



General Faculties Council
Committee on the Learning Environment
Minutes

Thursday, January 13, 2011
2-1 Council Chamber
2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Colleen Skidmore (Co-Chair), Renée Elio (delegate), James Eastham, Andrea Rawluk (delegate), Scott Delinger (delegate), Heather Kanuka, Ada Schmude (delegate), Rachel Milner, John Boeglin, Katy Campbell, Dustin Chelen, Elaine Chow, Lili Liu, Fern Snart, Bob Luth, Nathalie Kermaal, Sheree Kwong See, Marlene Lewis (Coordinator & Scribe)

PRESENTERS AND GUESTS:

Marlene Lewis, Coordinator, GFC CLE and Associate Secretary to GFC, University Governance
Bob Luth, Professor, Faculty of Science and GFC CLE and Cross-Appointed Representative from the GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC)
Colleen Skidmore, Vice-Provost (Academic) and Co-Chair, GFC CLE

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Liu/Luth

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) approve the Agenda.

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Minutes of December 2, 2010

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

The title of Item 9 should read The Academic Plan Subcommittee.

Motion: Boeglin/Chow

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) approve the Minutes of December 2, 2010, as amended.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Chair

Update on Regular Session Minutes of November 4, 2010 – the Coordinator provided the following comments regarding the November 4, 2010 Minutes of GFC CLE: There was an omission in the November 4, 2010 minutes to be captured in today's minutes. The November 4, 2010 Minutes noted initial interest

from Andrea Rawluk and Dustin Chelen to work on the proposed Academic Plan sub-committee. As for a formal membership for a CLE Academic Plan Subcommittee, the Chair expressed that a more complete membership for a CLE Academic Plan Subcommittee would only become clearer once CLE had an opportunity to review the revised draft Academic Plan to see how a Subcommittee and CLE's Workplan could support the new Academic Plan. It was anticipated that with the review of the revised version, CLE members would have a better idea about working on the Subcommittee and additional volunteers would then be solicited at the January meeting.

The Chair commented on a number of issues of interest to members including the following: members were asked to consider volunteering or nominating a colleague to showcase and share their classroom expertise at an "open door" classroom session during the Festival of Teaching, March 7-10, 2011; launch of a new Governance website at www.governance.ualberta.ca due to the website's transition to the Sitecore environment; an interim agreement was signed by the University on copyright with the understanding that the guidelines outlined in the memo distributed to the University community in November remain operational.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Assessment and Grading Update

Presenter: Bob Luth, Professor, Faculty of Science and GFC CLE and Cross-Appointed Representative from the GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC)

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Discussion:

Professor Luth, Faculty of Science and GFC CLE and Cross-Appointed Representative from the GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC), provided a summary of the feedback to date from Faculties and student groups on the proposed purposes and principles of assessment, and noted the following common themes of concern: that the outcome of the process will prescribe a common and uniform assessment regime and grading scheme for the University, that disciplinary differences are not recognized, that the current policy's flexible nature will be lost, that while the purposes are appropriate, they are not prioritized, that the principles are prescriptive, that the word 'oversight' suggests a loss of Faculty and department autonomy. Professor Luth further noted that the goal of his work is to formulate new draft University-level policy and procedures for assessment and grading with an expected completion date of June, 2011. Finally, Professor Luth distributed the Terms of Reference for the CLE Subcommittee on Assessment and grading, and a memo summarizing feedback to date from Faculties and students.

During discussion, members expressed questions and comments concerning the following matters: a need for improvement in the degree of communication between professors and students on course assessment frameworks used including those for multi-section courses, benefits to students in accessing past grade distributions in courses, the pros and cons of publishing course grade distributions, possible additions of members to subcommittee with final agreement that a reference group of members be formed so the subcommittee could draw upon their expertise as needed.

5. Academic Plan

Presenter: Colleen Skidmore, Vice-Provost (Academic) and Co-Chair, GFC CLE

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Discussion:

Dr Skidmore, Vice-Provost (Academic) and Co-Chair of GFC CLE presented the item noting that the Plan before members is the version that was discussed at the Academic Plan Review Session in December and that the version GFC CLE will review at its February, 2011 meeting will be the one that will proceed through the governance process. Dr Skidmore sees GFC CLE's Academic Plan subcommittee working with the directions of the Academic Plan in the upcoming academic year.

During discussion, members expressed questions and comments concerning the following matters: Edmonton Public School's use of "character education"; being more inclusive about learning communities by expanding the Plan's limited mention of undergraduates, graduates and post-doctoral fellows; need to rework the global engagement and international research pieces; in the section on "embracing our unique history and contemporary place", the misalignment of Enterprise Square which denotes a place in the 'CSJ/Augustana/Enterprise Square'; general discussion on attributes and competencies including the importance of distinguishing between the two terms and educating the University community as to the differences while reviewing practices of other universities; using less prescriptive language (ie, "identifying") and articulating how core competencies are to be developed.

6. GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Workplan

- Graduate Studies Issues
- Recognition of Teaching
- International Issues
- Fostering Pedagogy of Technology

With agreement from the Committee, the item was deferred to a future GFC CLE meeting with a comment from the Chair that once the Committee had the opportunity to review the final version of the Academic Plan in February, members could then have a general discussion on how the potential Workplan items would be explored in relation to the Academic Plan

STANDING ITEMS

7. GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC) Update

Presenter: Bob Luth, Professor, Faculty of Science and GFC CLE and Cross-Appointed Representative from the GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC)

Purpose of the Proposal: Discussion/information.

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Discussion:

Professor Luth provided a brief update including mention of the Academic Plan and a Proposal for the Establishment of the Institute for Land Use Innovation (ILUI) (Faculty of Science).

8. GFC Academic Standards Committee (ASC) Update

No update was given as the December ASC meeting was cancelled.

9. GFC Facilities Development Committee (FDC) Update

No update was given as the December FDC meeting was cancelled.

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

No update was given as TLAT had not met since the last GFC CLE meeting.

INFORMATION ITEMS

11. Items Approved by the Committee by E-mail Ballots

The following items were sent to members between meetings. Any member who wished to debate an item understood that he/she should have contacted University Governance at least 2 business days prior to the meeting to request that the item be placed on the Agenda as a separate item, allowing for an expert to attend the meeting to speak on the item.

No items to date.

12. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

Copyright and Course Material at the U of A: Q-and-A generated on Nov. 19, 2010 (sent by e-mail on December 3, 2010)

Notice of rescheduling the GFC CLE January meeting from January 6, 2011 to January 13, 2011 (sent by e-mail on December 3, 2010)

13. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 PM.