

Faculty Forum

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Faculty Senate Chair Report

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Faculty Forum

from the Coulter Faculty Commons
for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Volume 25, Number 1
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Toward a Student-Centered Administration **Brian Railsback**

Two weeks ago, the university Citizenship & Civility Committee met and an interesting thing happened. Discussion involved getting students engaged in a campus-wide effort but because of scheduling no students could be there. Then the possibility of the committee members stepping back and letting students take their place emerged. Though the original committee members will be involved in a mentoring role, the students will take the lead in making efforts regarding civility in particular work for other students.

I hope what happened at that meeting can become the norm at WCU.

Many years ago the academy made a shift to a student-centered classroom, allowing students to engage in classroom projects and discussion in a way that fostered more involved and responsible learners. Now it's time for a student-centered administration. Students need to be more involved in making decisions about how their university is managed and sometimes they need to be asked to take the lead in solving important issues for the university.

WCU is well-positioned to let students lead. The Division of Students Affairs has carefully developed student leadership in several ways (new SGA constitution, the Freshman Leadership Institute, the Leadership Minor—a partnership with the College of Education and Allied Professions). Since 1997, students have been called upon to lead The Honors College through their Board of Directors. The student leaders are here.

With a lot of new key administrators and a new strategic plan, this year is a great time for WCU to become a national model for a student-centered administration. Across the board, students should become major players in setting university direction and policy (rather than token members on committees and boards).

Relinquishing some power to students might be scary. Things might get messy or move in directions that are surprising. Imagine, though, what all of us could learn. The more we can truly partner with students and let them have a real say, the more pride they will have in their institution. WCU will feel to them more like *their* university.

Academic Dishonesty **Catherine Carter**

I'd like to talk about academic dishonesty. Not how prevalent it is (fairly[1]); nor how unfortunate and morally bankrupt it is (very); but about the fact that WCU has a clear and detailed policy about academic honesty, and a clear and detailed process to address it. This wasn't always the case. In my early years at WCU, there was no single register of Academic Integrity Policy (AIP) violators, and no clear process for addressing violations. Sometimes instructors assigned the sanction; sometimes Department Heads took a hand; sometimes cases were reported to Student Affairs, sometimes not. Identifying a second offense was dicy at best. But the process has improved immensely: as we see from the Department of Student and Community Ethics' site, <http://www.wcu.edu/26163.asp>, instructors detecting academic dishonesties are supposed to a) report them to their DH; b) meet with the student and inform him/her orally and in writing of the violation; c) assign a sanction, which the student may accept or not; and d) fill out the Academic Integrity Policy Violation form, in which the student either accepts allegation and sanction, or requests a hearing with the Academic Integrity Board. There are more details, but this is the basic process. If there's already a violation on record, the instructor does not assign the sanction; then this becomes a university matter, and a serious one.

The policy also stipulates that intention is irrelevant. We don't have to go through the painful dilemma of deciding whether the student "really meant" to do it or not; the only question is whether she did it. However, cases of academic dishonesty still sometimes—perhaps often—go unreported, and this is not good for the students, the University, or fellow faculty and staff. If they're unreported, how do I know about them? The same way you do. Perhaps I report a student for a violation of academic integrity and document it; he makes counterclaims about his character and history and intentions, and tells me accusingly that Good Professor So-and-So gave him or her the chance to "fix" the work, rather than reporting it to DSCE. Or maybe when I come dragging back from an AIB hearing in a state of deep despond, a colleague says, "That's a coincidence—I'm just struggling with a case myself," and, can you believe it! it's the same student. I have sat in AIB hearings knowing full well that the student has committed other violations, unable to bring them in evidence because they weren't formally reported, or because the instructor who detected them didn't want to testify. Formal reports are evidence of a student disposition toward dishonesty; anecdotal isn't.

There are other ways in which underreporting may come to light; but the point here is threefold. One is that, perhaps out of mercy, perhaps out of weariness, instructors aren't reporting all our plagiarisms and academic dishonesties—even though university policy makes it clear that we should. Two, some unknown number of the students who tearfully swear that they've never done such a thing before, and never will again...well, they're lying, and with considerable facility. All that distress is connected to the sanction, not to the "careless error" they say they've made.

Three, they're able to remain in the University, modeling unethical behavior for other students, in part because of this underreporting. And then I, or someone—it's often an English professor—has to go through the painful, difficult process of the first-offense hearing, listening to angry

parents allege that we're gratuitously trying to destroy their innocent darling...perhaps because one of our colleagues didn't report it the first time, or the third.

I know it's tempting to give in when the student sobs that this will destroy his life, and begs us to please, please give him another chance. No one wants to destroy lives. No one wants to look a weeping student in the eye and say, "I am legally and ethically obliged to report this no matter what it does to your career as a nurse, or a teacher, or an engineer"...though we are. And, probably, no one really wants to assemble the documentation point by point and cart the wagonload of evidence over to DSCE.

