

University of Puget Sound
Faculty Meeting Minutes
September 7, 2005

1. President Thomas called the meeting to order and welcomed us to the first faculty meeting of the year, at 4:06 p.m. in McIntyre 103. Sixty voting members of the faculty were present by 4:25 p.m.

2. John Finney was elected faculty secretary for 2005-2006. Suzanne Barnett asked if the minutes would record that his election was greeted by a round of applause. Finney responded he didn't know.

3. The minutes of the April 12, 2005 faculty meeting were approved as distributed.

4. In response to President Thomas's call for announcements Eric Orlin invited faculty to attend the November 8, 2005 Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar Lecture by Judith Reppy on "Bioterrorism in a Historical Perspective." The lecture will be given in Wyatt 101.

5. President Thomas thanked the faculty for thoughtful input at the fall faculty conversation. He also thanked Dean Kris Bartanen for coordinating follow-up conversations with faculty on strategic goals, and he thanked faculty serving on the various strategic issues task forces that have been formed.

President Thomas reported that the fall student body so far includes 671 freshmen, the same number as last year, and 91 new undergraduate transfer students, compared with 90 last year. He said this was a challenging admission year and he thanked George Mills and his staff for their good work and for the diversity of students that were recruited. President Thomas added that we have 207 FTE graduate candidates enrolled, compared with 206 last year, and that the total number of students this year was 2791, compared with 2792 last year. He said we could look forward to an exciting year, with the completion of Harned Hall next summer.

6. Dean Bartanen announced that the follow-up faculty conversations to discuss strategic goals would be held Friday September 9 at 12:00 noon, Wednesday September 14 at 1:00, Thursday September 15 at 8:00 and Friday September 16 at 4:00. She also announced that a campus forum and discussion conversation about Hurricane Katrina would be held this Friday September 9 at 12:00 noon in Trimble Forum.

In connection with Hurricane Katrina, President Thomas reported that we have two students enrolled this fall who were formerly enrolled at New Orleans colleges closed by the storm and ensuing flooding. He thanked faculty for their cooperation in helping these students to get registered and to settle in. [The number of Hurricane Katrina evacuee students enrolled at Puget Sound Fall 2005 ultimately increased to five. --JMF].

President Thomas announced that invitations to the first of several cocktail party gatherings at the President's home have been sent to the first 30 faculty in alphabetical order. He said all faculty would be invited to one or another of these parties throughout the year.

President Thomas introduced Dave Beers, our new Vice President for University Relations, who stood and was applauded and expressed his pleasure at being at Puget Sound. He said he very much appreciated the interest among faculty in the various outreach programs his office conducts. He said he had noticed this was not the case everywhere.

7. Faculty Senate Chair Barry Anton could not attend today's meeting, and there was no Faculty Senate Chair's report.

8. We turned to a discussion of a proposal to change the academic calendar. President Thomas turned to Richard Anderson-Connolly who reported that the proposal was sent last year to the Faculty Senate by the Curriculum Committee. The Senate referred the proposal to the full faculty for discussion. Anderson-Connolly briefly reviewed the proposal and background considerations that were contained in a two-page handout distributed at the meeting. A copy of the proposal also accompanied the agenda for the meeting and are attached to these minutes.

Alva Butcher asked how final exams would be scheduled in only four days instead of five. Finney responded that this would require evening exams. Orlin asked if there would be a provision easing the burden on students with four exams scheduled in one day. Finney responded there was such a provision formerly when we scheduled four exam periods per day allowing such students to request that one of the four exams be re-scheduled for another day.

Karim Ochosi said he was concerned about shortening the reading period and that, if anything, he would favor lengthening the reading period from the current four days. Geoff Proehl said he also was concerned about shortening the reading period, noting that students "are dead on their feet" by the last day of class and that they recover and prepare for finals during reading period. Carolyn Weisz suggested that faculty consider having term papers that are required in lieu of a final exam be due the last day of class rather than during final exam week, as a means of easing the burden on students during reading period.

