

February 23, 2001
Educational Policy Committee
Annual Report

Committee Members: Douglas J. Crawford-Brown (Chair), 2001; Melissa M. Bullard, 2003; Edward Carlstein, 2002; Jean S. DeSaix, 2001; Shannon Ghadiri, 2001; Randall Hendrick, 2002; George W. Houston, 2003; David C. Lanier (ex officio); Catherine A. Lutz, 2001; Bobbi Owen, 2003; Heidi Schultz, 2002

Meeting Dates: February 7; March 7; April 4

Report prepared by: Douglas Crawford-Brown (chair) from materials prepared by Committee members.

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 Code. The committee's function is advisory to the Faculty Council in respect of such matters." During this past year, the Educational Policy Committee (the EPC) considered several issues remaining from the previous year, as well as several new issues. Each of these is discussed below.

Issue #1: Grading Policies

This issue remained from the previous year. It concerns the practice of grading at UNC-CH, whether this practice currently conforms to stated guidelines, and whether grades have been rising inappropriately over the past several decades. The EPC prepared a report on this issue last year and sent it to the Faculty Council (to view the report, see www.unc.edu/~dcrawfor/educpolicy.htm). In response, the Faculty Council appointed a Grading Standards Committee to further review the issue. The EPC is represented on the Grading Standards Committee by Douglas Crawford-Brown, and no further action was taken by the EPC on this issue.

Recommendation: Since the Grading Standards Committee report clearly will have implications for aspects of campus life falling under the charge to the EPC, we expect to review their report and offer comments next academic year. We do hope that every faculty member will be able to obtain the report, perhaps through posting on the web

Issue #2: Length of the Academic Year

This issue remained from the previous year. It concerns the length of the academic year at UNC-CH in relation to the length at peer campuses. The EPC prepared a report on this issue last year and sent it to the Faculty Council (to view the report, see www.unc.edu/~dcrawfor/educpolicy.htm). It included a recommendation that the length of the academic year be shortened by the General Administration to remove problems associated with lack of coordination with peer institutions, adverse effects on summer research, etc. This

recommendation was forwarded by the Chancellor's Office to the GA, with inclusion of a memo by Boone Turchi (the then-chair of the EPC).

A response was received from Gretchen Bataille, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, on May 26, 2000. In her memo, she pointed out that there is large variation in academic length across peer institutions (which she takes to be public universities) and, therefore, no "standard practice" to which the UNC-CH campus could point. She indicated that her office remains committed to helping on this issue. At the same time, it seems clear that this help is tempered by a need for UNC-CH to conform to requirements placed on the UNC system through the GA, and the further need to coordinate changes across more than a single campus if these are desired by those campuses (i.e. perhaps across the entire system, or at least across the research universities).

The EPC considered this issue further and has determined that it remains sufficiently troubling to warrant additional action by the Faculty and Administration. An additional recommendation was prepared as follows:

The Issue. In July of 1996, C.D. Spangler, Jr., then President of the University of North Carolina, recommended to the Board of Governors that the University adopt a calendar that would provide a "minimum of 75 class days per semester, excluding final examinations, Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays." This represented an increase of five class days per semester over the calendar typically in use prior to the change in policy (which varied between 140 and 144 days; see Table 1). President Spangler's recommendation was adopted by the Board of Governors at their July 12, 1996, meeting and became effective in AY 1997-1998. We have now had five years of experience with the lengthened calendar. The Educational Policy Committee, along with other groups on campus, is interested in the calendar because it has an impact upon the educational experience of our students in a number of ways. Several groups have pointed out tensions created by the policy. The Committee reviewed the reports of these groups and, without repeating them in detail, would note the following.

Effects of the Policy

- The need to return in mid-August has decreased the number of options in internships, summer work, and summer educational experiences open to our undergraduates. We do not believe that students have been completely excluded from such experiences, but it is clear that they have fewer options. Some students have missed days of instruction at the beginning of the fall semester while they complete internships, rotations, or jobs.
- The 150-day calendar, when combined with the Summer School schedule, leaves very short periods of time between the end of Summer School and the opening of the school year, and also between the end of fall semester examinations and the opening of the spring semester. This has a number of undesirable consequences. The Registrar's office cannot process grades in the time between fall and spring semesters rapidly enough to inform students who are academically ineligible before they begin classes in the spring. The period for final examinations must be reduced to six exam days, meaning that students have less time to read, reflect, and learn. There is less time for orientation and training sessions before semesters begin, and some such programs have been shortened. Housekeeping finds it difficult to carry out needed maintenance.

- The summer is the best and only concentrated time for our faculty to revise their courses and learn new teaching techniques, including those pertaining to instructional technology. The 150-day policy cuts into this time and may have an adverse effect upon the quality of undergraduate instruction.
- The summer is also the best time for students and faculty to carry out research. Ultimately, the reputation of the University, and the quality of the students' educational experience, rests upon the quality (and quantity) of its students' and faculty's research, and it is quite clear that, over time, both will suffer as a result of the extended academic year.
- Our calendar does not correspond to that of Duke, thus discouraging inter-institutional collaboration and cross-registrations.