But I'm asking you, fellow instructors, to do it anyway—the first time and every time, except perhaps in the first drafts of the first papers of the first freshman classes, when students really may be still learning what academic dishonesty is. Why?

- Because students don't learn that WCU *is* serious about academic dishonesty if only some of us walk the walk. Non-reporting may well read as encouragement.

- Because in a really first-time case, the sanction can be as mild as the professor wishes. If, for instance, we list the sanction as a rewrite of the assignment, this doesn't destroy lives, or even grades...but it does leave a record which will be very important the next time. If the student never does do it again, there's no harm done. And the student learns something.

- Because no matter how the student weeps and begs (one memorable plagiarist showed me his Eagle Scout card as evidence of his sterling character) the odds are at least fair that it's *not* her first offense, it's not a careless error, and that the student subscribed to the dangerous belief that it couldn't hurt to try it on. If she's caught, she knows that groveling will probably result in a chance to do it right. But how many students do you think have sat in my office, stared at absolutely irrefutable documentation, and said, *Gee, you know, I took the easy way out and I shouldn't've?* One... in thirteen years. The academically dishonest always say they didn't mean to. They just got sleepy and forgot to "go back" and "put in" the citations or quotation marks (very poor practice in itself), or they were so stressed that they simply *had* to cut and paste from Wikipedia, rather than ask the prof an e-mail for an extension. They *all* say they've never done it before. This claim is not a reason not to report the violation: it's standard operating procedure.

- Because in not reporting, not to put too fine a point on it, you're very likely hanging a fellow instructor out to dry. It's much harder for a student to claim she didn't know, or he didn't mean to, or she never did it before, if the record is there. And it's equally hard for the faculty member who does report it to prove the truth if the record isn't. I've been hung out to dry more than once of recent years—inadvertently, to be sure, but it's no more pleasant for that. First offense hearings are ugly; student and parents are furious at what seems like gratuitous torture, the reporting instructor feels all the pangs of the unwilling torturer, the AIB has heard these same tears and excuses dozens or hundreds of times...and all this may well be the unnecessary price of an earlier instructor's impulse to mercy.

- Because if our students don't learn this here—even if they learn it the hard way—we're hanging *them* out to dry. Imagine what will happen to the engineer who composes her technical manual from pieces of other companies' manuals for similar technology, or the nurse whose

patient report copies his roommate's, or the teacher who fails her own student for plagiarism and then is caught—maybe by that student's parents—not citing her own material. It'll be worse than anything that happens to them here. Letting students get to that point is what really destroys careers.

So, please: report your academic dishonesties—which are not limited to great chunks of text swiped word for word from online, and which do include egregiously improper citation. Send a united message that academic dishonesty is unacceptable. If you need help documenting violations, or composing the letter to the perpetrator, or just moral support in the process...well, call me, okay? I know that not every department is as used to doing this as English, and if I can, I'll help.

[1] Estimates of college students who have committed academic dishonesty at least once range from 30% to nearly 98%:the website PlagiarismdotOrg lists a series of such estimates at http://www.plagiarism.org/plag_facts.html.

Carrot and Stick Mark Mattheis

Often valuable lessons are learned early in life. Third grade math class struck home for me the concept of “carrot and stick”. By the door hung the enforcer, a plank of poplar with a rope through the handle and the room number burned into the business end. On occasion it was put to use, always out of sight of students, but the procedure reverberated to all ears up and down the hallway. Recess was the carrot. Do your work, don't mess about, and you get to go outside and swing.

There were variations on this theme with the use of gold stars, free milk tokens, or pounding the erasers against the wall outside. Good carrots. Effective sticks were nose in the circle, dunce stool, and the worst, a ruler across the knuckles. Whack. When flicked by an experienced wrist a piece of wood twelve inches long, one inch wide including the brass edge, would always motivate a student to pay attention and perform up to standard. It was also a handy way to remember the “pledge of allegiance” minus two words, which was conveniently printed on the back.

I am your new faculty fellow for publications. It is my duty to promote productive discussions on issues that effect and influence our performance as educators. This is your publication and all material written, spoken, recorded, or etched on the business end of a board may be submitted. When called upon to do so I will present topics that may elicit a visceral response. I stir the pot. This month we have two articles that show how our interactions with students can be considered a carrot or a stick. Both are useful tools when applied appropriately. Today's news on plagiarism reminds us that we must always remain vigilant. We must also make room for new ideas; the ingredients that help us grow.

Submit your articles, ideas, or diatribes and lets keep the kettle full of nutrients for the mind, strength for the body, and levity for the soul.

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Faculty Forum

*from the Coulter Faculty Commons
for Excellence in Teaching and Learning*

Editor's Note Mark Mattheis

Here is the second Faculty Forum published this year. The [first covered two topics](#) important to faculty and also introduced a new [Faculty Fellow](#) for Publications. Several comments were received by the publisher about the log in procedure. The wiki requires a log in to gain access. Some faculty and staff did not believe it was safe to log in so they did not. Others rejoiced in the progress that was being made to update the functionality of the forum. Since the first publication I have been making personal contact with individuals who have expressed the desire to publish their thoughts on a topic. There were no new articles submitted for this publication.

