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

Wednesday, February 03, 2021
Zoom Virtual Meeting
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:
John Nychka, Chair
Benjamin Cheung
David Draper
Ivan Fair
Simran Ghoman
Bora Kim
Janice Kung
Hollis Lai
Pascal Lupien
Brian Maraj
Abner Monteiro

Kerry Mummery
Karsten Mündel
Sharon Murphy (delegate)
Cheryl Poth
Sachiketha Reddy
Norma Rodenburg
Ali Shiri
non-voting:
Brad Hamdon
Cosette Lemelin
Mike MacGregor
Kate Peters

REGRETS:
Dale Askey

Staff:
Heather Richholt, Coordinator

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)

Motion: Mündel/Maraj

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

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of December 2, 2020

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair CLE

Motion: Mündel/Maraj

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the open session minutes of December 2, 2020.
CARRIED

3. Comments from the Chair (no documents)

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair CLE

Discussion:
The Chair informed members about the discussion on remote learning and assessment at the January 25 meeting of GFC. He noted that the Office of the Provost had established a taskforce on remote teaching and learning with himself and Associate Dean of Students Helen Vallianatos as co-chairs. He explained that the taskforce would address immediate and longer-term issues.

The Chair also spoke about the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) review of the Faculty Excellence Teaching Awards that was underway.

The Chair updated the committee on the Evaluation and Grading Procedure recommendation that CLE put forward at their meeting of December 2, 2020. He explained that Tammy Hopper, the Vice-Provost (Programs), sought some additional advice from General Counsel about the risk of continuing the term with the procedure unchanged, in the hopes that a more holistic review of the Procedure could be undertaken. As a result the Chair expected that a more complete review of these procedures would come back to CLE when ready for discussion.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4.   Updates

A. Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

Dr Lemelin was not able to attend during this item so provided her update later in the meeting.

Presenter(s): Cosette Lemelin, Assistant Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning

Discussion:
Dr Lemelin spoke about CTL's efforts to gather feedback including a survey of 1500 instructors who used CTL's services in 2020. She also noted that questions were being asked during one-on-one meetings and in webinars to serve continuing efforts to meet the needs of the community. Dr Lemelin also informed members of a new section on the CTL website regarding multifaceted evaluation, the trailer for *Territorial Acknowledgements: Going Beyond the Script*, and work underway to make the CTL website more approachable and searchable.

B. Information Technology
- USRI Visualization Improvements

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Mike MacGregor, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Services & Technology)

Discussion:
Dr MacGregor spoke about the Universal Student Rating of Instruction (USRI) Visualization Improvements to make the compiled data more easily accessible and searchable.

Members asked questions about access to the data and were informed that the access was not changing but that the format was more user friendly.

C. Library and Museums

Presenter(s): Sharon Murphy, Associate University Librarian

Discussion:
Ms Murphy noted the following points:
- Bookstore operations were being transferred to Ancillary Services in the Facilities and Operations portfolio under the Service Excellence Transformation (SET) initiative;

- Curbside delivery and pick up, and interlibrary loan services had resumed; and
- Cameron Library remained closed in alignment with the province's COVID-19 public health regulations.

D. General Faculties Council

Presenter(s): Kate Peters, GFC Secretary and Manager, GFC Services

Discussion:
Ms Peters made note of the conversation on remote teaching and learning at the January 25 meeting of GFC, and the upcoming conversation on collegial governance at the continuation of that meeting on February 8. She also observed that 3 motions recommending to GFC on measures related to remote learning and assessment from the Council on Student Affairs (COSA), led by the International Students' Association (ISA), would come to the GFC Executive Committee for discussion on February 10 and then to GFC on February 22.

