

March 27th, 1998
Educational Policy Committee
Annual Report

Committee Members: Anthony Passannante (chair)-98, Arthur Champagne-98, James Leloudis-98, Paul Fullagar-99, Judith Meece-99, Jack Sasson-99, Reid Barbour-2000, Boone Turchi-2000, Thomas Warburton-2000, David Lanier (ex-officio)

Members leaving the committee during the year: David Lanier (due to reassignment)

Meeting Dates: May 20th, 1997, September 8th, 1997, October 6th, 1997, November 3rd, 1997, December 1st, 1997, January 21st 1998, February 17th, 1998, February 27th, 1998, March meeting to be scheduled

Report prepared by: Anthony Passannante (chair) with participation and review of the committee

Charge to the Committee: "The committee is concerned with those matters of educational policy and its implementation which have significant impact upon graduate and undergraduate instruction within the Division of Academic Affairs, and as to which the Faculty Council possesses legislative powers by delegation from the General Faculty under Article II of the Faculty Code. The committee's function is advisory to the Faculty Council in respect of such matters." The committee considers issues presented to it by the Faculty Council.

Issue #1 Proposed Change in Course Numbering

Comment: UNC General Administration proposes that the UNC system alter the current course numbering system to clearly differentiate courses intended for undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students. This proposal is intended as a first step towards conversion of the entire university system's financial allocation formula from an FTE based system to a student credit hour based system. After considering the many potential implications of this proposal for this campus, the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) feels that we should resist this proposed change. Many courses do not easily separate into undergraduate, masters and doctoral courses. What is true with respect to a course one semester can be different the next semester. We have expressed this opinion to Richard Andrews and Tim Sanford, and to UNC General Administration.

Issue #2 Web Publication of the Carolina Course Review

Comment: Several faculty members expressed significant concern regarding the availability of the Carolina Course Review (CCR) on the World Wide Web. Boone Turchi has done an extensive review of this issue and his report is available on the Faculty Council Web site. The EPC believes that effective evaluation of the quality of instruction at UNC-CH is critical to the maintenance of a healthy academic environment. However, serious concerns exist about the validity of the information presented in the CCR. The conclusions of the EPC are as follows:

The Carolina Course Review contains serious flaws that make it unsuitable for general dissemination on the World Wide Web. The CCR presents a view of course quality at UNC that

requires considerable interpretation in order not to provide a distorted impression. In addition, given the absence of many courses from the database and the complete absence of some large departments (e.g. English and Physics), the CCR can hardly be said to provide a balanced view of instructional quality. The CCR may be of some limited utility to student consumers; however, we see no advantage for removing the current restriction on wider dissemination.

In addition, the CCR is an inappropriate tool for the evaluation of teaching faculty for promotion, tenure, or salary decisions. The survey was never designed for that purpose and the quality of its data is poor enough to disqualify it as an appropriate tool for official evaluation of teaching at any level. At present coverage is so incomplete and norms are so obsolete that the use of the CCR for administrative purposes is highly problematic. Class size and grading rigor have strong and significant impact on an instructor's ratings. Unless these and other flaws are fully corrected, we recommend that the Faculty Council resolve to disqualify the CCR as an instrument of official teacher evaluation. The EPC proposes 2 Resolutions regarding this issue.

Resolution #1:

Whereas the results of public presentation of the Carolina Course Review contain flaws that can lead to a distorted assessment of course quality at UNC,

and

Whereas the absence of many courses, curricula, and departments from the Carolina Course Review data base compromises its capacity to provide a balanced and comprehensive evaluation of instructional quality,

Be it resolved that public electronic dissemination of the Carolina Course Review be permanently restricted to workstations physically located on the UNC-CH campus and included in the University of North Carolina domain.

Resolution #2:

Whereas the Carolina Course Review was not designed to serve as an instrument in a formal review of faculty members for personnel or salary purposes, and

Whereas course coverage of the Carolina Course Review is incomplete, and

Whereas its norms for rating teacher performance can be both misleading and obsolete, and

Whereas the use of a public document for personnel decisions can raise issues of privacy,

Be it resolved that the Carolina Course Review be disqualified as an instrument of official personnel evaluation at the departmental and administrative levels of UNC-CH.

If so directed by the faculty council, the EPC could begin deliberation on an appropriate campus-wide course evaluation mechanism.