Upcoming Topics Mark Mattheis

These are topics of discussion that should be appearing shortly. The name of the potential authors have been omitted so they may write what they see fit.

If you have an interest in this topic please provide your own insight.

“Creative Funding”

Our institution creates programs and constructs structures. The continual funding of these programs is often left up to departments. Equipment breaks down and materials are used up. What are some of the creative ways we are going about purchasing items that are expendables? We will address some creative funding essential to a quality education.

“Pushing the Envelope”

Interesting ideas on how one department is taking it upon itself to be inventive.

“Bookstore of the Future”

[South Korea](#) is moving toward digital textbooks for schools. What is the future of a brick and mortar bookstore on our college campus? We will examine why we are where we are and how we can all get to the future together.

“20/20 Vision”

Every department has been asked to review the published report on the future vision of our institution.

What initiatives did you embrace? Is there one that we can all rally around?

One that stands out for this publication is the following.

INITIATIVE 4.6.2: develop a forum that facilitates collaboration among members of the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and the Student Government Association on university wide issues and projects.

Provide your comments below or send an article to [Faculty Fellow](#).

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Faculty Forum

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**Volume 25, Number 3
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WCU History and Future Anna McFadden

I watched with great interest the recording on UNC-TV of the memorial service of William Friday, President Emeritus of the UNC system. When I came to WCU 16 years ago as an assistant professor, I heard his name and learned somewhat of his legacy. However, until hearing the remarks at his memorial service, I had no idea of his impact and what it means. This is what I heard:

1. The UNC System is about democracy for our citizens. Our state constitution insists on an affordable education whenever possible for our citizens.
2. North Carolina is recognized nationwide for its university system
3. Leaders such as Bill Friday were influential with the legislature. They pushed, but in respectful ways, their influence with the Governors and the North Carolina General Assembly.
4. The influence of such leaders as Bill Friday was about their integrity, their respect for diversity, their strong sense of service to the state, and their perseverance.

What does this mean for WCU?

1. We must recognize our important role in a larger whole, but also, in our unique service to our region.
2. We must understand that we serve others, not ourselves in our jobs and the work we do. As society changes and the needs of the university change, so must we.
3. We must be strong and loyal advocates for WCU, the UNC System, and higher education.
4. When we disagree with directions, we must do so as family- meaning we can disagree and question among ourselves but come to a supported decision in the best interest of the students we serve.

Bill Friday was hailed as the greatest educator in the state of North Carolina in recent history. Can we follow his legacy and commitment to the students in our care now and in the future?

[The Life and Legacy of Bill Friday at UNC-TV](#)

Anna T. McFadden, PhD
Director of Academic Engagement and IT Governance
Professor, Department of Human Services

Horse and Cart Mark Mattheis

I've been thinking about horses lately, so here is something for you to ponder. If you could be a horse, what kind of horse would you be? Now that might sound like an odd question. But, recently I haven't been getting very good traction under my hooves. After all *a good horse is hard to come by*, so if I were a horse I would be a standard bred trotter. Since you asked, the difference between a trotter and a pacer is the gate. A pacer brings both legs on the same side forward together. A trotter brings the front left and rear right forward together and alternates. Both pull a lightweight cart and are built for speed. I like that.

So why do I feel like a horse? There are many great horse analogies. *Don't look a gift horse in the mouth* might describe our recent raise. Maybe that should be more like *giving a leg up*. *Don't beat a dead horse* and *get off your high horse* might refer to past administrations. Right now I am *chomping at the bit* to see some good old fashion *horse sense*. Think about the one *don't put the cart in front of the horse*. In higher education I see the institution as the cart and the process of education as the horse. The two must be compatible. Without the students, faculty/staff, and degree programs there is no power to move the cart. We might have a pretty nice cart like a *sulky with fringe on top*, our maybe big old beer wagon. But the horse and cart have to match in order to function properly. Could you imagine an Arabian horse with it's high-strung temper and long flowing mains hooked up to slay in the snow? A new form of racing could be Clydesdales pulling sulkies around a mile track. Not a very effective use of the size, strength, and temperament of the *horsepower*. Carts can be viewed the same way. Do they need a team or just one horse? Does the cart need to move fast, slow, carry weight, be comfortable, or maybe go over rough ground? So while keeping the arrangement of the horse in front of the cart, we must also look at what horses we have and what carts need to be pulled. This is how I have made sense of what is going on lately.

