

Chairs' Corner – September 2006
Faculty Fellows Program

TO: UW Foundation, Campaign Cabinet, Deans, Development & Alumni Staff
FROM: William H. Gates, Campaign Chair, and Orin C. Smith, Chair, UW Foundation

Dear Friends,

Psychology professor Jaime Diaz recently told us what it was like to arrive at the University of Washington as a young faculty member in 1978. “They showed you the bathrooms and the parking lot and then just basically said, “Go to it.””

Scholarship or research prowess was assumed—that was what you had learned in graduate school and what got you the job. Also assumed was that anybody who knew his or her subject could teach. Or, perhaps, that teaching was simply a talent, which you either had or lacked. Or, perhaps, that teaching just did not matter very much. Or all of the above.

Professor Diaz, together with Professor Susan Kemp from Social Work, has just finished co-directing a program that shows how far we have moved from those assumptions. From September 8th to 15th, the Faculty Fellows program gave about a hundred new UW faculty members (both beginners and those who moved here from other universities) a week-long immersion in the theory and practice of teaching UW students.

About forty percent of new faculty members arrive here with very little teaching experience. For them especially, the program’s practical advice about the nuts and bolts of college teaching is invaluable—things like putting together a syllabus, articulating course goals, assessing the students and the course itself. There are sessions on lecturing, on educational technology, and on the ways students change as their educational careers progress (with real live UW students to demonstrate). The faculty-in-training get to make five-minute videotapes of their own teaching, see themselves in action, and hear feedback from their colleagues.

Apart from the specifics, the Fellows program conveys some crucial basic messages. The first and most important is that this major research university really values teaching. The second is that teaching is a skill as well as a gift, and one can learn how to do it well. The third is that talking to colleagues about teaching is a far quicker route to improvement (and a lot more fun) than working away in isolation.

Professor Diaz was part of the faculty group that started the Fellows program in 1994. (The driving force, he says, was sociology professor George Bridges, now the president of Whitman College, and the critical administrative support came from Fred Campbell, then dean of Undergraduate Education.) “Nobody ever taught us to teach,” he says. “We asked, why do we all have to keep inventing and re-inventing the wheel?” The program has grown steadily since that first year, and most new faculty now participate. They learn

from the UW's own master teachers—almost all the program's instructors are winners of University Distinguished Teaching Awards. "We get tremendously positive feedback," says Professor Diaz. "People really light up."

During the last fifteen years or so, research universities across the country have begun to re-emphasize good teaching. The UW, it is fair to say, has been a leader in this trend. The Faculty Fellows Program is now one of four teaching-related initiatives that operate out of the UW Teaching Academy, created in 1998 to capitalize on the collective talent and experience of Distinguished Teaching Award winners. Each program addresses a different facet or phase of university teaching, from managing the demands of large lectures courses to retooling one's teaching as a senior faculty member.

Many new faculty members, excited by the Fellows program, go on to enroll in other Teaching Academy programs as well. "They changed the world for me," says Professor Peter Mackenzie of civil and environmental engineering. "When I came here, I'd had ten years of teaching experience in Europe, but I'd never had a chance to really talk about teaching. There, my teaching was all about curriculum. Now, it's all about students and their learning. I look at a class and ask, how did my students grow during the time we spent together? It's really changed my way of teaching, and I enjoy it more than ever."

UW classes are about to resume. We like to imagine all the students who will soon reap the benefits of the 2006 Faculty Fellows Program.

Bill and Orin

Looking Back

- As of August 31, 2006, our **total Campaign giving since July 1, 2000, reached \$1,830,720,074** toward our Campaign goal of \$2 billion.
- The August Report of Contributions Notes is attached and contains fundraising details.

Looking Ahead

- **Friday, January 26, 2007**, Foundation Board & Campaign Cabinet Meeting, 8:30 a.m. coffee; 9:00-11:00 a.m. meeting.
- **Friday, April 27, 2007**, Foundation Board & Campaign Cabinet Meeting, 8:30 a.m. coffee; 9:00-11:00 a.m. meeting. Washington Weekend April 26-28, 2007.
- **Friday, September 7, 2007**, Foundation Board & Campaign Cabinet Meeting, 8:00 a.m. coffee, 8:30-11:30 a.m. meeting.
- **Friday, September 7, 2007**, Sixth Annual Recognition Gala, Suzzallo Library.