General Faculties Council
Committee on the Learning Environment
Approved Open Session Minutes

Wednesday, April 04, 2012
Council Chamber, UHALL
2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Voting Members:

Bill Connor	Vice-Provost (Academic)
Emerson Csorba	Vice-President (Academic), SU
Nima Yousefi Moghaddam	President, Graduate Students' Association (Delegate)
Scott Delinger	Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology) (Delegate)
Heather Kanuka	Centre for Teaching and Learning
Ada Schmude	Vice-Provost and University Registrar (Delegate)
Rachel Milner	Academic Staff – Member of GFC
Karim Damji	Academic Staff
John Boeglin	Academic Staff
Trevor Woods	Academic Staff
Anne McIntosh	Graduate at-large
Brock Richardson	Support Staff
Lili Liu	Department Chair
Fern Snart	Dean
Deanna Williamson	Cross-Representative from the GFC Academic Planning Committee
Janet Scott Hoyt	Major Teaching Award Recipient

Presenter(s):

Garry Bodnar	Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
John Boeglin	Chair, Joint Subcommittee on the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment/Teaching, Learning and Technology Council Fostering Pedagogy of Technology
Jennifer Chesney	Executive Director, University Web Strategy
Bill Connor	Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (and Chair, GFC Academic Standards Committee)
Emerson Csorba	Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies
Scott Delinger	Information Technology Strategic Initiatives Officer, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Heather Kanuka	Academic Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Nima Yousefi Moghaddam	Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies
Jonathan Schaeffer	Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology)

Deanna Williamson   GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Member Cross-Appointed
                          from the GFC Academic Planning Committee

Staff:

Garry Bodnar   Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
Emily Paulsen   Scribe

OPENING SESSION

Prior to seeking the approval of the Agenda, Dr Connor noted that this was a joint meeting of the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) and the Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council held annually. He welcomed Council members to this joint session.

[It should be noted the Coordinator of TLATC, Ms Bobbi Schiestel, was in attendance and was responsible for taking notes on behalf of the Council for consideration at their next regularly-scheduled meeting. These Minutes are intended to reflect the business conducted by GFC CLE.]

1.   Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Members agreed to re-ordering of items on the Agenda to accommodate presenters.

Motion: Boeglin/Damji

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Agenda, as re-ordered.

CARRIED

2.   Approval of the Open Session Minutes of March 7, 2012

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Delinger/Boeglin

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of March 7, 2012.

CARRIED

2.1   Review of the Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council Notes of February 7, 2012

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

There was no discussion.

3.   Comments from the Co-Chair

The Co-Chair commented on a number of items of interest to members.

ACTION ITEMS

4.   Joint Subcommittee of the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)/Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology Report and Evaluation Plan

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: John Boeglin, Chair, Joint Subcommittee on the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment/Teaching, Learning and Technology Council Fostering Pedagogy of Technology

Purpose of the Proposal: To seek approval of the Joint Subcommittee of the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)/Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology's report and evaluation proposal.

Discussion:
Dr Boeglin explained to members that the Subcommittee grew out of a series of discussions that took place at General Faculties Council (GFC) and GFC CLE meetings around the integration and use of technology at the University. He noted that this joint subcommittee of GFC CLE and TLAT Council was subsequently created and has now met eight times to date, as well as having engaged in numerous consultations. Dr Boeglin informed members that the Subcommittee is proposing a University-wide 'reflection' to further enhance the learning environment, one element of which acknowledges strengths and weaknesses and ultimately develops strategies and policies for the University regarding the deployment of technology in teaching/learning endeavours. Professor Boeglin emphasized that this study was unique because it focused on pedagogy first and technology second.

During the ensuing discussion, the presenter addressed questions and comments from members including, but not limited to, the following: possible collaboration with and amongst technology experts at the University; the assumptions often made of the younger generation as to their level of expertise with and access to technology; and the importance of considering the expectations of current and future students with respect to teaching and learning.

Motion: Karim/Boeglin

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the report and evaluation plan proposed by the Joint Subcommittee of the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment/Teaching, Learning and Technology Council on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology, as set forth in Attachment 1.
CARRIED

DISCUSSION ITEMS

5.   University of Alberta Web Strategy and the Learning Environment – Presentation

There were no documents.

Presenters: Jennifer Chesney, Executive Director, University Web Strategy; Jonathan Schaeffer, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology)

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Dr Schaeffer explained to members that there has been increasing interest, especially in the past eight months, regarding the presence of post-secondary institutions online. He noted that Stanford University

has led the way with massive open online courses, which has created huge spinoff implications. He also made note of the newly-formed MITx degree offered by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in which all courses for the degree are offered online free to, as MIT advertises the program, "a virtual community of learners around the world." Dr Schaeffer impressed upon members that there are still advantages to and necessities associated with a physical University, but an online presence must be a part of the University's future. Although there are pockets of activity, Dr Schaeffer emphasized the need for the University as a whole to have a vision of the future, noting that this is an opportunity that could make the institution elite and unique, especially in Canada. Ms Chesney added that it is important that the vision set out reflects the academy's aspirations. She noted that they will be seeking input from, amongst others, the Students' Union (SU) and the Graduate Students' Association (GSA). She emphasized that the bar is low in Canada so there is a huge opportunity to become a leader in this field.   Both Dr Schaeffer and Ms Chesney invited members to submit any ideas or comments on these issues directly to them through e-mail.

