

Faculty Meeting Minutes 10-12-11

1. Call to order: Kris Bartanen, on behalf of President Thomas, called the meeting to order at about 7:45 a.m. A total of 59 faculty members were present.
2. Approval of the minutes of the September 20, 2011 faculty meeting
M/S/P with the following revision and clarifications:
Revision: on page four, modify the sentence “In order to be in compliance with the Code, affirm the FAC chair reports to the senate but does nothing else that may impact the way the FAC works.” to read: “In order to reconcile the Bylaws and FAC practice, the revision of the Bylaws must state that the FAC chair reports to the senate but does nothing else that may impact the way the FAC works.”
Clarifications:
 - On page four: Bill Haltom noted the senate has pressed the FAC to have a chair for the past five years (a clarification of the word “few”).
 - On page four: Bill Haltom clarified that the FAC has provided annual reports to the Senate since 1998 (rather than 2006).
3. Announcements – none
4. President’s Report - none
5. Academic Vice President’s Report: Dean Bartanen offered clarification regarding her remarks at the September 20 meeting:
 - Education: our MAT program is a great program and contributes to the university budget; we have not met the enrollment goal identified in the Long Range Plan (LRP) therefore we need to revise the university budget goal (LRP) down to 32 students (and adjust the revenue expectations accordingly); see Terry Beck’s recent message about MAT recruiting opportunities.
 - Faculty Salary: The Faculty Salary Scale provides for step increases at the assistant (2.5%), associate (2%), and full (5% every five years through four steps) professor levels. We are able to cover steps and promotions with retirement savings for 2012-2013. The question raised at the last meeting was to invite faculty reaction to attempting to plan for an additional increase of inflation-plus-1% (the LRP models inflation plus 1% with a 2.5% inflation figure) for salary pool increases. If we retain the LRP 3.5% increase in the salary pool, we likely will have to make reductions in other areas of the budget to reach this projection (and one option is to further reduce the number of visiting faculty members).
6. Report of the Faculty Senate Chair – none (Steven Neshyba noted later in the meeting that he will send a report via the faculty governance listserve).
7. Second reading of the proposed revision to Bylaws Article V, Section 6.B.a – Curriculum Committee

M/S/P to revise the Bylaws Article V, Section 6.B.a to include the Library Director (*ex officio*) as a member of the Curriculum Committee (unanimous).

8. Ratify revision of the first-year seminar rubric (see Appendix I for introductory memo and revised rubric)

Julie Christoph introduced the revised rubric. She spoke on behalf on many people who worked on the revision, especially the Burlington Northern working group (Bill Barry, Derek Buescher, Peggy Burge, Julie Nelson Christoph, Andrew Gardner, Kent Hooper, Renée Houston, Priti Joshi, Kriszta Kotsis, Sunil Kukreja, Julie Neff-Lippman, Eric Orlin, Amy Spivey, and Ariela Tubert). Julie noted that the current rubrics, sequencing, syllabi differences, and student outcomes can be quite different between the two seminar types. This is especially true regarding information literacy (an important element because students are not coming in with good research skills).

With the support of a Burlington Northern grant, the group of faculty members worked over the summer to identify best practices, review comparison institution programs, review Puget Sound assessment data, and evaluate our first-year seminars. In the review of comparison institutions they found that the norm is to have one and often two first year seminars with multiple disciplinary perspectives. The group's work points to the need for sequencing of the seminars and a more coherent experience for students.

Therefore, the working group developed one rubric that identifies a sequenced, coherent, year-long first-year seminar experience with consistent preparation for information literacy. The revised rubric opens seminars in both semesters to multiple disciplines and divides course content between the two semesters more clearly. The working group is proud of the rubric; it is a good model of first-year education.

M/S/P to ratify the revised first-year seminar rubric (one dissenter).

