

University Council on Teacher Education

Minutes for February 2, 2005

1:30-3:30

217 Willard Hall

Members Present: Tim Barnekov, John Burmeister, Chris Clark, Joan DelFattore, Alice Eyman, Laura Kincaid, Gail Rys, Janet Smith, Carol Vukelich, George Watson, Rachel Wilt

Members Excused: Barbara VanDornick

Member Absent: Amanda Hess

Guests Present: Jan Blits, Mike Stetter, Tony Whitson

Announcements

- On January 4, two UD graduates, Amy Lewis (Elementary Education) and Jessica Smith (Health & PE), were honored at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Teachers Project Meritorious New Teacher Candidate Event at the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, DC. Jessica, who teaches in Harford County, Maryland, spoke highly of her HPE program, reporting that her principal is 'amazed' at all that she knows and can do.

Barbara VanDornick and Carol Vukelich represented UCTE at this event. They determined that UD needs to do more regarding the meritorious teacher award. Please encourage students who are eligible to apply. In Delaware, graduates with a cumulative grade point index of 3.75 or better receive a 'gift' of a year of teaching, thus accelerating their progress on the pay scale.

- Wayne Barton (DDOE) reported to Carol Vukelich that DDOE will "honor the intent" for certification purposes of ETE students and ECDE who elected to take the additional five primary education courses. This applies to students admitted prior to July 2004 only. That is, ETE students will be eligible to receive K-6 and 6-8 (general or math or science) certificates, and ECDE students with the five courses formerly specified by the state for primary certification will be eligible to receive Birth-K and K-6 certificates.

Carol Vukelich notified program coordinators to ensure that their program's catalogue description not reference the kind of certification program alumni will receive. The University does not control the specific grades for which alumni will be certified.

- The Department of Education granted Provisional Approval, until December 31, 2007, to the Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction with a Specialization in Science Education program.

- The following notice has been sent out to students: “In order to meet various states’ certification requirements and to help us assess the effectiveness of the University’s teacher education programs, we ask that you share your test results on the Praxis II tests or the tests required for certification in the State of New York.” The lack of accuracy in the data provided by ETS prompted this request.
- A Southern Delaware Substitute Teacher Job Fair will be held because Southern Delaware school districts requested it.
- Project Search: Teach in Delaware Day will be held Monday, March 21 from 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. and Project Search will be held on Tuesday, March 22 from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Both events will take place at the Bob Carpenter Sports/Convocation Center. Please contact Barbara VanDornick if you plan to attend the luncheon on the 22nd.

Old Business

I. Grade Inflation: Report made to the Faculty Senate. (Jan Blitz)

Dr. Blitz reviewed the Senate Ad-Hoc Committee’s report to the Faculty Senate on grade inflation at the University of Delaware, 1987-2002. This report can be found at (<http://www.udel.edu/facsen/reports/index.html>). The committee uncovered grade inflation and grade compression problems and that the Faculty Handbook has no official policy on the definition of letter grades.

Committee recommendations:

- Defining letter grades in Faculty Handbook.
- Grade distribution be a part of the chair’s annual appraisal of faculty.
- Grades be awarded more strictly so that different levels of achievement are distinguished.
- Faculty should challenge students.
- Colleges should periodically examine grade distributions.
- Faculty Senate should periodically form an ad hoc committee to review grade distribution.

John Burmeister indicated that each semester he distributes a table to faculty members in Chemistry and Biochemistry showing the average GPA for each course offered in his department. In addition, he also distributes the average student evaluation ratings for the key teacher effectiveness and teacher recommendation questions for the entire department. Although individual course student evaluation data are not shared with the entire department, he does publish the (non-identified, by either faculty member or course) high and low extremes in the following categories: freshman, upper-class, and graduate courses. The intent is to nudge accountability on the part of individual faculty members.

Joan DeFattore believes there should be a campus-wide open discussion of recalibrating the grading system so that different views can be considered and that the change will be clearly understood. Several challenges were noted: issues related to internship and field experiences, S-contract instructors grading higher than UD faculty, the challenge that many state require students to earn at least a cumulative 3.0 GPA for certification.

Gail Rys asked if there had been any discussion with other institutions in the area. Why would students want to stay at UD if they can go to another institution where grading practices are less stringent? This could impact student recruitment.

Dean Barnekov thought that making an “A” more meaningful would be helpful. He suggested focusing on the “A” as something special and distinct, a grade used for truly outstanding performance.

Laura Kincaid described how the math coordinator for MATH 251, 252, and 253 each semester examines how many A’s, B’s, C’s, D’s, and failures each section’s instructor believes his/her students have earned. The goal is to ensure a comparable distribution of grades in each section of each course.

Jan Blitz assured UCTE that the committee had no intention of recommending that UD follow the lead of some other institutions and legislate the percentage of each grade to be allowed within each department.

II. Enrollment Reports (Barbara VanDornick)

- End of Term Report (Spring 2004). Item tabled until March meeting.

III. University Practicum to Hours Requirement (Carol Vukelich).

- Item tabled until March meeting.

New Business

I. Honors Day Items tabled until March meeting.

- Representatives
- Honoring ‘Meritorious’ Students on Honors Day (Carol Vukelich)

II. Program Revisions: DDOE Approval (Alice Eyman)

- Item tabled until March meeting.

III. Understanding by Design (Mike Stetter and Tony Whitson)

Mike Stetter, from the Delaware Department of Education, described the department’s initiative to use Grant Wiggins’ *Understanding by Design* in a recommended curriculum project. The ultimate goal is to support educators’ ability to identify the ‘big ideas/concepts’ that students should learn as a result of their study.

Grant Wiggins suggests the following steps:

Step one – identify what I am responsible for this year.

Step two – what evidence will I accept that student has mastered material.

Step three – planning and learning.

Tony Whitson reported that he thought that UD professional educators, particularly ETE faculty, should consider adopting the use of Understanding by Design as their instructional model. Mike Stetter is interested in ensuring that UD students learn about this curriculum model so that they will be able to use this model in their planning as new teachers.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.