In October we put in our TPR documents. This document explains what type of horse we are as individual faculty and why we should not be *sent to the glue factory*. We were then asked to complete information about our engagement activities. I suspect this explains how well we are *teaming up* with the other horses in the stable. We move on to the 2020 initiatives. Now here we are figuring out which team of horses are going to pull what load for our campus cart. But, we don't know what loads need to be pulled by our campus until the UNC System Strategic Plan describes the big one party in power cart. If they only describe the cart and not the power in front of it, we might hear *my kingdom for a horse*. Don't forget about our own campus master plan. This is the long-range view of how our cart functions in the barnyard. Finally, coming around the last turn is Program Prioritization. Here we might *throw a shoe*. A few may be *put out to pasture* while others could have their *feedbags* put on. We will certainly be *a horse of a different color* when this process is over.

So ask yourself, if I were a horse what type of horse would I be? No matter what, naying *hold your horse's* is not going to slow the pace of change. It would be nice to know what cart I am being asked to pull. I keep glancing behind me to see what's back there. Most of the time I just see my own *horse's rear end*. Some days it is easier to *keep the blinders on* and just keep pulling. I don't want to end up being one of those *horses changed midstream*, but I guess I won't know until I *hear it from the horse's mouth*.

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**The Council on Diversity and Inclusion
Henry D. Wong**

Diversity means differences. These differences go beyond the covered groups of the Civil Rights Act like race, gender, religion, disability, and others. It also includes how we think and the expression of our being.

Research suggests that recognizing and valuing diversity has the potential to enhance employee satisfaction, competitive business advantage, innovation, problem-solving, and best practices in the workplace. Inclusion and diversity efforts by higher education have implications for achieving excellence in learning, teaching, research, student development, and community engagement.

The Council on Diversity and Inclusion (CODI) established in 2011 addresses the UNC Tomorrow Phase II Report. The purpose of the CODI is to develop a campus-wide diversity plan and suggest recommendations for diversity initiatives congruent with the 2020 Vision: Focusing Our Future.

To ensure campus-wide representation of the five divisions and colleges, council members were recommended by their respective Deans (See <http://www.wcu.edu/26030.asp> for an inclusion video and biographies of council members). The diversity plan that has been developed to date includes the following:

Vision – Western Carolina University is committed to being a diverse and inclusive learning environment where students, faculty, and staff aspire to be global citizens, multiculturally competent, and respectful in words and actions of all members of the University community.

Mission - Build and maintain a diverse, inclusive, and welcoming university that promotes respect, global citizenship, and access to education and the workplace for students, employees, and members of the global community.

The complete list of value statements can be found at <http://www.wcu.edu/28762.asp>. Some of the values include:

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Learning experiences, pedagogy and curricula that lead to the development of globally aware, confident citizens/graduates who possess multicultural competence.

Co-curricular Learning Experiences

1) Connecting curricular, co-curricular, leadership, and culturally diverse experiences to provide accessible opportunities that challenge students to expand their boundaries and horizons.

Fostering Diversity in the Workplace and University Community

1) The recruitment and retention of a culturally diverse and multiculturally competent workforce and student body.

2) A workplace and university community that is inclusive, welcoming and supportive of all individuals and that promotes freedom of expression and ideas.

Relationship Building through Leadership & Communication

1) Collaboration, engagement, and outreach that foster an open community with shared interests and goals, and that make a positive impact and promote success.

Climate

1) A welcoming and inclusive community in which honesty, mutual respect, and collaborative participation underpin all interactions.

Goals:

Goal 1: Prepare students to become globally aware, multiculturally competent, and civic-minded.

Goal 2: Foster cultural immersion and learning experiences, including international experiences that challenge students to expand their boundaries and horizons.

Goal 3: Recruit, develop, and retain a diverse multiculturally aware work community that promotes inclusion and equal opportunity in a welcoming and supportive work and educational environment.

Goal 4: Build an open community that is supported by executive leadership and is inclusive, accessible, and that promotes collaboration and engagement among all participants internal and external to Western Carolina University.

Goal 5: Establish and maintain a climate that is welcoming, accepting, and respectful of diverse groups and opinions, and that provides opportunities and access to obtain an education.

Three recommendations by the CODI to the University include:

- 1) Increase faculty, staff, and student minority rates;
- 2) Improve student retention and graduation rates of underrepresented groups; and
- 3) Promote diversity education opportunities for faculty, staff, and students.

The CODI plan is congruent with Chancellor Belcher's vision and principles outlined in his installation address whereby he stated, "our time of stewardship will be worthy of remembrance, not because of the fleeting glory of rankings and statistics, but because of the genuine difference Western will make in the quality of life of the people – the wonderful, resilient, diverse, extraordinary and ordinary people – we serve" (The Reporter, March 30, 2012). The plan supports the core value of cultural diversity and equal opportunity of the WCU 2020 Commission.

Henry Wong is the Director for the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Programs at Western Carolina University. He investigates complaints of discrimination and grievances based on the covered groups under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (2008). He serves as the chairperson for the Council on Diversity and Inclusion.

