



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

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What Have We Done? Dialogue Builds A Community of Scholarship

In our first issue of the *Faculty Forum* last October, we announced that our purpose was "to raise the energy level and spark a lively dialogue on campus about college teaching." A dozen issues later, we see encouraging signs of elevated energy and scholarly sparks; we think we have seen a community of scholarship in action. We have debated whether textbooks help or hinder learning and whether the teacher's attitude toward W's, missed classes, and vacations has a significant effect on what we are trying to teach. We have heard a student voice define excellent teaching, and we have shared specific and practical teaching tips--advice on what we might do next Monday to make the classroom more effective.

Given the tension that exists between research and teaching, it was perhaps inevitable that some would interpret our work as a call to choose sides, but such was never our intent. That this issue arose so soon was not premeditated but a natural and wholesome product of what we achieved, "a scholarly airing of differences of opinion." These philosophical differences are not likely to be resolved easily; but if they are, it will be only through open discussion. If a conflict between teaching and research undermines our work at WCU, the conflict should be resolved, and the first step is open dialogue. If there is no conflict and no problem, the dialogue will settle that and we can put the tension behind us.

With your help we have created a vigorous forum, a medium for open discussion of issues crucial to WCU faculty. People are talking about these issues in the hallways, in the parking lots, and in committee meetings; apparently many are reading the *Forum* and not simply routing it from the mailbox to the circular file. The number of people who have responded to each issue, the number of unsolicited manuscripts we have received, and the amount of visibility achieved implies that the effort is worth continuing.

As we close down for this academic year, we are already looking forward to the next. A number of opinion pieces are in the works already, and we are looking for more. The *Forum* will be a success when faculty demand more issues in order to get their opinions aired, when we have more responses to each issue than we can possibly publish, when just about everyone looks forward to each issue, when the

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dialogue over the *Forum* is evident everywhere on campus--in short, when it mirrors and excites our sense of community.

One of William Blake's proverbs says, "you never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough." Is it possible to have too much dialogue? Is it possible to have too much community spirit? Is it possible to care too much about teaching excellence? Write us today. If the *Forum* hasn't voiced your concern, it must be because we haven't heard from you. Give us an opinion about some aspect of the teaching life at WCU. Tell us what works in your classroom. Tell us what you see as the problems confronting us as teachers. The campus community is waiting to hear from you.

Terry Nienhuis, Editor

If there are a number of responses to this final issue, we will print them in August during the first week of classes.