Discussion

Bill Breitenbach said the revised rubric is an improvement and he will vote to approve it; the cost may be flexibility for individual faculty members and departments. He wondered if faculty members will be disposed to offer only Seminar I or Seminar II and, therefore, all of their "non-departmental" units would be in one semester. Julie Christoph agreed that it will take some work to convert all seminars; however, those who teach seminars regularly would have two different versions of their seminar(s), one for each semester. There will be faculty development support for revising existing seminars and developing new courses. Derek Buescher noted that the new rubric is an entirely new model and creates a structure to allow for greater flexibility. Amy Spivey confirmed that a number of faculty members who currently teach seminars can imagine adapting their courses to either seminar (or both) in the new rubric. Eric Orlin noted that there is not a big distinction between some seminars under the current rubric. He encouraged us to think of the new rubric as unique and not simply a modification of the existing seminar rubrics.

Andy Rex asked if the same seminar was offered as both Seminar I and Seminar II, would they be listed separately in the bulletin? Yes, they would. Andy Rex then asked how we move seminars through the Curriculum Committee. Barbara Warren responded that the committee will devise a review mechanism.

Hans Ostrom wondered, given that all first-year students will take Seminar I in the fall, how we will be able to have enough sections. Julie responded that we will have the same number of

sections offered as we do now and the new rubric will provide more flexibility for faculty members from any department to teach them.

Nick Kontogeorgopoulos asked if the seminars were thematic and if the seminars, especially Seminar II, were considered a “mini-thesis” class. Priti Joshi replied that both seminars are themed and there is more independent research in Seminar II. Kent Hooper noted that he is surprised by the differences in student ability between fall and spring—he has restructured his seminar assignments (now that he is teaching in the fall semester); the new rubric identifies that more guidance is built in to the first semester.

Seth Weinberger asked about disciplinary approach differences and cited his own experience of asking students to do significant research in his seminar. He wondered if he assigned papers that require independent research, would he be precluded from teaching a seminar in fall term? Amy Spivey replied that assignments requiring independent research are certainly possible in either semester. The difference is the degree of research guidance. For example, in the fall the instructor may provide a list of resources. Derek Buescher noted that we are charged with introducing students to the academic community and seminars are a place to do that. He expects students in the second semester will have encountered ideas and techniques in the first semester—the rubric provides consistency. Julie Christoph noted that students enjoy research but when they are not prepared to do so it can be a disaster. She reminded us of the research practices survey results; e.g., 43% of our incoming students have not used online databases.

Bill Breitenbach asked if students would be barred from taking the same thematic course in both semesters. Julie Christoph and Kris Bartanen noted that we need to work out these details and invited participation in this process. Others noted that it may not be logistically feasible for students to take a two-semester seminar sequence due to scheduling constraints.

Rich Anderson-Connolly expressed concern that faculty members would be constrained by the rubric. For example, what if a faculty member wants to assign more papers in the first semester? Eric Orlin noted that the rubric does not preclude a significant paper in the first semester—just more guidance in the research and writing process. Eric Scharrer worried that scientists may be unsure how to teach Seminar II because students will not have the background and/or disciplinary knowledge to complete a significant research project. Tiffany MacBain recognized that there will be some anxiety about how to adapt seminars. She pointed out that first-year seminar students are not supposed to be mastering content, but rather mastering practices. Kent Hooper expressed surprise that faculty members are worried about how to modify seminars. The revised rubric allows for more variety. Minor modifications to existing seminars would lead to successful seminars and an improvement over what we have now. He urged his colleagues to vote to approve the revised rubric and work with the Curriculum Committee and the Associate Deans’ Office to implement the revision. The rubric reflects best practices; and teaching of writing has evolved since we first put the seminars into practice. Kent exhorted us to put aside our worries and “let’s go for it!” He hopes the revised rubric will get more people to teach seminars.