Barnett asked what position students had expressed about the proposal during last year's Faculty Senate discussions. ASUPS President Alex Israel said he wasn't in on those discussions, but that he was prepared to present the student position now. He said that the 2005-2006 executive branch of ASUPS had decided to take a neutral stance on the proposal. Beyond that he reported that students liked the notion of a Wednesday travel day before Thanksgiving. Concerns he had heard students express about the proposal included: (1) worry that students might decide to take Monday and Tuesday of that week off as well, in a kind of "vacation creep;" (2) concern about the proposed shortening of reading period, as students use the reading period for study and feel it is vital; (3) worry among science students that faculty may decide to schedule labs the last week of class if it became a full week of class (currently science labs are not scheduled the last week of class); and (4) worry over the possibility of having four final exams in one day.

Juli McGruder said she wanted to assure students that the faculty can hold the line on vacation creep at Thanksgiving.

Doug Cannon, who has served as the faculty representative to the Student Senate, reported that the reading period issue was very hot in those meetings and that students consider reading period to be an important time for preparing for finals.

Barnett suggested that we were confronted with “competing goods,” between a reading period in service of a final exam week of exams or final papers on the one hand, and balancing out the number of days in the week during the semester on the other. Which is better, she asked, a longer reading period or balancing the days?

McGruder asked if the proposal worked for science faculty, who need “a rational schedule” to deliver labs. John Hanson responded that they’ve worked it out over the years and that the current calendar “doesn’t seem like something that’s broken that needs to be fixed.” Alyce DeMarais added that it was important not to have too many partial weeks during the semester because of the impact on labs. Tom Rowland reassured students that science faculty were not interested in adding a lab to the final week of classes. He said that would put pressure on faculty as well as on students.

Suzanne Holland said Chris Ives had assembled data on calendars at other institutions, and that the question that arose from the data was, “Why are we teaching so many days compared to other institutions?”

Mirelle Cohen said that faculty in her department (comparative sociology) were affected by the fact that the fall and spring semesters contain different numbers of teaching days (69 in fall; 72 in spring). She said she teaches a greater amount of material in the spring than in the fall and that equalizing the number of days would be a good thing.

Dean Bartanen pointed out that the proposal is not for the elimination of reading period, but for the shortening of it from four days to three. She asked if faculty thought there was a significant difference between having three or four days. Ochosi said he would like to have a five day reading period. Bill Breitenbach argued that the issue was not just the compression of reading period, but also the compression of final exam week from five days to four. He said that together, two days would be lost from reading period and final exam week, meaning that two days would be removed from the preparation for and the taking of final exams. Dean Bartanen added that we should also discuss preference for a four-day final exam week versus five days. Holland said one faculty told her he or she was in favor of a full week of reading period.

Terry Cooney said that most faculty would agree that it would be nice not to have class the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, as the average student lives over 500 miles from Tacoma and that we’re only pretending to have class that day. But he argued that the other issues in the proposal are issues of preference rather than substantive academic argument. For example, we should consider lengthening fall semester as well as shortening spring semester. He said he was not sure what the rationale is for the changes in the proposal beyond the

Thanksgiving issue. Anderson-Connolly responded that the Curriculum Committee started with the Thanksgiving issue and “branched out from there about how to do it” without simply having a 68-day fall semester and a 72 day spring semester. Dean Bartanen suggested that we could address the Wednesday-before-Thanksgiving issue without addressing all the others at the same time if we wanted to that. Anderson-Connolly said that the Curriculum Committee could not figure it out how to do this.

Orlin pointed out that under the proposal spring term would be one week shorter, which presents an opportunity. He said that currently final exams end on Friday and commencement is on Sunday. If finals end a week earlier, but commencement stays the same, then there would be time for events to be scheduled before seniors’ parents show up. Faculty might have time to turn in seniors’ grades so students would actually know if they’re really graduating. He said the proposal says nothing about the timing of commencement, and that we should take advantage of the opportunity ending finals a week earlier would present.

McGruder asked for a “fleshing out” of the report of fall term graduate school enrollment numbers and President Thomas and Finney fleshed them out.

There being no further business we adjourned at 4:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John M. Finney
Secretary of the Faculty

Proposal: The guidelines for the academic calendar shall be changed as following:

Guidelines for Setting Academic Calendar

Length of Semesters

The current semester configuration shall be two sixty-nine day semesters, with an additional three-day reading period (Saturday through Monday) and a four-day period (Tuesday through Friday) for final examinations.