5. Remote Learning (no documents)

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair CLE; Wendy Rodgers, Deputy Provost

Discussion:
The Chair acknowledged that the university was still learning and working to solve the problems that had arisen as a result of the emergency move to remote delivery in March 2020. He noted that in addition to this work, it was also important to be proactive and look to the future and how to approach teaching and learning in different ways. The Chair asked members to consider the university's longer-term relationship to remote learning and the pedagogies, technologies, and training that would be needed. He emphasized the need to listen to others and think beyond current positions and constraints.

During the discussion, members asked questions and expressed opinions including but not limited to:
- potential opportunities to increase the university's educational reach through online teaching;
- that some subjects, and teaching and learning styles worked well with online learning and some did not;
- that the University of Alberta had not engaged with online learning much in the past because it was the acknowledged domain of Athabasca University;
- the need to look at our regulatory framework and the way the rules could facilitate or hinder moving forward in the remote learning environment;
- that teaching with an online platform required a different skill set for students and instructors, and that supports for skill development were a critical element;
- the importance of a shift in pedagogies to avoid simply transplanting current methods into the remote environment;
- the potential for training students how to better connect to resources and succeed in a digital environment;
- providing options for students to attend courses remotely and in person;
- that challenges in the remote environment were different for undergraduate and graduate, small and large class sizes, labs and lectures, practical and theoretical knowledge, and that a one size fits all approach would not be effective;
- developing training that provided concrete examples, best practices, and solutions;
- reviewing and learning from successes and failures in remote learning at the University of Alberta and at other institutions;
- that the pandemic had pushed the community into remote learning but now was an opportunity for students and instructors to think about options;
- strategies for creating community in online learning and how to establish human connection beyond traditional methods; and
- how common first year seminars could contribute to the community vibe and how this had been developed at Augustana Campus with a mixed cohort of students.

The Chair thanked members for the engaged discussion and acknowledged that there was more work for the committee to do around planning and building for the future.

6. Student Experience of Teaching and Learning (SETL) Taskforce Update (no documents)

Presenter(s): Brian Maraj, Co-Chair SETL Taskforce; Cheryl Poth, Co-Chair SETL Taskforce

Discussion:
The task force co-chairs provided an update of the second meeting of the task force, noting the interesting presentation they had been given on the history of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRIs). They observed that the work to reimagine the student experience of teaching and USRIs was complex and that the following points were among those to consider:
- appropriate use of the data;
- closing the loop with students;
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion;
- metrics for in person and remote teaching; and
- the future of USRIs since many institutions were eliminating them.

The Chair also noted that evaluation of teaching was meant to be multifaceted and the university was not really achieving that.

7. Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Supervisory Initiatives

Presenter(s): Brooke Milne, Vice-Provost and Dean, FGSR

Discussion:
Dr Milne gave an overview of the FGSR's work on supervisory initiatives that were aimed at supporting graduate student success, and enhancing the graduate student and supervisor relationship. She explained how the standardized progress reports would ensure that regular and consistent feedback was gathered in a transparent way that would meet current requirements. She noted that many students struggled with the power differential and that the tool would provide a record, as well as a way for students to raise concerns. Regarding supervisory membership and training, Dr Milne pointed out that the University of Alberta was an outlier by having no structure for this. She explained that existing faculty would automatically have membership and that training would be available for new and current faculty members.

During the discussion, members asked questions and expressed opinions including but not limited to:
- the potential for consultation with Chairs' Council;
- FGSR's place in academic restructuring;
- support for the proactive nature of supervisory training;
- whether the collective agreement would allow for mandatory membership;
- information technology and prepopulated data in the progress reports; and
- how course-based graduate supervision would factor in to these initiatives.

8. Question Period

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair CLE

Discussion:
A member asked about the taskforce on remote teaching and learning and whether it would have a student member from the International Students' Association.

The Chair replied that he would share the membership with the committee once it was finalized.

INFORMATION REPORTS

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

There were no items.

10.   Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

11.   Adjournment
        - Next meeting of CLE: March 3, 2021
        - Next meeting of GFC: February 22, 2021

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:50 p.m.