

# Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

## Responses to Phil Wade

At the risk of sounding like a defensive administrator, I would like to point out that all the things Phil Wade suggests at the end of his essay

are working. Enrollment is up at WCU and so are SAT

scores. We are on the south ASTU

I would prefer to compare 1989 and 1991

with 1976 and 1977. The ASTU WCU and UNC Central Administration figures in those

years are up. Only UNC system is up. This paints a different picture and

recent activities. UNCA's average SAT score actually went down between 1976 and 1988 and

enrollment in this year in response to the new chancellor's policy that they would have to restrict

enrollment to make their SAT's fit their image. Why not compare us with ECU?

Phil's essay points out that our problems stem from a decision made in the mid 1970's to build enrollment at any cost. It worked at first when we

jumped by nearly 500 students in 1975, but by 1985

enrollment was below what it was in 1974 (while the system enrollment was up). The students had

decided. We could hold the course and try to

more people, more cities, more market area,

you can see what kind of a market area you're

student cohort. The farther a "consumer" must travel to obtain a piece of a service, the less is the

incentive to travel there. A glance at a map of

most distant and isolated of the sixteen UNC institutions with regard to the in-state student

market. That geographic factor will NEVER change.

Also at work is the principle of "intervening

opportunity. In the field of research analysis, this

usually exists, the course nearest to the consumer will usually be chosen. If an additional equally

course is created closer to the consumer, the new

source will likely be substituted as an "intervening

opportunity" that changes or eliminates the interaction between the original supplier and the

consumer. For example, the creation of UNC-A as a constituent institution of the UNC system

represents a classic case of intervening opportunity not only BETWEEN WCU and an

important market area (the Piedmont), but also WITHIN that traditional market area (the

Mountaineer). True, the very geographic location

of WCU and its proximity to its abatement and that's a "draw"

in some respects, but I doubt that it compensates very much for the double whammy of distance

and intervening opportunities

Finally, the actual SHAPE, the physical outline of North Carolina, conspires against WCU in its

peninsula. The state gets wider and the end of a more sparsely populated peninsula

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out most severely from the out-of-state market, with Tennessee, Georgia, and South Carolina so enticingly close yet blocked off by that invisible "18% Curtain," a marketing "Berlin

peninsula that's open (on the east) there sit those "intervening opportunists" UNC-A and ASU

governing at least some of the student flow that would legitimately be available to WCU.

We do not have a value system of...  
impinge upon WCU's ability to attract and retain students of whatever quality. Perhaps

after a number of responses to Dr. Wade's...  
CALCULUS and LINEAR ALGEBRA have been aimed we

we do and how we do it. But this does not

mean abandoning...  
Therein lies the crux. Faculty have to admit that

each of us needs to change his or her behavior and how he or she spends his or her time. We

need to spend...  
with students and for students. This...  
the problem becomes one of university-wide

activities necessary to teach our students well.

not have a coherent...  
mission statement that WCU

to change. We can be a first rate, third-

from being a third rate school. All it takes is for the faculty to have the will to change its values and behavior and focus its scholarly energies on

**Jeff Neff, Geosciences &**

educating the students we are fortunate enough

to have in our classrooms...  
interesting issues that I can agree with, especially that each faculty member needs to

award grades consistent with academic rigor.

I agree with the point that the solution to the

raise our admission standards. It is the old argument, give me better students and I will be a better teacher."

what we should use instead is a "developmental

faculty new behaviors, new thinking, and new processes, with some exceptions, most of our students are poorly prepared. They have poor

the larger society. Our job is to meet our

**Bill Kane, Management**

Average SAT scores are not the issue that we should concentrate on in regard to academic

Alexander Astin has called the "developmental model" for higher education institutions. I agree with Astin that

ability to enhance the academic (and general) development of its students and faculty members. Furthermore, I

in-kind for future use in which that development occurs.

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perhaps more telling than the average SAT score of entering students would be the average SAT score of graduating students. (Based on the evidence I was given in anecdotal form by a previous administrator here, the average SAT score of graduating students is not significantly different from the average entering student—better SAT scorers are not more likely to graduate from WCU.)

reputation for WCU and in which prospective students come to perceive WCU as a place where students, regardless of their entering SAT score, are more likely to graduate. changed.

*Bruce Henderson Psychologist*

The softer evidence of what happens to students while they are here at WCU is not encouraging. To paraphrase Astin, although we frequently recognize or even reward the demonstration of intellect, we less frequently engage in its development. Gathered informally over fourteen years at WCU, my experience has been that students are not asked to read enough, write enough, or generally work hard enough while they are here. Students get by with sloppy work by almost anyone's criteria. Many faculty members do not want to take the time required to grade assignments, or more broadly, to give students the kind of constructive feedback they need to develop. In many courses, the major feedback students receive comes in the form of test grades or grades on end-of-term papers that they never get back, get back with few remarks, or get back with low grades for low quality but which never have to be rewritten at a competent level. As one colleague has pointed out repeatedly, the faculty too frequently has joined the students in a conspiracy against scholarship.

I guess it would be nice if we could change our admissions policies so that we would have better students. In the short run, we might become as small as UNCA and have a faculty about its size, but I would miss some of those low-SAT students who I have seen blossom as they began to take learning seriously for the first time. Instead of recruiting better students, I would rather see us change our teaching behavior. Yes, that means more of the C's, D's, and F's, but it also means more work for us as faculty members to teach students in the rigorous fashion Dr. Wade suggests. This is