Doug Cannon relayed his experience with a current seminar that would fit the Seminar II rubric. He requires a substantial research paper in the second half of semester and has found that the students in the course fall into two groups: those who are prepared for this kind of assignment and those who are not. He is not sure about a solution to this. Carolyn Weisz noted that, under

the current calendar, the fall semester is one week shorter than the spring semester. If we have to retool our courses anyway, and we have more time in spring, then the sequencing of the revised rubric is good. She also noted that information literacy practices are always evolving so we will have to continue to retool our seminars and this is provided for with the revised rubrics.

Judith Kay supports the proposal and noted that she addresses students' lack of subject matter expertise by controlling the topics they write about. She knows what topics have accessible research/literature; there are ways to address content appropriately for first-year seminars. Kris Bartanen noted that the most recent addition of the revised rubric, in section 2.b, identifies assignments as "appropriate." Priti Joshi reminded us that first-year seminars are designed to introduce students to academic argumentation, reading, and writing, not disciplinary content; teaching writing around a topic is the best practice. Amy Spivey confirmed that students can explore the basics of technologies, etc., in science-related first-year seminars. Steven Neshyba, after noting that the Senate endorsed the revised rubric, confirmed that students in seminars in the liberal arts are capable of critical thinking and can address two paradigms. He noted that chemistry is rife with different models of reality—we can approach this directly in the seminars.

Keith Ward spoke in favor of the motion; the new model addresses course sequencing, questions of content, and process. Mott Greene agreed and noted that a great strength of Seminar II is that it introduces students to independent research that is not tied to day-to-day classroom activities.

Nick Kontogeorgopoulos and Jennifer Utrata like the rubric revision and enthusiastically support it. They wondered about possible clarification of section 2.b. to have flexibility to provide material but also have students undertake independent research. Eric Orlin confirmed that 2.a. and 2.b. are not mutually exclusive and both could be addressed in the same semester, but students must encounter the process through the two semesters.

Hans Ostrom called the question—**M/S/P with two dissenters**—and we moved to the vote on the motion to ratify the revised rubric.

Kris Bartanen expressed appreciation for the team who worked on the rubric revision. There was a special, sustained round of applause for Julie Christoph, recognizing her leadership of the revision project.

9. No other business was raised and the meeting adjourned by 8:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Alyce DeMarais.

Appendix I: First-year Seminar Revision Memo and Rubric**To: Curriculum Committee and faculty members at the University of Puget Sound****From: Burlington Northern First-Year Seminar Faculty Working Group (Bill Barry, Derek Buescher, Peggy Burge, Julie Nelson Christoph, Andrew Gardner, Kent Hooper, Renée Houston, Priti Joshi, Kriszta Kotsis, Sunil Kukreja, Julie Neff-Lippman, Eric Orlin, Amy Spivey, Ariela Tubert)****Purpose**

This memorandum accompanies the proposed new rubrics for the first-year seminars (FYS) at the University of Puget Sound. It

- explains the background and process behind creation of the proposed new FYS rubrics;
- explains the strengths and weaknesses of the current FYS structure; and
- explains how the proposed change alleviates the weaknesses of the current FYS structure.

Background

Assessments of the Writing and Rhetoric and Scholarly and Creative Inquiry Seminars over the past eight years have revealed consistent support for the basic concept of the seminars –as well as some consistent strains of dissatisfaction among faculty and students alike about the clarity and feasibility of course objectives. The regular review of core areas by the Curriculum Committee (as reported in the Curriculum Committee Working Group *Report on Freshman Seminars* of April 21, 2010) reports on the survey of and discussion with faculty teaching the FYS. The report notes that the majority of faculty who provided feedback were satisfied with their delivery of specific seminars. However, the report acknowledged a number of weaknesses in the current system, which are detailed below. In student focus groups as part of The Study of Writing at Puget Sound (2007), Puget Sound seniors reported their perception that the student experience of the FYS was highly uneven from section to section.

