

Annual report of the Instructional Support Committee, 2002-2003

June 11, 2003

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The members of this year's Instructional Support Committee were Doug Caulkins, Vince Eckhart, Bill Francis, David Harrison, John Kalkbrenner, Christopher McKee, Ralph Savarese, Helen Scott, Martha Voyles, and I. I served as chair of the committee.

Curricular development

The Committee formulated more explicit guidelines for evaluating curricular development proposals than we have used in the past and announced these guidelines on the application form, stating that proposals are more likely to be funded if they

- exemplify and facilitate new or more effective kinds of teaching;
- use technological tools or skills that instructors would be unlikely to acquire without special funding;
- relate to courses that are, or will be, taught frequently;
- relate to one of the following areas of curricular development: Africana Studies, East Asian Studies, Gender and Women's Studies, Global Development Studies, Race and Ethnicity, Prairie Studies, and Technology Studies;
- have already been partly implemented, so that some course materials can already be examined and assessed;
- come from instructors who have not recently received similar grants; or
- might not be implemented as part of normal course development.

During the year, we approved a total of \$10904.07 in funding for ten curricular development proposals and \$42454.00 for various teaching and learning groups, reading groups, and summer workshops.

At the end of the year, the Committee reviewed the method by which such proposals are dealt with and agreed on several adjustments:

- The budget for a proposal should separate the faculty member's stipend from other expenses related to the proposal (equipment, student labor, travel, etc.); since stipends are taxable, it is counterproductive for the faculty member to pay expenses out of the stipend.
- The stipends for curriculum-development proposals should be fixed rather than variable: \$1600 for the development of a new course, \$800 for a substantial revision to an old course, \$400 for a course module.
- The guideline giving preference to certain curricular areas should be removed. The Office of the Dean will continue to send relevant proposals to the concentration committees and the Race and Ethnicity Curriculum Development committee for review, but the Committee will give equal weight to proposals in other parts of the curriculum.

Facilities and services

After discussing and evaluating several alternatives at length, the Committee endorsed a proposal from Information Technology Services for a facility to support instruction and research using information technology and recommended that this facility be located on central campus.

Some faculty members have raised questions about the price of course packets at the College Book Store. The Committee opened a discussion of this issue but did not reach any conclusions.

The Committee distributed a survey concerning on-line resources to the faculty and collected the results, but did not review or discuss those results this year.

Computing and library policies

The Committee endorsed the Library's Statement on Information Literacy, (now available on the Web at <http://www.lib.grinnell.edu/infolit/statement.html>).

The Committee considered several computing policies that have provoked questions or complaints from the faculty, notably the prohibition against the use of College computers to send unsolicited instant messages, the wasteful and inconvenient use of Microsoft Word attachments in e-mail, and the increasingly restrictive licensing agreements that makers of proprietary software impose on the College. In each case, the Committee either endorsed the current policy or took no action.

In this connection, I wish to offer an observation as an individual faculty member who has observed the Instructional Support Committee since it was established in 2000 and has served on the ISC for two of the four years of its existence. Although the Faculty Handbook specifies that the Instructional Support Committee "shall. . . assist in the development and review of policies regarding the use of computer software and hardware [and] the Internet," the ISC has in practice accepted this charge reluctantly and executed it perfunctorily. The Academic Computing Committee that existed before the formation of the ISC represented faculty interests more effectively, and I recommend its restoration.