



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

Wednesday, March 01, 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)
Fahim Rahman (Delegate)	Member, Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union
Gerald Beasley	Member, Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian
Allen Berger	Member, Dean Representative, selected by Deans' Council
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, Staff representative and Major Teaching Award Recipient
Luis Marin	Member, Graduate Student at-Large
Janice Miller-Young	Member, Academic 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
Quinten Starko	Member, Undergraduate Student at-Large
Mani Vaidyanathan	Member, Academic Staff
Stanley Varnhagen	Member, Academic Staff

Presenter(s):

Sarah Forgie	Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives) and Chair, GFC CLE
Marc de Montigny	Member, GFC <i>Ad Hoc</i> Committee on Academic Governance Including Delegated Authority
Betty Jo Werthmann	Member, GFC <i>Ad Hoc</i> Committee on Academic Governance Including Delegated Authority
Fahim Rahman	President, University of Alberta Students' Union
Jeff Rawlings	Director/Relationship Management, Office of the Associate Vice-President (Information Services & Technology)
Adam Giraldeau	Solutions and Standards, Information Services and Technology
Francisco Vargas	Research Coordinator, Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Rawlings/Varnhagen

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

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of January 25, 2017

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Miller-Young/Maraj

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of January 25, 2017.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Chair

There were no comments.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Terms of Reference TOUR of GFC Standing Committees

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Sarah Forgie; Marc de Montigny; Betty Jo Werthmann

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:

Dr de Montigny and Ms Werthman provided an update on the work of the GFC *Ad Hoc* Committee noting that the Provost was receptive to delegating more authority to GFC CLE.

It was noted that GFC CLE currently has a dual reporting structure to both GFC APC and the GFC Executive Committee and members noted that some elements of this linkage would still be required. Members pointed out that it would be beneficial to have a more formal reporting relationship in terms of the reports that GFC CLE generates, as they are comprehensive reports with sound recommendations. The committee observed that the recommendations made do not seem to result in any outcomes. Members would like to see a formalized way for subcommittee reports go straight to the GFC Executive Committee for immediate review.

Members suggested that language within the Terms of Reference, specifically 'fostering, nurturing and promoting', could be strengthened to help bolster the mandate of the Committee; the current language does not make it clear what the committee is empowered to do. In addition, members noted that certain items within the Terms of Reference are difficult to define.

The Vice Provost and Chief Librarian noted that Learning Services would like to feel more empowered by GFC and would benefit from the guidance of a governance body. Learning Services would be looking for advice from the academy on many of their activities. Historically, there was a GFC Library Committee that specifically dealt with library information and it might be beneficial to revisit that former committee's Terms of Reference in order to see what was included.

The addition of an elected librarian, a sessional instructor and the Vice-President (Research) were all suggested. The GFC *Ad Hoc* Committee has also asked about the composition including a Department Chair

and a Dean and an Associate Dean. The committee noted that there are very different perspectives found in these roles, but they could be elected by GFC rather than appointed by their respective bodies. The Committee further noted the importance of these members in representing the FEC process. Members suggested that the inclusion of a cross-appointed member from GFC FDC might also be beneficial.

The Chair asked committee members to send any further comments by email.

5. GFC CLE Subcommittee to Explore Teaching Tenure Stream at the University of Alberta - Update

There were no documents.

Presenter(s): Fahim Rahman

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:

During the discussion, members offered Mr Rahman several suggestions, including clarifying the concept of equality of roles and identifying an appropriate title for this position.

6. CoursEval Presentation

There were no documents.

Presenter(s): Adam Giraldeau; Jeff Rawlings

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:

The Chair deferred this item to the next meeting.

7. USRI Response Rate Update

There were no documents.

Presenter(s): Adam Giraldeau; Jeff Rawlings

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:

Mr Rawlings and Mr Giraldeau reported that eUSRIs are done in accordance with GFC policy and provided members with an overview of the eUSRI process.

They reported that the Fall 2016 response rate for lectures was 62.8%; this has been consistent over the last three years. They confirmed that this is about 10% lower than the paper USRIs but it was noted that the University of Alberta is performing better than its peers who have about a 50% response rate for online evaluations.

There was a discussion around how to improve response rates including: increasing the window of administration from 7 to 14 days, providing class time to complete USRI, and best practices such as stressing the importance and use of the USRI results.

Members provided comments on providing data on small classes; providing clear information to students, particularly with respect to lab instructors, to make it easy for them to complete; challenges with response rate

related to the number of USRIs a student may be asked to complete and the number of email reminders; why students are not completing the surveys; ensuring that students know why they are completing the USRI.

During the ensuing discussion, members expressed several comments and questions, including whether students have been asked about completing their USRIs and what might motivate them to do so. It was questioned if there was any data on the kinds of responses, i.e. positive vs negative, coming in earlier rather than later.

Mr Rawlings reported that specific recommendations would be offered at the next meeting.

8. USRIs - Update

There were no documents

Presenter(s): Francisco Vargas; Rebecca Best-Bertwistle; Sarah Forgie

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:

Mr Vargas provided an update on the preliminary results of the study noting that the full report is still in progress and will be provided when it is available.

The survey has indicated that the vast majority of chairs use the USRI to evaluate teaching with a large focus on the overall instructor was excellent. A smaller proposition used department specific instruments to meet specific needs. It was also noted that, due to small class sizes, graduate courses tended to have more open ended questions for evaluation. Mr Vargas noted consistency in the responses and indicated that saturation of the data was achieved quite early in the process. There was a discussion on the use of median scores and reference data.

The survey also indicated that most Chairs were looking for support to aid in evaluation of teaching as most did not receive any training on teaching evaluation. Chairs felt that time and resources were major constraints and having an office to aid in this would be beneficial. There is general concern that Chairs do not have effective means to evaluate teaching.

Members asked if the data included a sense of the context of the course such as class size, level, complexity, and lifecycle of instructor. It was noted that there is some data to look at and comparisons over multiple years occurs for tenure purposes.

The Chair noted that Norma Nocente was the supervisor of the project and that they planned to publish results to add to the literature on the subject.

9. Discussion on Learning Outcomes

There were no documents.

Presenter(s): Sarah Forgie

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:

The Chair deferred this item to the next meeting.

10. Question Period

There were no questions.

INFORMATION REPORTS

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

There were no items.

12. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

13. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.