Summer Session shall include five terms: Terms I and II (6 weeks each), Term A (8 weeks), Terms B and C (four weeks each).

Beginning and Ending of Semesters

Fall

The **Fall Semester** will end no later than December 20, requiring a semester beginning date which will accommodate the prescribed length of the term.

The **Fall Semester** will begin on a Monday, unless that Monday is Labor Day, in which case the semester will begin the following day.

Spring

The **Spring Semester** will begin on the Tuesday following the birthday observance for Martin Luther King Jr.

The **Spring Semester** will end on a date which will accommodate the prescribed length of the term.

Summer

Term I shall begin on the Monday following the last day of finals in Spring semester for a duration of six weeks.

Term II shall begin on the Monday following the end of Term I and shall end six weeks later on a Friday.

Term A shall begin on the Monday five weeks after the start of Term I and shall end eight weeks later on a Friday.

Term B shall begin on the same Monday as Term A and end four weeks later on a Friday.

Term C shall begin on the Monday after the end of Term B and shall end four weeks later on a Friday.

Semester Breaks

A two-day Fall Semester break will be set on the Monday and Tuesday of the eighth week of classes.

A one-week Spring Semester break will be set after the eighth week of classes (mid-term).

Holidays

The following will be observed as academic holidays:

1. Labor Day
2. The Wednesday through Friday of Thanksgiving week.
2. Martin Luther King Jr. birthday holiday
3. Memorial Day (official observance)
4. Independence Day or the weekday of the staff bonus day, (July 3 or 5) whichever is applicable

Background Regarding Proposal to Change the Academic Calendar

The proposed changes to the calendar are the result of deliberations of the 2004-05 Curriculum Committee. In these meetings many desiderata regarding the academic calendar were expressed:

- Equalization of the number of teaching days in the fall and spring semesters. (The fall currently has 69, the spring 72.)
- Equalization of the number of teaching days (Mondays, Tuesdays, etc.) within each semester (ideally 14 of each).
- Holding no classes on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.
- Retaining the currently celebrated holidays, Labor Day and the observed birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Offering “full” weeks, i.e., holding classes on Monday-Friday of each week. (The most important rationale for this objective involves the scheduling problem created for courses with labs that meet once per week when there is one day off during a week.)
- Keeping the current length of winter break. (Students seemed generally opposed to lengthening, faculty to shortening.)
- Retaining the reading period.

While we were not able to achieve all these objectives, in the spirit of preventing the perfect from being the enemy of the good the CC proposes a calendar that we feel is superior to our current one.

The elements of the proposed calendar in comparison to our current:

Fall Semester:

- The semester will begin as under the current system, maintaining the current rule to end before December 20. No classes will be held on Labor Day. In some years the semester will begin on the Tuesday after Labor Day; on others, classes will begin on a Monday and the Monday of the second week will be the holiday.
- No classes will be held the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. It will be designated as “Thanksgiving Travel Day” in the hopes of preventing “vacation creep.” Faculty will be encouraged to treat the Monday and Tuesday of that week as normal class days, reminding students that Wednesday is set aside as the day for traveling.
- The Fall Break will occur at the same time as currently (week 8) but will be expanded to include the Tuesday of that week.
- Classes will end on the Friday of week 15, instead of the Wednesday as currently.
- Vital Statistics: 69 teaching days; 13 Mondays, 14 Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays; 3 partial weeks and 12 full weeks.

Spring Semester:

- Classes will begin as under the current system, i.e., the day after MLK Jr. Day.
- Classes will end on the Friday of the 14th week of classes (15th week counting spring break), i.e., the Friday preceding what is currently the last (partial) week of classes. Thus the spring semester will end one week earlier than currently and summer vacation will be one week longer.
- Vital Statistics: 69 teaching days; 13 Mondays, 14 Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays; 1 partial week (week 1), 13 full weeks, and 1 week off (spring break).

Reading Period and Finals:

- The reading period will be the Saturday through Monday immediately following the last day of classes.
- Finals exams will be held on Tuesday through Friday. The number of exam periods per day will increase to four from the current three.

