



Faculty Forum

From the Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CULLOWHEE, NORTH CAROLINA

Vol. 3, No. 3

November 1, 1990

What Does a University Club Have To Do With Excellence?

When it's difficult to get two faculty members to agree on an assessment of the weather, the newly formed University Club at WCU is a tribute to our capacity for collegiality.

Without any prodding from "above," our faculty and staff have initiated, sustained interest in, and implemented an idea that will lead eventually to unimagined excellence at WCU. You are skeptical? I contend that our University Club will serve our pursuit of excellence in many ways:

- (1) when you meet your colleagues at the Townhouse every Friday afternoon between 4 and 7 pm and talk about your daily work, you are more likely to see your work as part of a university-wide set of objectives and values, thus enhancing your sense of community and your sense of how your specific work contributes to a larger purpose
- (2) when you meet with your colleagues and talk about non-work-related matters, you will also be enhancing your sense of community
- (3) when you get to know your colleagues better, you are more likely to be flexible, cooperative, and industrious in your daily work during the next week because you will feel that you are working as part of a team; this is apparently one of the reasons why the Japanese build good cars and television sets, among other things
- (4) when you are part of the **supportive** atmosphere of a healthy community, your friends will listen sympathetically to your complaints and frustrations, which will be cathartic for you
- (5) when you are part of the **positive** atmosphere of a healthy community, you and your friends will tend to look for solutions to problems rather than to just complain
- (6) when you are part of the **supportive and positive** atmosphere of a healthy community, you and your friends will solicit advice with less fear

STEERING COMMITTEE: FACULTY CENTER FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

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- (7) when you and your colleagues talk with each other, you are more likely to like one another, to reconcile your differences, and to tolerate those differences you can't reconcile
- (8) when you and your colleagues feel that you are part of a supportive, positive, and sharing community, you will have **higher morale**

You are still skeptical? You say that no informal gatherings on Friday afternoons can do such wonderful things? Okay. Name something else that can. If everyone's salary doubled in the next year, we might have temporarily happier individuals, but we would not have a stronger sense of community. If everyone got paid the same for teaching less, we might be happier, but our happiness would have nothing to do with our jobs. If you say, "no, I mean that this sense of community is not possible at WCU," then I ask, what have we got to lose trying? If we all can agree that this rich sense of community is idealistic but glorious, then the question is only what is the best way to attempt it? If you think the University Club is not the best way to pursue this ideal, I challenge you to name something else that is.

The University Club is more than a TGIF party. The \$25 charter membership fee and \$5 per month dues will enable the Club to move toward other ventures that can improve our sense of community. We hope eventually to coordinate trips to "real" cities, provide receptions for university guests and evening speakers, encourage international activities, and even build our own building some day.

The University Club is open to all faculty, administrative and support service staff, and alumni. It will be a democratic organization that becomes what its members want it to be. If you want your voice to be part of this very exciting activity, you need to be a member. Contact Jack McFadden, 108 Killian, 227-7131 for details. We are already over 75 strong and we want you to join us. See you on Friday.

Wilburn Hayden, Social Work

The Faculty Forum is your opportunity to express your considered opinions on issues related to college teaching. Our goal is to spark a lively, constructive dialogue, and all viewpoints are welcome. If you would like to respond to this opinion, indicate whether you want to be quoted by name or anonymously and send your response, whatever its length, to

*The Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence
161 Hunter Library*

We also invite all readers to submit more lengthy opinion pieces or a teaching tip. We want to share your insights with the entire university community.