During the ensuing discussion, the presenters addressed questions and comments from members including, but not limited to, the following: the initiatives that resulted in Stanford University's and MIT's successes; the expenses associated with increasing an institution's online presence; and the accessibility an online presence would provide for students in Alberta.

6. <u>Assessment and Grading at the University of Alberta – An Update</u>

There were no documents.

Presenter: Bill Connor, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (and Chair, GFC Academic Standards Committee)

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Dr Bill Connor explained to members that the assessment and grading proposal is now moving through a formal governance process. He added that most of the proposal comes from the work done by past-Provost's Fellow Robert Luth (Professor, Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences), which had included an intensive consultation process.

7. <u>Report of the Mentoring of New Faculty Subcommittee of the Teaching, Learning and Technology Council (TLATC)</u>

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Heather Kanuka, Academic Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information; to share with members the findings and recommendations of the Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council's Subcommittee on Mentoring of New Faculty.

Discussion:
Prior to the start of discussion, Dr Kanuka distributed to members the latest version of the recommendations provided by the Subcommittee; she noted that, since the distribution of the above-cited report to GFC CLE and TLAT Council members for this joint session, the Subcommittee had met and revised in small part the recommendations contained therein.

Dr Kanuka continued her presentation by noting that the report before members was the penultimate version. She explained that the Subcommittee, struck in November, 2009, had observed that, in general, mentoring was unsuccessful. It was noted that incoming faculty required an array of information that would be nearly impossible for one individual to provide. It was recommended that several advisors be available to the new faculty member by means of an orientation program with such programming necessarily under the control of the individual Faculties, given their diversity.

During the ensuing discussion, the presenter addressed questions and comments from members including, but not limited to, the following: the possibility of some orientation occurring centrally (on such issues as administrative details or pension information) and then allowing for further Faculty-specific orientation; agreement amongst Subcommittee members that the responsibility for advising new faculty should be held at the level of hiring; clarification on defining who is considered "new faculty;" the challenge of graduate supervision and the need for faculty to understand entities such as the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) and the role of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR); and reflection on who would be considered an ideal advisor or mentor for new faculty.

8.   GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies Report: Update

There were no documents.

Presenters: Emerson Csorba, Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies; Nima Yousefi Moghaddam, Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Mr Csorba informed members that he underwent extensive consultations with students and faculty to develop a report on the matter of student attributes. He noted that the report is based on higher education research and government policy documents and should be made available over the next few months. Mr Moghaddam explained that the Subcommittee has been conducting separate undergraduate and graduate meetings, with the latter working on professional development skills—he stated he was hopeful these issues could be discussed by GFC CLE at a meeting in the near future.

There was no further discussion.

9.   Working Group on Online Course/Teaching Evaluations – Update

There were no documents.

Presenter: Scott Delinger, Information Technology Strategic Initiatives Officer, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Dr Delinger explained to the members that one of the key issues in instituting online Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) would be to maintain a high participation rate amongst students. He noted that the University of Calgary used online evaluations from 2005 to 2008 but abandoned the process due to

low participation. The Working Group is hoping to engage in student consultation on this issue.

During the ensuing discussion, the presenter addressed questions and comments from members including, but not limited to, the following: the importance of maintaining the anonymity of those commenting; the provision of faster feedback for instructors; the delivery of optional feedback which could possibly result in only disgruntled students taking the time to participate; the possibility of midterm feedback to help instructors, particularly Teaching Assistants (TA), continue to work on and enhance their teaching techniques during the semester; commentary on how online evaluations will save time for the staff who currently have responsibility for typing out handwritten comments on hard-copy USRI; and the rare and extreme occasions when the author of comments made by those completing online evaluations needs to be tracked down.

STANDING ITEMS

10. GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC) Update

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Deanna Williamson, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Member Cross-Appointed from the GFC Academic Planning Committee

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Professor Williamson informed members that the GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC) had met once since the last report. She noted that the Committee recommended that General Faculties Council (GFC) consider a proposed change for Collège Saint-Jean's official name to Centre collégial de l'Alberta, University of Alberta.

11. GFC Academic Standards Committee (ASC) Update

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Bill Connor, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (and Chair, GFC Academic Standards Committee)

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Dr Connor noted that the most significant item from the GFC Academic Standards Committee (ASC) at its March 15, 2012 meeting involved consideration of a proposed new credit Certificate for Writing Studies program at Augustana Faculty. He added that the Committee had also spent time discussing, in general, a range of issues related to the University's offering of credit and non-credit certificates.

12. GFC Facilities Development Committee (FDC) Update

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Garry Bodnar, Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Mr Bodnar noted that the March 22, 2012 GFC FDC meeting included discussion around the list of approved Facility Alteration Requests (FAR) for 2011-2012 and a series of updates on ongoing facilities projects at the University.

13. Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council Update

There were no documents.
Presenter: Scott Delinger, Information Technology Strategic Initiatives Officer, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Dr Delinger noted that the Teaching, Learning, and Technology (TLAT) Council had not met since the GFC CLE meeting.

14. Question Period

There were no questions.

INFORMATION REPORTS

15. Items Approved by the Committee by E-Mail Ballots

There were no items.

16. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

17. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:35pm.