



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

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The Faculty Forum, Ten Years After

Remember October, 1988? Vol. 1, No. 1 of the *Faculty Forum*. "A Call for Opinions!" In that premiere issue, we said that we sought to "raise the energy level of the dialogue on campus" and "to spark a lively dialogue about college teaching." Our goal was to encourage our own faculty to raise crucial issues that might lead to significant changes in our campus community. We now have a collection of *80 opinion pieces on file, and some of our colleagues who were here prior to 1988 say that this steady stream of provocative, insightful articles has indeed made a difference. Remember these?

"Encouraging Student Risk-Taking By Balancing Challenge and Support" by Bruce Henderson, February, 1990

"One of the trickiest aspects of teaching is finding that precarious balance between adequately challenging students and providing sufficient support so that students will take exploratory risks. But how well do we as teachers provide a responsive, 'secure base' for risky learning?"

"Teaching Has Always Been #1: A Dean's Viewpoint" by Cliff Lovin, December, 1990

"Teaching is Dead Last, or Worse: A Faculty Viewpoint" by Bill Kane, February, 1991

"Remus Singularis in Aqua" by Phil Wade, March, 1992

"We read the *Faculty Forum* to learn what our colleagues are doing individually to improve academic standards. And again one is reminded of the boat with only one oar in the water. Unfortunately, academic standards cannot be raised by faculty members alone. The endeavor requires a deliberate university-wide policy. Our present plight, I think, is an unhappy corollary of WCU's two-decade failure to heed Wade's Law which, with apologies to Thomas Gresham, I will state once more: bad students drive out good students and, ultimately, even bad students. They don't want to be seen in each other's company."

**You can find past issues of the Faculty Forum on the Faculty Center home page: from the WCU homepage your path is Centers, Faculty Center, either Frames or No Frames, and Publications*

"The Web: The Revolution Is Here; Let's Join Today"
by Bob Houghton, February, 1995

"What should the university do now? Provide more networked seats. There are only 12 public access workstations on our campus, all in the Killian Lab. Do more to encourage and help students obtain their own workstations. Network classrooms and provide projection equipment for whole class activities to make this incredible new system visible. Reward risk and innovation with new technologies in the tenure and promotion process. Develop a team to assist the creation of local call access to our Western mountain communities. We must learn and lead."

Teaching Awards: A Modest Proposal
by Hal Herzog, November, 1996

"We can hold what amounts to a playoff series. Each contestant will have 15 minutes to demonstrate his or her pedagogical skill. As in Olympic figure skating, a panel of judges will rate each performance on a 10 point scale. The departmental teach-off winners will go on to the college level. The winners from each college will then compete in a grand event to be held each year during half-time at the WCU-ASU football game. The specter of the best teachers at the university duking it out over a lifetime of financial security would be just the sort of public acknowledgment of good teaching that state legislators love. Personally, I favor this approach. I have a lecture on the evolution of the sexual orgasm that will knock their socks off."

The Plight of Part-Time Instructors: Two Similar Experiences
by Linda Kinnear and Michael Waters, November, 1997

"After ten years of teaching and service, I cannot reconcile my commitment with having no job security, health benefits, retirement, or any hope for advancement. Likewise, I cannot help but wonder where our General Education program will be academically and technologically if we continue on the course of considering faculty expendable. Any development of faculty commitment must first consider the value the institution places on those doing the teaching. How we treat our least empowered faculty speaks loudly of Western's commitment to teaching."

For the dialogue of the *Faculty Forum* to solidify our sense of ourselves and to alter what needs changing, you must believe that your voice in the *Faculty Forum* could make a real difference. You also need to trust that we don't have to agree with your point of view. In fact, we believe that a healthy academic community thrives on constructive disagreement and the free exchange of ideas and opinions. We encourage Forum pieces that will arouse opposition so the resulting debate can uncover the best wisdom that a community of scholars can generate. There are many in-house publications across the country that come out of faculty development centers and focus on teaching, but ours is singular in that it focuses on feedback, on an exchange of ideas and different points of view. In order to sustain the *Faculty Forum* for another decade, we need you, this summer, to decide what needs to be said to make WCU a more vital teaching and learning environment.

Terry Nienhuis, Editor, Faculty Forum