

**Curriculum Committee Minutes  
October 14, 1997**

**Present:** Barnett, Bruce, Fikes, Goleeke, Hooper, Kline (Chair), Mehlhaff, Proehl, Ralls, Bartanen, Washburn, Tomhave (for Morgan)  
**Absent:** R. Fields, Lupher  
**Guest:** Finney

At 4:06 p.m. Kline opened the meeting by welcoming us all, including invited guest John Finney, Associate Academic Dean.

*Minutes.* **Mehlhaff M/S/P approval of the minutes for the meeting of 7 October 1997.**

*Subcommittees.* Kline announced receipt of a new proposal for an affiliated study-abroad program and asked the Foreign Languages and Literature review subcommittee to consider it; Kline will join the subcommittee in this effort.

*Academic calendar.* Washburn reported that the School of Education has decided at this time not to recommend changes in the "Guidelines for Setting Academic Calendars." **Mehlhaff M/S/P to remove from the table the motion to approve the guidelines.**

**ACTION: Mehlhaff M/S/P approval of the "Guidelines for Setting Academic Calendars," the 1998-1999 full academic calendar, and the basic academic calendar for 2001-2002.**

*Core Curriculum assessment.* Finney distributed a document outlining the surveys of students conducted during the past two decades (entering freshman every fall since 1978; juniors in 1982, 1983, 1987, 1991, and as part of the general survey in 1995; graduating seniors, annual; and alums five years out, 11 surveys 1987 through 1997). Finney stressed that the University already has a great deal of material and that assessment is something for which we are ready in many ways. He pointed out that the questionnaires for the surveys of graduating seniors are those in use in other institutions comparable to Puget Sound. Finney added that "assessment is a process, not an act"; to the broadly used survey instruments we can add our own questions as we determine more specifically what we want to know.

Fikes asked if the surveys currently include questions about the core, and Finney responded in the affirmative with reference to the survey of alums five years out and the surveys of seniors; these include questions about writing effectively and other "outcomes" connected with general education.

Turning to his document's second page, entitled "What it means for core curriculum assessment to be faculty driven," Finney stated that the key is determining what one needs to know: If I knew this, I could know whether, for example, the Fine Arts core is doing what it should and, knowing this, either have the courage to change it [the Fine Arts core] or the ability to decide not to change it. Of the effort to assess the core, Finney's office could provide perhaps 10%; the other 90% is the faculty's effort. Finney suggested that as we proceed assessment will become a normal, routine effort.

Fikes observed that had we started to assess the core five years ago we could have used the data in last year's debate about the core. Goleeke suggested that we derive assessment questions from the guidelines for each core area. Finney reminded that the challenge is to come up with questions the answers to which provide more than interesting data; rather, the effort must be to obtain data that will really show what the core is performing. To get such a question, one might ask, for example, "If I could know anything I wanted to know about the written communication core, what would it be?" Perhaps such a question would be one to determine whether students write better as a result of the Communication I core.

Barnett asked if we want to know if students write better or if students *perceive* they write better. Mehlhaff asked how we are to determine whether what we do makes a difference or whether just moving through a college over four years makes the difference. Kline reminded that our job as a committee is to determine the “core-ness” of each course and how it delivers on the four goals of the core curriculum. Bartanen offered the thought that in considering what we really want to know we could seek some information at the course level (for example, in the International Studies core) and some information that transcends courses (for example, whether a student’s awareness of international issues and life has increased).

WORK GROUPS. For the next ten minutes or so the committee met in three groups, one to consider the Fine Arts core, one to consider the Communication I core, and one to consider the Science in Context core. Kline brought the committee back together and asked for reports. The FA group considered the difference between things a student should do in a course and things a student should be able to do at the end of a course (Proehl). The CI group focused on whether students see the applicability of the core course to other work in a range of academic subjects; perhaps in the term after a CI core course a student could comment on 3-5 “elements” of the CI course put to use in the subsequent term (Bartanen). The SCXT group worried about the validity of samples with such a wide range of different courses meeting the core rubric (Mehlhaff).

As the meeting drew to a close at 5:05 p.m., Kline thanked Finney, who offered the view that in assessment “Keeping it simple is a good strategy”; finding out one or two things in the first round would be better than complex surveys.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne W. Barnett  
15 October 1997