest amounts of disciplinary research, especially when you can involve students. You were educated to do so, it keeps you and the students interested in your field, and it is fun. Be a good advisor. Do your share of institutional chores.

Model #2. Most important, specialize in some aspect of your discipline, no matter how obscure or esoteric. Make sure it is in the mainstream, but cutting edge. Publish in high visibility disciplinary journals. Seek research grants, especially those with considerable indirect cost support and ample release from teaching. Spend as much time off campus as you can afford to so you can make friends with potential peer reviewers. Avoid teaching duties outside your specialty, especially interdisciplinary courses that will draw you away from your specific expertise. Teach with enthusiasm but limit your efforts to the time you actually spend in the classroom. Do not give assignments or exams that will take time to read and grade. Do not let your courses get a crib reputation, but don't demand too much from your students either. Seek release from teaching whenever possible. Take on the absolute minimum of institutional chores. Certainly shun any program administration responsibilities. A little public service goes a long way too. Avoid it unless it involves specific applications of your research or is required by the granting agencies supporting your research. Make it clear that your commitment is to your discipline and to gaining national visibility, not to WCU. Make sure administrators are always worried you will leave, taking your national reputation elsewhere.

The dilemma. Which to recommend? For more than 20 years I have argued that the balance in Model #1 should provide our model of excellence. I am still convinced that Model #2 is a recipe for institutional mediocrity and pretentiousness at universities like WCU. I even wrote a book saying as much. But recent experiences in our TPR process and reading the description of the Madison Professorship have convinced me that to persuade new faculty members at WCU of the wisdom of my approach is unfair to them. Unless you are willing to risk failure in the TPR process and unless you are happy being part of the blue collar work university work force, don't follow Model #1. It will not get you the national visibility you need to be recognized as one of the best at WCU. You can't be a "distinguished" professor following Model #1.

If you want to join the elite, to be a Madison Professor, or even to ensure tenure, promotion, and substantial merit raises, there is no option. Pursue Model #2. The closer you are to Model #2, the more rapidly salary increases, tenure, and promotion will follow. The simple fact is that there is no national competitive market for good teachers or those who provide public service. Forget the talk about Boyer. Unless you can get it in print, it won't count, and discovery research counts most by far. Forget engagement, no matter how insistent the rhetoric or the need. The chances of getting it peer reviewed and in print are just too risky. Unless your children need clothing and food, forget teaching summer school no matter the need of students for the courses. Engagement and teaching will not get you national visibility. Cosmopolitan is good, local or regional is bad.

Aim for somewhere in between? Not recommended. The farther you stray from Model #2, the more you risk your national visibility. You risk having to teach more courses and spending too much time in your office. Somewhere in the middle will decrease the passion you need for real success and leave you with few options. The message is clear. Stick close to Model #2 or risk becoming part of the huddled, undistinguished masses. You don't want to be part of a university community of scholarship. You want to be a scholar in a university community looking out for your own interests. That is Western's model for faculty success.

Bruce Henderson, Psychology

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Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

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“Terry, Thank You for the Conversation”

This year marks the 20th anniversary of The Faculty Forum. More importantly, the article in your hand will be the last of the nearly 200 essays edited by Terry Nienhuis. In 1998, Terry wrote a retrospective on The Forum's 10th anniversary. It is time for another.

Origins: The Forum came about one afternoon when Terry and Ben Ward, the director of the newly organized Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence, were sitting on a sofa in the Center, mulling over the idea of publishing an informal publication written by and for WCU faculty members. It would feature monthly essays, followed two weeks later by an issue devoted to rejoinders and teaching tips. Volume 1, Number 1 of the Faculty Forum appeared on October 15, 1988. The headline was “A Call for Opinions.”

