



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

Wednesday, January 25, 2017
2-31 South Academic Building (SAB)
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Voting Members:

Sarah Forgie	Chair (Delegate), Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Marina Banister	Member, Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union
Janice Causgrove Dunn	Member, Associate Dean or Associate Chair, Teaching and Learning (or equivalent)
Shannon Erichsen	Member, Support staff representative, elected by GFC
Firouz Khodayari	Member, Vice-President (Academic), Graduate Students' Association
Eva Lemaire	Member, Academic Staff
Glen Loppnow	Member, Associate Dean or Associate Chair, Teaching and Learning (or equivalent)
Brian Maraj	Member, Major Teaching Award Recipient
Luis Marin	Member, Graduate Student at-Large
Janice Miller-Young	Member, Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Jeff Rawlings	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President of Information Technology
Norma Rodenburg	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and University Registrar
Carrie Smith-Prei	Member, Academic staff member and currently a member of GFC
Quinten Starko	Member, Undergraduate Student at-Large
Mani Vaidyanathan	Member, Academic Staff
Stanley Varnhagen	Member, Academic Staff

Presenter(s):

Uwe Hacke	Chair, GFC University Teaching Awards Committee
Ken Cor	Associate Director, Assessment, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Fahim Rahman	Co-chair, CLE Subcommittee to Explore Teaching Tenure Stream at the University of Alberta
Sarah Forgie	Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
Janice Miller-Young	Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning

Staff:

Meg Brolley, Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Maraj/Loppnow

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

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of November 30, 2016

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Miller-Young/Varnhagen

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of December 7, 2016.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Chair (no documents)

There were no comments.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Overview of the University Teaching Awards Committee (UTAC) (no documents)

Presenter(s): Uwe Hacke

Discussion:

Dr Hacke provided the committee with an overview of the GFC University Teaching Awards and noted that the deadline from nominations was February 24, 2017. During the discussion it was noted that: nominations usually come forward from the dean; that some awards are focused on experienced instructors while others are targeted at individuals early in their career; there is a good pool of applicants for most of the awards except the teaching unit awards; the importance of ensuring equity and diversity and identifying any perceived obstacles in the application process.

5. Moodle Syllabus and Mapping Tool Demonstration

Presenter(s): Ken Cor

Purpose: To provide for information purposes, a demonstration of a TLEF supported project that involved the creation of a Moodle plug in. This tool can be used by instructors to create course syllabi that meet University of Alberta course outline policy. The tool also creates an electronic database of course information that can be used by faculties to run various types of curriculum mapping reports. The demonstration is meant to gauge interest from Faculties to begin to use the tool to manage syllabi creation and perform mapping. Support for further development will be discussed.

Dr Cor reported on a pilot project in the Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Science, an outcome of a Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (TLEF) award to Drs. Cheryl Sadowski, Sharla King and Ken Cor. He noted that the project involved the development of a tool to facilitate curriculum mapping that aligned with assessments and teaching strategies and also provided a syllabus creation tool. Dr Cor provided a comprehensive demonstration and noted that the tool could be tailored to meet the individual needs of a Faculty. The value of the tool for program evaluation and accreditation purposes was noted.

During the discussion, members raised various questions and issues including: whether students would be able to search through the database; whether a French language version was available; challenges in ensuring consistency on items such as learning outcomes between individual users; potential use as part of a new professor orientation. It was noted that the tool would be usefully administratively to ensure that course syllabi were consistent and complete across a Faculty.

Further information will come to the committee at a later date after discussions with the Provost's Office, IST, and interested Faculties.

6. Survey: Mapping the Campus Teaching and Learning Landscape

Presenter(s): Janice Miller-Young

Purpose: CTL would like to conduct a survey to investigate faculty teaching practices, faculty attitudes about teaching, and faculty engagement with the scholarship of teaching and learning, related to undergraduate teaching across the University of Alberta. The information collected through the survey will provide evidence to inform CTL initiatives and programming in order to better serve the needs of faculty.

Discussion:

Dr Miller-Young presented an overview of the proposed project which would provide a focus for CTL for a period of time. She reported on discussions with the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning at the University of Calgary regarding the potential of combining data to add to the literature on disciplinary differences.

During the discussion, Dr Miller-Young confirmed that the survey would include contract staff, and students on items related to the learning environment. Members expressed caution about: a collaboration with Calgary noting differences in institutional cultures; the risk of low response rates normally seen with email surveys; and the length of time required for participants to complete the survey.

Suggestions included asking questions on: to include method of delivery such as flipped classrooms and blended learning; how instructors obtain feedback and how useful it is; how safe do instructors feel in implementing innovations in practice. Other suggestions included: providing the survey in French; clearly defining what the data will be used for and why participants should take part in the survey.

7. GFC CLE Subcommittee to Explore Teaching Tenure Stream at University of Alberta – White Paper

Presenter(s): Fahim Rahman

Purpose: To consult members of GFC CLE and seek their advice on the White Paper containing a Brief Analysis of Arguments For and Against Creation of Teaching-Only Stream. Mr. Rahman led a small CLE subcommittee that provided advice on the preparation of a report summarizing its discussions, review of existing evidence and its likely consequences (excluding financial implications) for teaching and learning environment at the institution. Further to the discussion on November 2, 2016 at CLE, additional information was added comparing teaching streams at eight other Canadian institutions based on publicly available information (mostly institutional policies, collective bargaining agreements, data reported in institutional planning and analysis, and in rare cases media communication). These institutions represent a cross-section of Canadian post-secondary institutions of different size, research ability, and membership in U15 and are spread across Canada (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Nova Scotia).

Discussion:

Mr Rahman provided an overview of the additional information provided based on the committee's feedback in November. Committee members noted the value in having instructors who can explain complicated things well. Caution was expressed by the committee on differentiating streams of faculty members and the risk of the streams being viewed unequally. Comments included: career mobility, variability in lifespan of a professor, what is the merit of doing this, teaching not given the strategic significance of research, what are the expectations around scholarly activity, how to compete with research grants, what is the goal of having a differentiated stream, how does this relate to the current FSO model. The committee advised that the report should define a position and address the open ended questions. The committee also reiterated the recognition of equality between the two streams was very important.

8. USRIs (no documents)

Presenter(s): Sarah Forgie

Discussion:

The Chair reported that CTL had completed a summary of previous reports at the U of A around USRIs and teaching evaluation, a literature review of teaching evaluation and, after receiving ethics approval, was engaged in conducting interviews with chairs about how they evaluate teaching. The questions used in the interviews had been presented to CLE members at previous meetings and discussed. She noted that there is very little in the literature on USRIs and how administrators use this data and that one of the outcomes of this project would be a paper to contribute to the literature. There was a short discussion on student opinion surveys.

9. Question Period

Ms Banister invited committee members to attend the Students' Union Interdisciplinary Education conference to be held on February 4, 2017.

INFORMATION REPORTS

10. Items Approved by the Committee by E-Mail Ballots (non-debatable)

There were no items.

11. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:55.