Recommendation: The Committee recommends:

1. That the Faculty, through its elected officers and through the Faculty Council, continue to urge the Administration of the University to return to the 140 to 144 day period that was typical prior to the policy change. Such a calendar is currently in use at most of our peer institutions across the country; none, so far as we know, has a 150-day calendar or longer. Some have calendars of fewer than 140 days. The data on this issue are displayed in the original EPC report (to view the report, see www.unc.edu/~dcrawfor/educpolicy.htm).
2. That the officers of the Faculty Council put this matter before the University-wide Faculty Assembly, and lead an effort by the Assembly to change the 150-day policy. It is our belief that other institutions within the University system will share our concerns about the adverse effect of the policy upon the educational experience of our students.

As can be seen in the above recommendations, the EPC considers this issue of sufficient importance to the academic mission of UNC-CH to warrant further action by the Faculty Council. We considered first the possibility that UNC-CH could live within the letter of the rule (150 days of instruction), while finding a creative way to work within this limit and still meet all of our other goals. This proved infeasible since the campus already makes maximum use of the flexibility allowed. The sole remedy, then, is to lower the requirement from 150 days back to the value of 140 to 144 days. While the letter from Gretchen Bataille is a fair statement of her position and that of the General Administration, it does not state categorically that changes are impossible, and in fact offers hope that her office can assist in such changes if there is sufficient support within the UNC system and a compelling argument can be made that the 150-day calendar is detrimental to the educational mission.

Issue #3: Double Minors

This issue remained from the previous year. It concerns the awarding of a double minor for those undergraduates completing the requirements for both minors. The issue was reviewed by the Administrative Board of the College in March and April of 2000 and concluded that no compelling reason had been provided to approve such a change (i.e. a change to awarding both minors). They noted that it would complicate advising, would not necessarily assist the student in gaining employment or entry into graduate school, and that a better option would be for interested students to obtain a double major (allowing more in-depth study of disciplines). The Board mentioned the need for further review, but essentially failed to approve the proposal; this

is the current status with respect to the Board. The EPC also noted the possibility that time to graduation could be increased.

At the same time, there will be cases of students who have completed all of the requirements for a second minor. When this happens, it may be unfair to restrict awarding of the second minor. It also was noted that, in some cases, it might be preferable for a student to focus studies in a second minor rather than spreading themselves across a number of electives. A counter argument is that such elective courses are necessary for broadening the perspective of a student, and is an essential part of a liberal arts education.

Recommendation: In the end, the EPC did not find a compelling reason to push for the awarding of a double minor. The established procedure is that such matters are considered first by the Administrative Board and their recommendations sent to the Faculty Council (and presumably the EPC) for review and comment. The Administrative Board failed to approve the proposal and we see no reason to overrule that denial. The EPC stands ready, however, to review the issue in more detail if the Administrative Board issues a final policy statement. In any event, we will be reviewing the issue next year in light of any changes in the curriculum.

Issue #4: Student Stipends and Wages

This issue concerns the salary of teaching assistants at UNC-CH. It stems from an on-going concern by teaching assistants that salaries are too low to support them without finding outside employment or taking on large loans. The issue was highlighted by a report sent to the EPC by the Association of Graduate English Students (to view the report, see www.unc.edu/~dcrawfor/educpolicy.htm). In that report, they detail the difficulties faced by TAs receiving \$4,100 per section (before taxes), and with a limit of three sections per academic year. They detail the costs of living in Chapel Hill, and note a difference between costs and wages of several thousand dollars per year. They conclude by recommending the stipend be raised to \$5,000 per section.

The EPC considered this report in conjunction with a larger discussion of living wages for TAs on campus. We note that low wages are common in many departments, and that there also is great variation in wages (particularly between TAs and RAs). We also note that TAs who are forced through circumstances to take an additional outside job to meet living expenses not only suffer in completing their own thesis research, but may have less time and energy to devote to their tasks of teaching undergraduates. When combined with the very modest assistance provided to graduate students in the form of tuition remissions, it seems clear that the University must reconsider the package of financial awards we provide to TAs, particularly in departments (such as English) where these TAs carry a large burden of the teaching responsibilities. Fortunately, such revisions already have been undertaken by the College, and should bring the stipends in line with student needs within 2 years. Specifically, the College has approved increases to \$4400 this coming year, followed by a further increase to \$5000 in 2002-2003.

Recommendation: The revisions to stipends currently approved by the College are an important first step. It is recommended that periodic review of the stipends and their relationship to living costs, competitive recruitment, etc, be carried out in future years. The EPC might serve in some capacity in that review (e.g. considering the impact of wages on teaching quality and progress

towards degree), but the issue also involves aspects of fairness, budgets, etc, that go beyond the charge to the EPC.

