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

Wednesday, May 07, 2014
2-31 South Academic Building (SAB)
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Voting Members:

Bill Connor	Co-Chair, Vice-Provost (Academic)
Colin More	Member (Delegate), President of the Graduate Students' Association
Kathleen DeLong	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian
Katy Campbell	Member, Dean (Selected by Deans' Council), Extension
Scott Delinger	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology)
Genevieve Maheux-Pelletier	Member (Delegate), Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Kangyi Lou	Member, Graduate Student at-Large
Ada Ness	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and University Registrar
Toni Samek	Member, Major Teaching Award Recipient, Staff Representative
Stanley Varnhagen	Member, Academic Staff
Trevor Woods	Member, Academic Staff

Presenter(s):

Garry Bodnar	Director of General Faculties Council (GFC) Services and Secretary to GFC (and Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE))
Bill Connor	Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)
Scott Delinger	Information Technology Strategic Initiatives Officer, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Kathleen DeLong	Associate University Librarian, University Libraries
Naomi Krogman	Associate Professor, Department of Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology and Past Provost Fellow
Mike MacGregor	Acting Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology)
Genevieve Maheux-Pelletier	Educational Developer, Centre for Teaching and Learning

Staff:
Garry Bodnar, Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
Andrea Patrick, Scribe

OPENING SESSION

1.   Approval of the Agenda

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 (CLE)

Motion: Campbell/Delinger

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Agenda.
CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of April 2, 2014

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 (CLE)

Motion: Ness/Varnhagen

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of April 2, 2014.
CARRIED

3. Comments from the Co-Chair

The Co-Chair commented on a number of relevant issues to members and welcomed new student members to the meeting.

ACTION ITEMS

4. Proposed Revisions to the Terms of Reference for the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Bill Connor, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE); Kathleen DeLong, Associate University Librarian, University Libraries; Garry Bodnar, Director of General Faculties Council (GFC) Services and Secretary to GFC (and Coordinator, GFC CLE)

Purpose of the Proposal: To revise the Terms of Reference for GFC CLE to clearly and formally acknowledge the important role Learning Services units play within the academy and in the fulfillment of the University's Academic Plan; to modify the Committee's composition to provide for more realistic replenishment of this body and to reflect the University's current staff categories; and to accommodate a series of minor/editorial changes to ensure the currency of these Terms.

Discussion:
Dr Connor reminded members that this item had been before the Committee for discussion once before (at its April 2, 2014 meeting). Mr Bodnar added that the changes set out in the proposal reflected feedback from members provided at the last meeting.

A member sought clarification surrounding the usage of punctuation within the document.

Motion: Campbell/More

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) recommend to the GFC Executive Committee proposed revisions to GFC CLE's Terms of Reference, as set forth in Attachment 1, to take effect upon final approval.

CARRIED

5. <u>Electronic Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (eUSRI) System – Proposed Revisions to Section 111.3 (Teaching and Learning and Teaching Evaluation/Universal Student Ratings of Instruction) of the GFC Policy Manual</u>

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Mike MacGregor, Acting Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology); Scott Delinger, Information Technology Strategic Initiatives Officer, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

Purpose of the Proposal: To introduce the use of electronic delivery of the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (eUSRI) *via* proposed changes to Section 111.3 (Teaching and Learning and Teaching Evaluation/Universal Student Ratings of Instruction) of the GFC Policy Manual; upon approval, the eUSRI system will be the only method by which the USRI evaluation tool is delivered.

Discussion:
Dr MacGregor explained that this proposal is intended to enable electronic delivery of the current USRI instrument, and he emphasized that it does not alter the current content of the instrument in any way.

Dr Delinger reiterated that the proposal sets out (proposed) revisions to language within Section 111.3 of the GFC Policy Manual to allow for the electronic delivery of USRI (eUSRI). He reported that these changes have been discussed with the Association of Academic Staff - University of Alberta (AASUA) and with the Students' Union (SU).

During the discussion surrounding this proposal, members provided a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: clarification surrounding the preservation of anonymity for students completing USRI; suggestions for minor revisions to language and terms; clarification surrounding the use of the words "shall" and "will" in the proposal; clarification surrounding the process of replacing handwritten comments on the USRI with typewritten ones and how this may impact the overall evaluation process; whether there could be a field or specific question for written comments; how the process may be impacted by the change in format from one that is paper based to one that is electronic; an expressed opinion that the electronic format does change the processes associated with USRI; that any unintended consequences resulting from this proposal have not been evident within the data collected from the eUSRI pilot projects conducted over the past two years; clarification surrounding AASUA's reception of this proposal; clarification surrounding how and when the eUSRI will be distributed to students; a query whether there is a mechanism in place to ensure that students are not confused about which course they are evaluating, particularly when the course concerned is one with a large enrolment covered by a number of course sections; clarification surrounding the Motion; and clarification surrounding the impact of the recent change to later term withdrawal dates on eUSRIs.