The Forum Goes Front Row

Mark Mattheis

Starting Spring Semester 2013 an additional form of the Forum will be available for faculty to discuss topics of interest. Although the written word is always welcome, discussing topics in a live studio setting may help to bring out details that wouldn't normally jump off a page. If you have a topic or interest please contact [Mark Mattheis](#) so you can be worked into a schedule. I want to thank Freya Kinner for her time to discuss the [F.A.C.E.](#) program available to faculty on campus. [Link](#)

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Working for the Clampdown Jack Summers

I am writing to address the likely consequences of recently adopted policies that restrict information sharing by members of university, college, and departmental collegial review committees (CRCs, formerly called TPR committees). The text of the new policy can be found in the faculty handbook beginning on page 102 (from the WCU web page, go to the 'for faculty and staff' link and you will find the link under the faculty heading). In short, the policies forbid members of these committees from discussing CRC business and members caught sharing information can be fired.

In my view, these policies suffer from a number of obvious problems. The first issue is a lack of accountability for CRC members. While the policy should have mechanisms for assuring committee members behave appropriately, it does not. A second issue arises when college and university CRCs interpret policies that are supposed to be determined at the department level. The third (and, to my mind, most important) issue relates to the feedback we provide to our early career faculty. The feedback I have seen has ranged from inadequate to non-existent. Our untenured people require more information, not less. They deserve better.

Accountability: It is distressing that the policy contains no provisions to ensure that members of these committees act ethically, or even in compliance with employment law. Can a committee member act based on malice or prejudice? There is nothing in the policy to stop them. If someone states that he will only vote to tenure and promote white Christian heterosexual men, the other committee members cannot speak out without fear that they will be fired. While this example represents an extreme, plenty of more realistic, undesired scenarios may arise. Committee members are free to systematically disregard clearly stated guidelines in a DCRD and may interpret the DCRD in ways that are inconsistent with departmental intent. The policy will protect CRC members from the consequences of sloppy, unethical, or lazy behavior while doing nothing to police these behaviors. The work load associated with serving on these committees is substantial and the secrecy policy will protect anyone who takes shortcuts when faced with a stack of dossiers and a looming deadline.

Interpretation of departmental CRD at the college and university level. The policy prevents departments from communicating their expectations to members of the university and college committees, and prevents conscientious members of those committees from seeking clarification regarding practices and standards in other disciplines. Not long ago, we went through the process of revising all DCRDs with the stated intent of standardizing expectations across the university. I recall hearing that there was a perception that some departments were not holding candidates to a high standard. If this is indeed a concern, then university and college committees should be

having that discussion with the tenured members of the department(s) in question, not with the tenure candidate.

While reappointment, tenure, and promotion decisions are supposed to be based on departmental CRDs, many of these documents are intentionally vague and can be interpreted in ways that are different than intended by the department. For example, the university does not have uniform standards for interpreting SAI scores (My requests for a policy guiding review committees on this issue have been denied by leadership last year's faculty senate). While the prevailing opinion among campus leadership appears to hold that CoursEval surveys are reliable gauges of teaching effectiveness, there is ample evidence to the contrary. For an example, Porter argues persuasively that student survey results have little validity (Porter, S. R., Do College Student Surveys Have Any Validity? *Rev. Higher Ed*, 2011, 35, 45-76) and Johnson (Johnson, V. E. *Grade Inflation, A Crisis in College Education*, Springer, 2003) has documented evidence that faculty respond to SAI scores by diminishing academic rigor. While this is another issue that is best left to another time, there can be little doubt that serious scholars of higher education do not fall into lock step supporting the validity of SAIs. Getting back to the point, departments that are skeptical of SAI validity cannot be confident that college and university CRCs will interpret their CRDs in a manner consistent with departmental intent. While a representative from a department will be able to present the DCRD to the college committee, that person's opinion may not be representative and most departments will not be represented at the university level. Since the departmental representative is subject to the secrecy policies, they cannot represent the opinions of the college committee to candidates. In short, neither the department nor the committee will be able to tell whether the college or university CRC's interpretation of a given DCRDs is consistent with departmental intent.

Mentoring the candidates. As stated earlier, I believe the effects of the policy on the feedback we provide to candidates are of the greatest concern. The policy prevents candidates from learning the expectations of the university, college, and departmental committees. In the past, a departmental committee could address perceived problems with a candidate through informal feedback. This could occur at the college or university level as well. It is possible that the committee's perception is inaccurate and informing the candidate will allow him / her to clarify the dossier in the future. Since informal feedback is not passed up the chain of command, a committee member could use this mechanism to be critical without threatening the career of the person in question. Thus, informal feedback serves as a means to mentor the candidate. The new policy limits feedback to official channels. For the Department of Chemistry and Physics, formal channels mean an up or down vote from the committee and a letter from the department chair. Since the letter goes up the chain to the college and university committees, it is cannot be harshly critical of anyone the chair wishes to retain.