Terry and Ben wanted The Forum to be edgy and controversial. They succeeded with the first faculty essay, a piece by Bruce Henderson warning us of the “Tyranny of the Textbook.” Jim Carland, a professor in the School of Business, was not impressed with Bruce’s argument. Two weeks later Jim’s response appeared, “I am angry and insulted! I have written textbooks; I am writing one. And I disagree with Bruce vehemently.” The Henderson/Carland dispute set the tone of the new publication. The games had begun.

A Voice/A History: Back issues of The Forum offer an insider’s perspective on the recent history of WCU. (Issues from 2001 to the present will soon be available on-line; issues from 1988 to 2001 are kept in two notebooks in the Faculty Center.) At the start, Terry assumed Forum essays would focus on teaching. It soon became clear, however, that the publication was serving as a mechanism for faculty members to air an array of concerns. In the early years, these included declining academic standards, sexual harassment, faculty retention, and our (still) pitiful summer school salaries. Some early Faculty Forum pieces had a big impact. An article by Wilburn Hayden helped launch the University Club. An essay by Linda Kinnear on the plight of part-time faculty generated five pages of responses and resulted in fundamental changes in the hiring practices in the English Department. A series of articles on faculty salaries served as a wake up call to persistent inequities in the distribution of merit pay. And Mary Jean Herzog’s phrase, “A Culture of Silence” became incorporated into the lexicon of faculty searching for a more effective voice at WCU. (Other articles had no effect. These include my 1995 suggestion that songs by Marvin Gaye and Kitty Wells be added to the play list of the campus carillon.)

Many early Forum essays foreshadowed issues that we struggle with today. In the last Faculty Forum, Bruce Henderson cautioned us about a pernicious drift in the tenure and promotion process toward traditional scholarship at the expense of teaching and university engagement. Back issues of the Forum show that the conflict between teaching and research has been a perennial sore point. For example, in 1990, Cliff Lovin, then dean

of Arts and Sciences, wrote an essay titled, "Teaching Has Always Been #1." The rejoinder came a month later in an article by Bill Kane, a perennial gadfly, whose response was titled "Teaching is Dead Last, or Worse." While Bill disagreed with the dean, he captured the spirit of The Forum in the last sentence of his essay: "Cliff, thank you for the conversation."

The Forum has given WCU faculty a voice that is rare at any university. Terry, thank you for the conversation.

The Last Word: It seems only fair to let the outgoing editor have the last word. Here is a conversation I had with Terry in his office in the English Department.

Terry, how much time goes into producing the Faculty Forum? I kept a log one year. I came up with 100 to 120 hours a semester. But this only counted my time, not the authors', the distributors', or the printers'. The truth is that I think about it all the time—looking for new topics, editing, soliciting articles. Finding people to write the articles every month is sometimes agonizing.

I have written a couple of articles for The Forum that the administration could not have been happy with, yet I never felt a shred of censorship. Has this ever been a problem? There has never been any censorship.

In the first issue of The Forum, you wrote that the articles would focus on teaching, yet many of the most controversial essays seem unrelated to teaching. Over the years some administrators have complained "it does not have enough to do with teaching." But I always interpreted "having to do with teaching" in a very broad way. I believe that almost everything in the university has some impact on teaching—for example, faculty morale. Ben Ward and I were constantly asking ourselves, "How does this relate to teaching?" I was always pushing that envelope when it came to that connection.

I have recently gone back and read the first decade of Forum essays. They are all very well written. (Laugh) I am not very good as an original writer, but I can edit up a storm. My job is to make the prose presentable. Luckily, most faculty contributions are very well-written to start with.

In retrospect, what impact do you think the Forum has had on our campus? When Ben and I sat on the sofa envisioning the future, we said we wanted the Forum to be noticed, to be read, to be taken seriously—for faculty to consider The Forum to be something that they own and where they have the freedom to say what they want to say. And I think that has happened. I have heard people say over and over, "The Forum is an important part of the faculty voice." It is a place where faculty, if they have the nerve, can say what is important to them.

Hal Herzog, Psychology

In the fall, the Faculty Forum will continue under the editorship of Vera Guise.