After meeting during 2010- 2011 in one-on-one informal interviews and open invitation focus groups with faculty members teaching FYS, Julie Christoph proposed and received a Burlington Northern grant for two summer workshops focused on reviewing assessments and considering structural and/or curricular revisions to the seminars. Workshop participants included faculty members from a variety of disciplines who teach FYS as well as librarians from Collins Library. Workshop participants met for three days in June and three days in August 2011, reviewing Puget Sound assessments of the FYS and the first-year experience in residential seminars and information literacy, longitudinal assessments of writing over the four years at Puget Sound, as well as staffing trends in the seminars over the past eight years (attending to department and to ongoing vs. contract faculty). The two workshop groups also looked at models for first-year academic programs at all of our comparison institutions, reviewed relevant best practices statements by the Council of Writing Program Administrators and by the American Library Association, research on adolescent brain development, and longitudinal studies of college student writing development. The workshop culminated in the writing of the proposed new rubrics.

Strengths of the Current FYS Structure

The Burlington Northern First-Year Seminar Working Group notes the following strengths of the current FYS structure:

- small classes that provide high levels of interaction between students and faculty and among students;
- the opportunity to academically examine topics to which students otherwise might not be exposed; and
- development of skills pertinent to academic inquiry—argument analysis and production as well as reading, writing and speaking ability.

Weaknesses of the Current FYS Structure

The Curriculum Committee Working Group *Report on Freshman Seminars* reports the following from their survey of faculty members teaching FYS:

- Too much content: "many [Writing and Rhetoric] faculty noted that balancing and doing justice to all three learning objectives as well as adequately covering the substantive topic of the seminar was difficult in the time they had."
- Preparation differentials in students: "a smaller number of [Scholarly and Creative Inquiry] faculty noted that inadequate knowledge of the topic and the variability in the level of preparation among some students tended to adversely affect the intellectual quality of the seminar experience."
- Spring term variance of student preparation: Faculty members teaching both types of seminars reported challenges teaching in the Spring semester because of variability in delivery of and preparation provided by Fall semester seminars. (See the *Report on Freshman Seminars* and Curriculum Committee minutes of November 9, 2009).

The Burlington Northern FYS Working Group also discussed the weaknesses of the current FYS system noting that, while the current system provides several pedagogical benefits, both student learning and faculty delivery may be enhanced with a number of changes. The primary weaknesses identified include the following:

- Lack of connection across semesters: There is currently no relationship between the Writing and Rhetoric (WR) course of study and the Scholarly and Creative Inquiry (SCI) course of study. This lack of relationship is exacerbated by the lack of sequencing in the current FYS structure. The SCI and WR seminars do not function together to provide a coherent and consistent introduction to academic inquiry nor do they provide a logical development of skills necessary for participation in that inquiry. In particular,
 - the lack of "flow" between terms increases student perception of the FYS as "hoops" to be jumped through, and
 - offering both types of seminars in each term means that faculty have no consistent foundation upon which to build in the Spring term. The result is that faculty may be repeating material and/or simply attempting to cover too much.
- Insufficient information literacy training: Information literacy is a central component of entering an academic community and the working group believes that it should be incorporated into the FYS experience in a consistent way—not only to serve student needs, but also in response to accreditation requirements. Results from the "Research Practices Survey," a national instrument taken by our entering first-year students since 2006, show that most of our students begin college with little experience with research and demonstrate little understanding of basic research terms, tools, and strategies:
 - 92 percent indicate that Google was their primary research tool
 - Only 57 percent had ever used an online library catalog
 - Only 50 percent had ever used a subscription database
 - Just 21 percent could correctly define a peer-reviewed journal

- When shown three citations, 59 percent could correctly identify a book, 23 percent a journal, and 12 percent an essay within a book
- Moreover, once students do arrive on campus, they receive inconsistent levels of information literacy instruction; a Puget Sound academic review of the library during the spring of 2011, as well as the NWCCU Evaluator's Report of April 2009, specifically noted the lack of a systematic integration of information literacy into the curriculum.

Benefits of the Proposed FYS Rubrics

Under the new proposed rubrics, the seminars would be taught as a two-semester sequence with explicit attention to academic tools in each semester, moving from more instructor-guided assignments in the first semester to more independent assignments in the second semester.