Accepting appointment to a CRC commits you to the confidentiality provisions. I consider these provisions to be an insult to my intelligence, my integrity, and my judgment. I doubt that they are legal. What judge is going to rule that the university can override constitutional guarantees of free speech so as to do the business of a state institution in the dark? Still, I do not feel like being the one to test the hypothesis in court, and I hesitate to reject my department's request that I serve on these committees. The business they conduct is too important.

The intent of the policy appears to be to shield CRC members from the anger of anyone who believes that they had been treated unjustly. Unfortunately, limiting the flow of information can

only increase the likelihood that people will be treated unjustly. Given that our system is populated by people who will inevitably make mistakes and who will inevitably come into conflict, we do need to have a mechanism to manage that conflict. I do not, however, believe that the answer is to shut off information to candidates. The potential for misunderstanding, error, and abuse is substantially mitigated when people communicate.

Our secrecy policy works against the best interests of the faculty and students of this university. Uncertainty of how committees will judge a candidate's merits cannot serve the interests of the university. We hire people with specific credentials and skill sets who frequently have little classroom experience. Many face a steep learning curve when they arrive. Do we want candidates to neglect teaching based on misinformed assumptions about the weight given to scholarship and service? Do we want faculty to inflate student grades and diminish course rigor in pursuit of higher SAI scores? If student learning were a higher priority than administrative ease, we would work to improve our communication with early career faculty. We would invest effort to make sure they know what they need to do in order to succeed at WCU. I don't believe that our best option is to discard people after six years on the learning curve and replace them with a fresh crop of totally inexperienced newcomers.

Since these policies came out of the Faculty Senate there is an inherent assumption that they reflect the will of the faculty. I am not convinced that they do. I don't recall there being much conversation of the topic prior to their adoption. Perhaps it is time we had that conversation. I think it is time we began talking to each other as individuals about the policies that affect our profession. Then perhaps we should talk about these things as departments, then as colleges and finally as the university. Do we really want a culture of secrecy or would we prefer a culture of openness and transparency? Were we properly involved in the creation and shaping of these policies? As I see it, we can either accept a culture that maximizes administrative ease or we can fight to form WCU's culture into what we want it to be.

Thanks for your consideration.

U Club
Marsha Lee Baker

If you've heard of the U Club, you likely have heard it's a great place to make new friends, acquaintances and work associates. It's true! I visited the U Club before I was even employed by Western--it was part of my on-campus visit interviewing for my job. I joined right away and have been a member for sixteen years. On Fridays at TGIF, I unwind with Western folks I count among my treasured friends; chat with valued acquaintances; meet for the first time folks I may or may not know by name, voice, or face. Thanks to the U Club, I know people who've been at Western since the 1960s and people who arrived last month; people in every academic college and practically every administrative division. I know staff and faculty members I likely would never know including administrative assistants, program directors, engineers, nurses, librarians, maintenance crew members, deans, scientists, marketers, as well as the partners and kids they bring to the club with them. They add to the fun in my life and improve my work relationships.

U Club TGIFs are drop-in every Friday from 5:00 - 7:00 pm. It also organizes several annual special events, like the one coming up January 25. The Robbie Burns Supper is famous world- and campus-wide for celebrating food, drink and frolicking in the spirit of its namesake,

Scotland's (in)famous eighteenth century poet and lyricist. Come join the fun! Happy hour will begin at 5:00 with the Robbie Burns Supper starting at 6:00. It'll be at Mad Batter.

All university staff and faculty members are invited to be U Club members. Dues are modest at \$30/semester. U Club currently meets in the recreation area of the Canterbury House (on Speedwell Road across from the Ramsey Center) unless otherwise announced. We will have a new, permanent location this fall!

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Mark Mattheis - Faculty Fellow for Publications memattheis@wcu.edu



Faculty Forum

from the Coulter Faculty Commons
for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Volume 25, Number 6
April 2013

Editor's Note
Mark Mattheis

The Faculty Forum gives a voice to all members of the WCU community. I welcome any articles or comments you wish to present. May I suggest a few topics you might want to write about.

One Year Contracts - Decades of service one year at a time

Roll-Up – Spend it or loose it forcing your financial hand

Program Prioritization – Where are the numbers and how do we fit in

Thank you for your continued support.

Faculty Senate Chair Report
Mary Jean Ronan Herzog

UNC Strategic Directions. The big news this month was about the UNC Strategic Directions plan. As you know from the minutes of the January meeting, the WCU Senate unanimously endorsed the resolutions of the UNC Faculty Assembly related to the “UNC Compact.” President Ross wrote a letter to the WCU community thanking the Faculty Senate for the support (documents posted). In the end, the plan was influenced by the strong, articulate, consistent faculty voices. The final plan was approved by the Board of Governors, and it is posted on the UNC Faculty Assembly website (<http://www.northcarolina.edu/facultyassembly/index.htm>). Erin McNelis’ sent it to WCU Academic Affairs on February 11. The faculty are expected to play a vital role during its implementation.

