Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning

Responses to "WCU and Teaching for the Twenty-first Century," by John Bardo, 10/1/97

There was one question in Chancellor Bardo's "Forum" that I would like addressed in more detail. He said that "portfolio contents might include class syllabi, copies of tests and assignments, and a representative collection of the outcomes of students' work that documents that the goals and objectives of the program are being met." Would this be a short set of materials a student selects from a few (or several classes) or some predetermined group that the program would require? Would the actual tests be part of the portfolio? Who would be the keeper of the portfolio? I am assuming that the total mass of tests taken by a given student would be an impractical and inappropriate assessment collection. Or alternatively, would we be expected to maintain old exams of students for a given period of time for potential review? Again, I see an impractical element here: for example, masses of paper or even computer storage files if storage is electronic. If the student was to keep his/her personal collection of old exams, would this even be practical?

Dan Pittillo, Biology

Dr. Bardo says we need to document the capabilities of our seniors--and I agree. However, we also ought to increase our tracking of what they are doing throughout their time at Western, and after they graduate. One way to do this for graduates would be to provide all alumni with links to their WCU department Web pages. These could be cross-linked to our WCU Alumni page (after all, links cost us virtually nothing but a line of typing). In addition, a worthwhile investment might be to offer Web page space to selected alumni who have no other access to a provider (perhaps people in extremely low-paid service areas, for example, whose work reflects the best of WCU's efforts). The one condition of such links and/or Web space would be that alumni keep an updated curriculum vita on-line. This would provide an advantage for graduates, since they would be able to keep in touch easily with professors, other students, and potential employers. It would be an advantage to the university in that it would provide immediate access to demographic information on former students.

Another desirable action would be for WCU to offer all entering freshmen (perhaps in their "intro to college life" course) the opportunity to produce a personal web page. This could become an accessible "portfolio" of their best work at WCU (selected papers, annotated bibliographies, graphic art, music clips, BRIEF videos of dramatic performances, and other projects).

A follow-up course in the senior year (perhaps a component of the senior seminar) would focus on an on-line job market or a graduate school search engine. This course or component could provide advanced skills in the uses of the Web, as well as showing ways in which WCU can continue to support student learning and career development.

Your initial reaction may be, "Ouch! we can't afford the additional expense for this!" However, letting us (and interested people outside WCU) see the actual performances of our students--now, through an on-line portfolio and later through the alumni links--would be an excellent investment for all of us.

Steve Eberly, English