Issue #5: Decision Processes on Campus

This issue remained from the previous year. It concerns the ways in which decisions that affect educational practice are made on campus, and the relative power of faculty to control these changes. The EPC raised the issue last year, and began a report. The final report became available this year (to view the report, see www.unc.edu/~dcrawfor/educpolicy.htm). It reviews three historical instances of significant change: the demise of the Department of RTVMP, the creation of the Carolina Computing Initiative (including the requirement of laptops for entering first-year students), and the creation of the Carolina Environmental Program.

The EPC feels this is a significant issue given what appear to be currents in educational reform on campus and throughout the nation. These currents include development of more interdisciplinary degree programs, greater reliance on the internet (e.g. web-based courses), greater use of technologies in the classroom, increased focus on student research, an increased role of study abroad and other experiential forms of learning, etc. While many of these reforms may ultimately be beneficial to education, they are in many cases introduced into the University community from the outside and represent a changing relationship between the University and communities such as the business world and funding sources. It is important that faculty review these changes periodically and determine if they meet our vision of the best educational process.

The previous EPC report detailed the three historical instances noted above and concluded that, in all three cases, there was a mixture of input from Administration and Faculty. This mixture seems appropriate in these past instances, although it also is clear to the EPC that it has been evolving. The EPC received comments from past Chairs of the Faculty indicating that the role of the Faculty had not been significantly eroded in the recent past, and may even have improved.

Still, the landscape has been changing rapidly over the past several years. The College, for example, is stressing interdisciplinary study, inter-departmental hires, study abroad, student research, student internships, etc. While the past has been encouraging, it also is clear that there are numerous decisions being made at present that will have a direct impact on educational practice, and that these decisions have not been reviewed by the EPC to date. It is time for a review by the Faculty of all of these changes, and so the following recommendation is made:

Recommendation: The EPC, acting on behalf of the Faculty Council, should conduct next year a full review of the changes in educational practice at the University, including the mode of teaching, policies on majors and minors, interactions of the University with outside organizations, etc. The EPC should prepare a report on these changes and how they affect the quality of education on campus. The report should propose any necessary revisions in decision processes to ensure that faculty have primary control over the educational process, and should propose any necessary revisions in University policies to ensure these policies meet Faculty standards of educational practice.

Issue #6: Curricular Revisions

The University is conducting a review of the existing General College curriculum, and has appointed a committee to perform the review and recommend changes if needed. That committee has issued a "Statement of the Goals of Undergraduate Environmental Education at UNC-CH" which will serve as the foundation upon which they will "proceed to design a structure, and a specific set of requirements". This issue is of direct importance to the EPC, and so a member of the EPC (Bobbi Owens) is serving as liaison to the review committee. The Curriculum Committee is rather new, and so there is nothing to report on from the EPC at present. Still, the EPC will discuss the issue in the remaining meetings of this academic year.

Recommendation: The EPC is pleased that we have direct representation on the Curriculum Committee, and believe that our views are being reflected through that representation. The result should be a Curriculum Committee report that will go to the Faculty Council with joint approval of our two committees. This will, of course, require that the EPC review, in the next academic year, the recommendations of the Curriculum Committee, and transmit that review back to the Curriculum Committee through our representative. This review should have two parts: one focused on the specific recommendations for reform and their conformance with educational policy, and one focused on the process of reform. The latter issue should be part of the report on decision processes mentioned in Issue # 5 above. The process of defining the issue, and the EPC position on it, will begin in the 2000-2001 academic year.

Table 1. Summary of Instructional Days

Year	Instructional Days	Fall Holidays	Exam Days	Instructional Days	Spring Holidays	Exam Days
68-69	88	17	9	86	4	9
69-70	74	13	9	71	3	9
70-71	74	12	9	70	5	9
71-72	70	2	9	72	5	9
72-73	70	2	9	72	5	9
73-74	70	2	9	72	5	9
74-75	69	3	9	71	6	9
75-76	69	3	9	71	6	9
76-77	71	3	9	71	6	9
77-78	71	3	9	71	6	9
78-79	72	5	9	71	6	9
79-80	70	5	9	71	6	9
80-81	70	5	9	71	6	9
81-82	70	5	9	71	6	9
82-83	70	5	9	71	6	9
83-84	70	5	8	71	6	9
84-85	70	5	9	71	6	9
85-86	70	5	10	71	6	9
86-87	70	5	10	71	6	9
87-88	67	5	8	65	7	8
88-89	67	5	8	67	7	8
89-90	67	5	8	67	7	8
90-91	69	5	7	69	7	7

91-92	72	5	7	71	7	7
92-93	72	5	7	71	7	7
93-94	71	6	7	71	7	7
94-95	71	5	7	71	7	7
95-96	71	5	7	71	7	7
96-97	71	5	7	70	7	7
97-98	75	5	6	75	7	6
98-99	75	5	6	75	7	6
99-00	75	5	6	75	7	6
00-01	75	5	6	75	7	6
01-02	75	5	6	75	7	7
02-03	75	5	7	75	7	7