Issue #3 Eligibility Standards For Undergraduates

This issue was presented to the Faculty Council by Dean Bobbi Owen last year, who noted that it is not uncommon for Junior transfer students to do so poorly in their first semester that it can become mathematically difficult for them to graduate. Our current eligibility standards state that a Junior transfer student must pass nine credit hours and earn a 1.0 GPA. The EPC feels that this standard should be raised and that Junior transfer students should be required to pass nine credit hours and earn a 1.50 GPA.

Resolution #3:

Resolved, that Junior transfer students in their first semester be required to pass nine credit hours and achieve a 1.50 GPA to maintain academic eligibility, beginning with the Fall 1999 semester. Dean Owen proposed a more wide-reaching elevation of the current standards necessary to maintain academic eligibility. She proposed raising the standards necessary to maintain eligibility to the level necessary to gain readmission to the University. While this has some intrinsic appeal, the EPC chose to raise the standard in the area where our current low requirement frequently creates jeopardy for students. The EPC is not adverse to considering a more broad-based increase in our eligibility standards, and we invite further input from faculty and students that feel strongly about this issue.

Resolved, that supervisors release staff who request to take a course during their regular work period, up to three hours per week. (Attendance at courses and grades in the course must be monitored by the supervisor.)

Resolved, that staff be given priority for enrollment in University courses.

Resolved, that University courses be offered that would benefit staff, at times appropriate for staff schedules and without jeopardy to the department offering the course.

Issue #4 Gendered Language

In April 1997 Sherryl Kleinman, Jane Brown, and Barbara Harris wrote Provost Richardson and requested that the University stop using the term "freshman" in all official University documents. This issue was then referred to the EPC. After considering this issue in some detail, the EPC has the following recommendation:

The Educational Policy Committee recommends to Provost Richardson that gendered language be eliminated from official University documents.

Issue #5 Final Examination Policy

In its now yearly consideration of Final Examination Policy, the EPC was asked to reconsider the final paragraph of its resolution of 1997 by James Murphy, Dean of the Summer School. The first two paragraphs of the current Final Examination Policy as printed in the Undergraduate Bulletin read:

Final assessments are required in all undergraduate courses. (Any exceptions to this rule are based on the special types of work done in the course, and must have the advance approval of the provost.) A final assessment must be a written examination administered at a designated location at a predetermined time as specified in the general final

examination schedule, except that the head of the instructional unit in which a course is based may give permission for faculty to use for that course an alternative form of final assessment, such as a portfolio of a semester's work or a take-home examination. Faculty employing an alternative form of final assessment must adhere to the general final examination schedule, must allow adequate time for completion, and should bear in mind that the students have other scheduled examinations. Annual reports of alternative forms of final assessments authorized pursuant to this paragraph shall be forwarded to the deans of the instructional units in which the courses are based.

No examination (except for laboratory sections) may be held at a time other than that specified in the general schedule except with the advance approval of the provost. No examination time can be changed after it has been announced. No special preparation quizzes may be given during the last five days of classes before the beginning of the final examination period. No examination may be held later than 7:00 PM. Final examinations for a full course should ordinarily cover two hours but should not exceed a period of three hours. Only examinations requiring an exceptional portion of practical work should be longer than three hours.

At the time of last year's report the major objections to the above policy were that it did not differentiate between Fall/Spring and Summer sessions, and that the time period requirements are somewhat ambiguous. We propose replacing the current two paragraphs with the following three paragraphs:

Undergraduate courses taught on campus must include a final assessment (i.e. final examination) unless an exception is granted by the Provost. A traditional final examination is written, is administered at a predetermined time as specified in the final examination schedule, and takes place at a designated location. Exceptions to the scheduled time and location of a traditional examination can be granted only by the Provost.

Department chairs (i.e. heads of instructional units) must give permission for faculty to use non-traditional examinations, such as a portfolio of a semester's work or a take-home examination. The chair should submit to the appropriate Dean an annual summary of the exceptions that were granted. For multi-disciplinary and co-taught courses, permission to give a non-traditional examination must be granted solely by the chair of the instructional unit in which the course is based.

No special preparation quizzes may be given during the last five days of classes (last 2 days of classes for Summer School) before the beginning of the final examination period. No examination (except for laboratory sections) may be held at a time other than that specified in the general schedule except with the advance approval of the provost. No examination may start later than 7:00 PM. Final examinations for a full course should ordinarily cover a minimum of two hours and should not exceed a period of three hours. Only examinations requiring an exceptional portion of practical work should be longer than three hours.

Issue #6 Oral Communication Skills Program

The committee is currently considering the proposed Oral Communication Skills Program and will report to the Faculty Council on this issue in April.