

Proposed 6  
Cuts Fall 1983

## Proposal for an Interim Teaching Center

The Assessment Seminar has identified a need for more visible and accessible support for teaching. Our discussions have revealed a desire for such services as a mentoring program, regular workshops on specific issues and techniques, a newsletter or some other vehicle for the dissemination of information about teaching, and a library and electronic database where individuals can access additional information about teaching. There is a substantial amount of "tacit" knowledge about teaching among our faculty that has no avenue for becoming more visible to or accessible to others, including the forty new faculty members who will be joining us soon. We recognize that the culture of Wake Forest is such that a flexible arrangement that spreads responsibility and can adapt to changing interests and demands is most likely to be embraced by our community.

Recognizing both the need for teaching support and the cultural constraints on how that support might be offered, we surveyed the faculty with regard to our proposal and presented the proposal to the faculty at its April meeting. A copy of the survey is attached. We also invited those who had not participated in the faculty meeting or the survey to offer additional input. We received 50 responses to the survey. Thirty of the responses favored the creation of a center, 8 were ambivalent about the proposal but had constructive ideas about how to improve it, and 12 were opposed for a variety of reasons. Most of the opposition was based on concerns about time, money, and bureaucracy. Based on this response, we present the following amended proposal for an experimental teaching center where we can test and evaluate its effectiveness (See attached evaluation plan). If this proposal is approved, we anticipate that in two years we will present the faculty with a proposal for a permanent center.

**MISSION:** The Teaching Center should have as its mission the support for teaching. It must not be viewed as a place where people with problems in their teaching must go, or where only untenured faculty need go, but rather a place where faculty at all stages of their career will WANT to go to: a) explore innovations in teaching that have been tried by others; b) get support for their own innovations; c) find experienced mentors who can help answer questions and develop teaching skills; d) seek confidential help with problems; and e) share teaching ideas and innovations with other interested faculty. We believe strongly that it must be controlled by the faculty, that participation must be voluntary, and all records of use must be kept confidential.

**DIRECTOR/OTHER FACULTY INVOLVEMENT:** A tenured faculty member should be appointed as Director of the Center. During a two year initial trial period, the Director will teach one course per semester in their department. After the trial period, if a permanent center is established the Director will serve a three-year nonrenewable term and have a one course reduction per semester during that time in order to direct the teaching support program. The faculty member could be from any department in the university. Directors should be chosen from a list of people who volunteer or who are nominated by other faculty. The interim center will be guided by a committee made up of current members of the Teaching Assessment Seminar and faculty from departments that are not currently represented on the committee. We believe that if a permanent center is adopted, the steering committee should be a standing committee of the faculty and thus elected by them.

Rotation of the director recognizes that teaching commitment and knowledge of effective teaching is spread across the university and permits us to tap into the "tacit" knowledge base we have on hand. In addition, it addresses the concerns about institutionalization, fiefdom building, and adaptability. Finally, the rotation in and out insures widespread dissemination of knowledge gained by the directors during their tenure. The length of the term permits the time for the establishment and effective implementation of programs.

**FUNCTIONS:** The faculty from the Assessment Seminar learned that while different disciplines have particular pedagogical needs and restraints, faculty from across disciplines have much to share with each other and can learn from each other. Many questions regarding teaching and learning are universal. We have no interest in promoting a particular approach to teaching, but instead in encouraging the kind of cross-disciplinary interactions that have proved so valuable to the members of the assessment committee and to others in recent workshops like the those involving the First Year Seminars and the Writing Seminars. In this spirit, the Center could provide the following resources:

- a. class visits, videotaping, consultation for faculty who seek this kind of help with their teaching
- b. workshops, discussion groups, panel discussions on teachings issues/practices
- c. visiting scholars or lecturers on teaching related topics
- d. a "teaching" library and database with resources available to the faculty  
(including a homepage, research on methods, discipline specific materials, and the use of technology in the classroom)
- e. a mentoring program for new faculty that matches them with more experienced faculty outside of their department. Faculty throughout the university could volunteer to be participants in this program and would be "on call".
- f. a newsletter that includes ideas on teaching from Wake Forest faculty and from current pedagogical research
- g. guidance on technology use in the classroom
- h. liaison with other academic counseling services

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT:** Financial support from the administration would be required to cover the items listed below:

- a. replacement within the department of the person serving as director
- b. space for an office, library, and gathering room (Z. Smith Reynolds Library)
- c. administrative assistant/student assistant
- d. expense fund to cover speakers, workshops, travel, library acquisitions

Assessment Seminar members include:

Deborah Best, Anne Boyle, Bob Evans, Katy Harriger, Pat Johansson, Scott Klein, Mark Leary, Steve Messier, Jill McMillan, Joe Milner, Bob Shorter, Howell Smith, Kathy B. Smith, Eric Stone, Bob Swofford, Claudia Thomas, Dave Weaver, Peter Weigl, Page West, Alan Williams, and students, Lakisha Blackstone and Louisa Hann.