

Summary of Activities of the Focus on Teaching Committee, 2002-2003
By David K. Jones, Chair, Focus on Teaching Committee

The members of the committee were:

David Jones (Chair), representative of the social sciences division
Ben Budde, representative of the natural sciences and mathematics division
Chapin Deel, student member
Terre Folger, representative of the education department
Angela Gerling, representative of the library, *ex-officio*
Dan O'Hearn, student member
Heather Rosson, student member
Bob Seelinger, Dean of Faculty, *ex-officio*
Rebecca Shapiro, representative of the humanities division
Amanda Signaigo, student member
Lyssa Trader, student member
Wayne Zade, Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence, *ex-officio*

Committee Activities during the 2002-2003 Academic Year

The committee met 19 times during the academic year, mostly on a weekly basis, to discuss issues relating to teaching on campus. Each meeting lasted approximately one hour. Student membership changed significantly during the year. Some preparation, including reading materials sent by the chair, was necessary for each meeting, though preparation time was probably not extensive. The committee discussed a number of topics related to teaching during the year, including but not limited to:

1. Advising issues related to the Center for Teaching Excellence.
2. Advising issues related to the faculty mentoring program.
3. Discussing and approving CTE workshops and faculty discussions about teaching issues.
4. Advising the Center for Leadership and Service about issues related to the academic component of the mission of the CLS.
5. Discussing faculty development issues, including the Wakonse program.
6. Discussing a number of teaching issues, including the Greater Expectations report from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), service learning courses, international programs, issues of teaching with technology, diversity issues, the results of the NSSE Faculty Survey, and issues regarding the writing across the curriculum program.

At the recommendation of the AAC&U Project team, and working with Wayne Zade, the Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence, the committee developed a series of FOT and CTE-sponsored workshops and discussions related to the themes of active learning discussed in the AAC&U Greater Expectations Report issued in the fall semester. Thus, the workshops and discussions planned for the year were guided by this theme. The committee spent several meetings discussing the report and its implications for teaching at Westminster, as well as the results of the NSSE for Faculty Survey (during two meetings) that had been distributed to faculty in the fall semester. The committee helped to develop a workshop for faculty on the results of that survey that was led by David Jones. Additionally, working with Wayne, the committee monitored the progress of the faculty mentoring program and made some recommendations for changing the physical structure of the second floor of the house in which both the CTE and the CLS are housed.

In its capacity as the advisory board for academic issues related to the academic component of the mission of the CLS, the committee met twice with CLS director Dr. David Humphrey to discuss and to offer advice regarding the CLS proposal for a leadership certification proposal. The committee then formally recommended acceptance of this program to the Curriculum Committee. The committee also helped to set the agenda for the CLS-sponsored visit of Cheryl Keen in the spring semester.

At its September 27 meeting, the committee met with both Judy Schaneman and with Sam Goodfellow to talk about international service learning courses and an International Institute for undergraduates at Westminster respectively. The committee offered feedback on the proposals and made suggestions to Wayne Zade about how the CTE could aid both projects.

At its November 8 meeting, the committee met with Teresa Fort to discuss a number of issues related to teaching and learning with technology, including the difficulty in using some equipment, the difficulties encountered in developing course web pages and the lack of course management systems used by so many colleges, and the difficulties encountered in training faculty to use technology appropriately.

At its November 13 meeting, the committee met with Charlotte McCloskey to talk about diversity issues on campus and made recommendations for the agenda for Charlotte's November 22 discussion with the faculty about diversity issues and suggestions for improving minority recruitment, retention, and generally creating a more welcoming climate on campus for minority students.

The committee sponsored, along with some other campus groups, the "teach-ins" about issues related to the war with Iraq.

The committee spent much of the last part of the spring semester discussing issues related to the Writing Across the Curriculum program and met with Bob Cowles, the Director of the Westminster Seminar Program; with Chuck Lewis, the chair of the English Department; and with Cathryn Pridal, the Interim Associate Dean of Faculty, to discuss the issues. The committee also developed a survey on writing for the faculty, which it distributed and analyzed to gain more insight into how faculty teach writing on campus. At the direction of the Executive Committee, the committee will continue its discussion of this program in the fall semester and make some specific proposals to the Curriculum Committee by October 1, 2003. The committee and the CTE will also need to develop a series of workshops and discussions about writing in the 2003-2004 academic year.

Finally, at its April 15 meeting, the committee met with President Lamkin to discuss his perceptions about the development of the mentoring program and the CTE, workshops that the committee and the CTE have sponsored, and general issues related to teaching and learning on campus. Subsequent committee discussion of President Lamkin's meeting with the committee has led to the committee's decision to develop a series of workshops on the theme of "Teaching in the Tiers" during the 2003-2004 academic year. These workshops will allow faculty to better work together to talk about how the college mission statement and the college learning goals are being incorporated into courses across the curriculum.

Still to Do

The committee will continue to work with Wayne Zade, the Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence and the Coordinator of the Mentoring Program, on a number of issues identified last year. These include:

1. Developing faculty workshops on a number of teaching issues.
2. Continuing the “Focus on Teaching” discussion series.
3. Developing grant proposals for funding faculty development projects.
4. Further developing resource materials for faculty.
5. Further develop web pages for faculty resource materials.
6. Finding ways to bring more outside speakers to campus to speak on teaching issues.

The two big projects for the 2003-2004 academic year will be:

1. Presenting proposals regarding the Writing Across the Curriculum program to the Curriculum Committee by October 1 and developing discussions and workshops about the teaching of writing.
2. Developing workshops, programs, and discussions regarding the theme of “Teaching in the Tiers.”

Respectfully submitted,

David Jones, Chair