Spring Caucus. The spring caucus was held on February 8 from 3:00 to 5:00 in Illusions at the University Center. About 30 people came for part or all of it; refreshments were provided by the Senate. I had received a large number of responses to my queries leading up to the caucus, which I compiled and sent to the faculty prior to the caucus. The issues that were the main focus of the discussion had to do with collegial review, hearing and grievance (issues, policies, procedures and practices). (See Erin McNelis’ notes summarizing the caucus. I’ll also post the compilation that I sent to all the faculty.) Other caucus issues included the following:

Senate Communications. A few faculty suggested that communications between the Senate and the general faculty need to be improved, while others did not have a problem with it. I was asked to encourage Senators to communicate with their colleagues about Senate issues, actions, etc. Examples of things that work are: Some senators make reports to their departments; others send an email report to their entire college with highlights of the Senate meeting; some faculty read the agendas and minutes on the Senate website to keep themselves informed. Some Senate chairs

in the UNC system hold one or two open hours during the week for anyone to drop in and chat. I'll set that up and see if anyone is interested.

Ombuds Office. There was a recurring request in caucus to find out what had happened to the ombuds office. The Faculty Senate passed a resolution in support of an ombudsman (sic) on January 23, 2008, but nothing has materialized. The UNC Faculty & Staff Assemblies have been studying the issue this year, and there seems to be a growing consensus that faculty and staff need an independent ombuds office to help with grievances, complaints, etc. Our Staff Senate is very interested as well. I will follow up with Chancellor Belcher and Provost Brenton about action on this long-standing desire and old resolution. Plenty of other interesting topics came up through caucus. See the posted documents for more detail.

Sharepoint. We had a brief discussion of the pros and cons of Sharepoint at the January Senate meeting, and I was asked to get more specific feedback from the Senators. I created a survey, posted it on Sharepoint, and asked the Senators to complete it. There were 14 responses, but since there are 26 senators, the results are not complete. Anna McFadden stressed that if you have trouble using the VPN or Sharepoint, please call the help line (227 -7487). Sharepoint is supposed to be coming out with a new, better version. Erin McNelis is modifying the way we use Sharepoint for the rest of this semester.

COACHE Survey. Associate Provost Mark Lord gave a brief report about the COACHE Survey at the CLC (Chancellor's Leadership Council) in January, and I thought it might be a good topic for Senate discussion, but it has not risen to the top. Mark said he would be glad to talk about it with Senate. Also, Laura Cruz, Director of the Faculty Commons, has been working with the data and she said, "...we have a small research group together and have obtained permission from COACHE to gain access to their full database for a comparative research study." If you want to know more about what this group is doing and what questions they're working on, get in touch with Laura (lcruz@email.wcu.edu). The COACHE survey is posted on Sharepoint.

News Item. Faculty Assembly received word that President Ross plans to visit the Faculty Senates on each campus. I'll keep you posted.
Respectfully submitted,
Mary Jean Ronan Herzog

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Faculty Forum

*from the Coulter Faculty Commons
for Excellence in Teaching and Learning*

**Volume 25, Number 7
May 2013**

**On Edge
Mark Mattheis**

Finally. The last scheduled day of class for the semester. I tell my students on the first day of class that the person in this room who will learn the most during the semester will be me. This opinion has held true with my position as a faculty fellow publishing the forum. My outlook at the beginning of the year and the one I hold now, have changed. I can see the campus in a new light. In essence I have learned.

What I have learned is that we are a campus on edge. We started the year with the hope of new leadership. But, with anyone new there is a period of finding the vision. The 20/20 commission first focused our sight far into the future. Program prioritization then made us don reading glasses and take a closer look at ourselves. Since then we have experienced there is always a personal side to every job. We are not just titles with power we are people who care for our own.

The November election results turned the state in a new direction. There are no checks and balances when one party rules. Legislative priorities have driven us to tighten our belts yet again, using new holes to keep up the pants with assumed deep pockets. Changes are coming fast and furious from the state, which put administrators on edge.

By listening I have learned there are many ideas that seldom turn into suggestions. The Faculty Forum is the platform where these suggestions can be made. If you have kept up with this year's issues you will have found few articles submitted. I have learned that by putting words on paper faculty expose themselves to perceived repercussions. Not just here, but an electronic article or even print could hurt their job prospects elsewhere. When would you ever imagine faculty keeping their collective mouth shut? Faculty are on edge.

The big picture brought us a year where calendars ended but the world did not, economies crashed, asteroids came close, and dictators rattled their sabers. This academic year has been one global issue after another. It seems that at times even the whole planet has been on edge. My personal edge is the brink of the tenure process. I will be the first in our young department to be scrutinized. I have now heard enough stories about going up for tenure. It seems to boil down to what I have accomplished and who will be on the committees. My work history is what it is, but there have been a few changes in personnel. I have worked under two chancellors, three provosts, three deans, and seven department faculty members have departed the premises. Who will be around to say grace next year is hard to tell. I'll find out the future just like everyone else, one day at a time.