The proposed rubrics offer the following benefits:

- Retains small class size: The proposed rubrics maintain both the small class size and the ability of individual instructors to select a topical focus, resulting in a higher level of interest for the faculty members teaching and the students taking the course.
- Retains emphasis on academic abilities: The proposed rubrics retain the emphasis on argument production and analysis and critical reading, writing, and speaking appropriate to an academic context, but the expectations for explicit instruction in these academic abilities is more clearly spread across both semesters.
- Sequencing benefits for students: Sequencing the seminars will assist student learning and development as they enter the academic community. For example, students will learn to analyze texts and other sources provided by the instructor before they are asked to find sources of their own using library resources.
- Culminating research project: Sequencing the seminars offers a culminating research project for all first year students. This project will ensure that all first year students will gain an introduction to basic research skills as preparation for their ongoing academic careers. The sequencing and final project develops an appreciation for the challenges and rewards of academic inquiry.
- Sequencing benefits for faculty: Sequencing the seminars provides faculty a clearer understanding of both what to offer students in each term and what students should have received in each term, Sequencing the course objectives means faculty may devote appropriate time to appropriate material with less concern about student preparation (understanding, of course, that students learn at different rates and come to campus with a variety of preparatory backgrounds).
- Greater faculty accessibility: The guidelines in the proposed rubrics are more broadly accessible to faculty members across the disciplines than those in the current WR and SCI rubrics.
- Addresses information literacy: To address the lack of uniformity in information literacy training being received by Puget Sound students, the guidelines in the proposed rubrics include specific language about the information literacy skills recommended for first-year students by the Collins Library librarians.

Seminar in Scholarly Inquiry I and II Proposed Objectives and Guidelines

October 10, 2011

Learning Objectives

The First-Year Seminars at Puget Sound introduce students into an academic community and engage them in the process of scholarly inquiry.

In these discussion-based seminars, students develop the intellectual habits necessary to write and speak effectively and with integrity. Students increase their ability to develop effective arguments by learning to frame questions around a focused topic, to assess and support claims, and to present their work to an academic audience both orally and in writing. As part of understanding scholarly conversations, students learn to identify the most appropriate sources of information and to evaluate those sources critically. Over the course of two seminars, students—with increasing independence—contribute to these conversations and produce a substantive scholarly project.

In the first seminar in this sequence, students engage challenging texts and ideas through guided inquiry led by the faculty member. Students begin to develop the academic abilities of reading, writing, and oral argument necessary to enter into academic conversations. Assignments in this seminar largely involve sources prescribed by the instructor, rather than sources students search for and identify themselves. In Seminar II, students build on and continue to develop the academic abilities introduced in Seminar I. The seminar culminates in independent student projects that incorporate sources beyond the instructor-prescribed course materials.

Each seminar is focused around a scholarly topic, set of questions, or theme. These seminars may be taken only to fulfill core requirements.

Guidelines:

These seminars teach students how to frame a problem or question, how to develop a thesis, how to defend their thesis effectively, and how to think critically about arguments—their own and those of others.

1. These seminars address important conventions of written argumentation (including audience, organization, and style), as well as approaching writing as a process.
 - a. In Seminar I, assignments focus on material largely provided by the instructor.
 - b. In Seminar II, students produce a substantive scholarly paper or project, appropriate to the skill-level and preparation of first-year students, that involves independent research.
2. Each seminar requires students to present arguments orally through discussion and more structured presentation.
3. Concepts and practices of information literacy including issues of academic integrity are integrated into these seminars.
 - a. In Seminar I, students learn to distinguish between different types of information sources (for example, scholarly vs. popular, primary vs. secondary)

and learn to evaluate sources of information for biases, reliability, and appropriateness.

- b. In Seminar II, students learn to craft research questions, search for and retrieve information, and seek appropriate assistance in the research process.