The Mover and Seconder agreed to several minor ('friendly') amendments proposed during the discussion.

Motion: Varnhagen/More

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment recommend to GFC Executive Committee proposed revisions to Section 111.3 (Teaching and Learning and Teaching Evaluation/Universal Student Ratings of Instruction) of the GFC Policy Manual, as submitted by the Acting Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology) and set forth in Attachment 1, as amended, to take effect upon final approval.

CARRIED

DISCUSSION ITEMS

6. <u>The Quality of Graduate Student and Post-Doctoral Supervision at the University of Alberta (April 2014)</u>

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Bill Connor, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE); Naomi Krogman, Associate Professor, Department of Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology and Past Provost Fellow

Purpose of the Proposal: As a research-intensive higher education institution, the University of Alberta has both an ethical and a leadership role in molding excellence in graduate student supervision. This report is written to inform the Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) of best practices and different problems associated with graduate student and post-doctoral fellow supervision at the University of Alberta. The report is also intended to help professors, graduate students, post-doctoral scholars, University administrators, and other key professionals in higher education to examine multiple ways to foster a supportive environment for excellence in graduate student and post-doctoral scholar supervision. Overall, the University of Alberta has many programs and practices in place to cultivate an excellent culture of graduate student supervision. Faculty members and graduate coordinators reported strong interest and commitment to improved learning experiences for the institution's graduate students.

Discussion:
Dr Connor welcomed Dr Krogman to the meeting and introduced her to members.

Dr Krogman explained that, in 2011, she was approached by the Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) to review, as a Provost Fellow, the issue of graduate supervision as a result of concerns raised by the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) as well as discussions at meetings of the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE).

Dr Krogman provided a brief synopsis of the report, including information relating to the increased numbers of graduate students at the University of Alberta, especially international graduate students; the emergence of a co-learning method between students and supervisors; the duration of students' involvement in their graduate programs and the debt levels of graduate students; and the changing demographical data of graduate students and the impact of this on the mental health of graduate students.

Dr Krogman provided a summary of each recommendation as outlined within the Report and commented on possible solutions for implementation, specific to each of these recommendations.

During the discussion surrounding this report, members expressed a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: commendations for the report; a query whether the report could be shared publicly; commentary that some individuals do not possess the qualities of a good supervisor; that increasing faculty workloads impact individuals' ability to provide quality supervision; clarification surrounding the lack of existing protocols for allowing graduate students to change supervisors; updates

regarding tools aimed at assisting graduate students; that the report accurately details the change of culture within graduate studies; that graduate coordinators are part of the equation; that there are instances where supervisors off-load their responsibilities onto reviewers; that there are additional considerations for supervising course-based, part-time students who do not reside on campus; that the GSA is working on reviewing the Report and determining what it sees as next steps; clarification about a program being developed in PeopleSoft to track graduate students and the emergence of tracking graduate students' progression through their programs; a suggestion to create a website for potential supervisors in order to provide them with the tools necessary to carry out their supervisory responsibilities and obligations; and clarification surrounding the finality and public availability of this report.

7. University of Alberta's Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL): Update from the Interim Director

There were no documents.

Presenter: Genevieve Maheux-Pelletier, Educational Developer, Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Dr Maheux-Pelletier provided members with an update in relation to recent activities and sessions hosted by CTL, including:

- Bringing together students of different academic levels: Research findings and best practices for "slash" courses
- Back to Basics Before You Flip: Course Design for F2F (Face-to-Face) and Flipped Environments
- Catalysts: A Conversation Series on Teaching, Design of Multidomain Demonstrations
- Sessions on: teaching philosophy; preparing a teaching dossier; blended learning course design
- The CTL Peer Consultation Program

STANDING ITEMS

8. GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC) Update

There were no documents.

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

Discussion:
There was no discussion.

9. GFC Academic Standards Committee (ASC) Update

There were no documents.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

There was no discussion.

10. GFC Facilities Development Committee (FDC) Update

There were no documents.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
There was no discussion.

11. Question Period

There were no questions.

INFORMATION REPORTS

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

There were no items.

13. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

14. Adjournment

The Co-Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:55 pm.