So for the last issue of the year let me leave you with this. Let us use the edge to remind ourselves why we are here. Life is too short to leave the words unspoken. Have passion in your work and compassion for those with whom you work. Embrace the day for the potential it holds

and never give in to the naysayers in life. Speak your mind for it may be a solution for progress. Make plans for the future, but always strive to live in the moment. For good or bad whee all are truly family at Western. Take care.

Faculty Senate Chair Report
Mary Jean Ronan Herzog

Committee Appointments. I asked the general faculty for nominations for the following committees, and received more than fifteen nominations within a few days. Go, Faculty!

1. Information Technology Council (one faculty member)
2. Infrastructure Technology Committee (one faculty member)
3. Paul A. Reid Awards (two faculty members)
4. Athletics Committee (one faculty member)

Ombuds Office. Sometimes things take a long time. At the first Senate Planning meeting of the year, Chris Cooper, chair of the Faculty Affairs Council, brought up the Senate resolution to create a position for an ombudsperson. It passed on January 23, 2008, and Senate leadership followed up year after year. This year, the UNC Faculty Assembly and Staff Assembly both encouraged the development of ombuds offices throughout the system and invited the Ombuds Office at Chapel Hill to give presentations. I brought it up with our provost, Dr. Brenton, during our fall conversations, and she was very supportive of our need to have such a position/office. Dr. Brenton has a background in conflict resolution and sees the ombud as a very positive approach, and she talked to Dr. Belcher about it. In the meantime, Mary Ann Lochner was advocating for such a position, with the understanding that an effective ombud can help resolve conflicts in the early stages before they get out of control. And, the WCU Staff Senate has also been advocating for an ombuds office.

The end result is that Dr. Belcher has approved an ombuds position which may be similar to the new one at Appalachian State (a full-time faculty member with half-time release to serve as an ombud). Details will be worked out, but our ombuds office will be available to both faculty and staff. Hooray!

Hearing, Grievance & PTR Procedures. The Rules Committee has been working on clarifying and simplifying the procedures and steps in the Grievance, Hearing and PTR appeal committees. I sent suggestions for changes and clarifications that I received from faculty throughout the year to the Committee in early March. This is important work, and the end results are expected to make these processes much more effective. However, it is also tedious and time-consuming and requires the committee to proceed carefully and systematically. Erin McNelis, chair of the Rules Committee, has posted the documents on Sharepoint, in the folder labeled, "Grievance_Hearing_PTR_Appeals_Process_Flow_Charts."

Senate Restructuring. The Senate leadership started examining the Senate organization last summer. This included looking at what other senates do, how they are organized, etc. The UNC Faculty Assembly distributed a best practices paper on effective senates. I plan to follow up on this issue, and will ask the senate leadership to discuss how we should proceed.

Proposed Senate Schedule for 2013-2014: Open Faculty Caucuses for 2013-14:

August 30, Friday 3 – 5 p.m. in U.C. Illusions

January 24, Friday 3 – 5 p.m. in U.C. Illusions

Faculty Senate Regular Business Meetings for 2013-14: Note: unless indicated otherwise, meetings are 3 – 5 p.m. in the University Center Multipurpose rooms.

August 28 (Overflow September 4) Wednesday

September 26 (Overflow October 3) Thursday

October 23 (Overflow October 30) Wednesday

November 21 Thursday (Overflow December 4, Wednesday*)

January 22 (Overflow January 29) Wednesday

February 20 in Health and Human Sciences Building (Overflow February 27) Thursday (Do we want to hold this in HHS?)

March 26 (Overflow April 2) Wednesday

April 24 (Overflow May 1) Thursday

*Note, change due to conflict. Faculty Senate Planning Team Meetings for 2012-13: Note: these meetings are each on a Wednesday, from 12 – 2 in the UC Dogwood Room.

August 21, September 18, October 16, November 13, January 15, February 12, March 19, April 9

Other Key Proposed Dates:

Friday, March 14 (nominations for all University Elections run by CONEC due, proposed ballots emailed to faculty for review)

Friday, March 21 (last day to submit write-in nomination for ballot)

8 a.m. Monday, March 31 through 8 a.m. Monday April 7, University Elections Voting Period
5 p.m. Wednesday, April 2 (no later than the first Wednesday in April), all College Senator election results must be submitted to Secretary of the Faculty by this time.

Thanks:

Thanks to all Senators, Planning Team, Leadership and Ann Green for your work and participation this year! A special thanks to the Senators who are finishing their term at the end of this semester: Cheryl Daly, Christopher Hoyt, Libby McRae, Steve Miller, Wes Stone, Ben Tholkes, Erin Tapley, and Leroy Kauffman, who will continue work with the Senate as Chair-elect.

Respectfully submitted, Mary Jean Ronan Herzog

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