UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

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

Wednesday, September 29, 2021
Zoom Virtual Meeting
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

John Nychka, Chair	Benjamin Cheung	Kate Peters
Kathy Haddadkar	Bora Kim	Lara McClelland
Abner Moneiro	Angie Mandeville	
Ali Shari	Hollis Lai	**REGRETS:**
Connie Winther	Pierre Lemelin	Brad Hamdon
Norma Rodenburg	Al Meldrum	Mike MacGregor
Mary Olukotun	Shauna Wilton	
Christine Hughes	Angela Bayduza	Staff:
Gregory Thomas		Heather Richholt, Coordinator
Ashmeen Aneja	*non-voting:*	Edyta McLoughlin, Scribe
	Tommy Mayberry	

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)

Discussion:
Before calling the meeting to order, the Chair read the following territorial acknowledgement:

> The University of Alberta resides on Treaty 6 territory and the homeland of the Métis. This territory is a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples whose histories, languages and cultures continue to influence our community. To acknowledge the territory is to recognize the longer history of these lands. The acknowledgement signifies our commitment to working in Good Relations with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples as we engage in our institutional work, uplifting the whole people, for the University for Tomorrow.

The Chair acknowledged that the following day, September 30, was the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. This inaugural day, which also coincided with Orange Shirt Day, was a response to The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) calls to action. The Chair encouraged members to learn more about the TRC calls to action and noted that the university's response was an ongoing commitment.

Motion: Shari/Lai

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

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of April 28, 2021

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

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

Motion: Cheung/Winther

> THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the open session minutes of April 28, 2021.
> **CARRIED**

3. Comments from the Chair (no documents)

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

Discussion:
In his comments, the Chair made note of the following:
- Welcome to new and returning members;
- Vice-Chair role - in accordance with the committee terms of reference, the committee would be electing a Vice-Chair from among the academic staff members on the committee; and
- an addition to Item 5, Updates - report from Lara McClelland on Facilities and Operations.

4. GFC Committee Orientation

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

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

Discussion:
Ms Peters provided an orientation and spoke about the committee's mandate and the responsibilities of members. She also spoke about Governance meeting formats and the potential to hold hybrid meetings in the future, as well as upcoming changes to the GFC Guiding Documents which were expected to come forward for recommendation at the October 4 GFC Executive Committee meeting, and for approval at the October 24 GFC meeting.

The Chair highlighted that during discussions, he would like to give everyone a chance to speak before hearing from members a second time.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

5. Updates

   A. Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

Presenter(s): Tommy Mayberry, Executive Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning

Discussion:
T Mayberry spoke about the 2021 Online Teaching Institute event that took place in August, ongoing collaborations around hybrid classrooms, and the striking of the Steering Committee for the Festival of Teaching and Learning for 2022. They also noted the current hiring process for a new Lead Education Developer, Assessment and Evaluation, and the potential for an October job posting for two more developers: one focused around a Indigenous Portfolio and another one around the Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) Portfolio.

   B. Information Technology

Dr MacGregor was not in attendance.

C. Library and Museums

Presenter(s): Connie Winther, Associate University Librarian

Discussion:
Ms Winther spoke about the Libraries reopening as of August 16, 2021 and that the Libraries were serving as one of the touchdown spots for remote campus learning. She also noted that the Research Data Centre, Digital Scholarship Centre, Bruce Peel Special Collections and the Archives were open by appointment only, and that the new Health Sciences Library had moved into the design phase.

D. General Faculties Council

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

Discussion:
Ms Peters noted that the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Supervisory Initiatives had been approved at the last GFC meeting and provided an update on several items coming forward to GFC including the changes to the Meeting Procedural Rules and the decommission of Section 65.3 (University of Alberta Student Housing Policy) from the GFC Policy Manual.

E. Facilities and Operations

Presenter(s): Lara McClelland, Associate Vice-President (Integrated Planning and Partnerships), Facilities and Operations

Discussion:
Ms McClelland shared that a majority of Facilities and Operations staff were back on campus and noted that the Facilities Optimization Oversight Committee, and the Implementation Team were looking at all of the campus buildings and assets across campus to help address the issue of deferred maintenance.

6. Report of the Student Experience of Teaching and Learning (SETL) Taskforce

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

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

Discussion:
Dr Maraj noted that the final report of the Taskforce had been submitted and thanked the committee members for their input and contribution to the process.

Dr Poth noted that the final report of the Taskforce included four recommended principles for SETL, which they hoped would guide action moving forward:
- Equitable and inclusive environment and culture;
- Collaboration for Enhanced Engagement;
- Accessibility for Decision-Making; and
- Usefulness for Effective Teaching.

She also noted the recommendations for next steps, which included:
- Consideration of Indigenous Initiatives, Equity and SETL as important values to consider before moving forward;
- Creation of a communication plan to articulate the alignment of SETL with the Framework for Effective Teaching was suggested to ensure the "new" approach to SETL could be distinguished;
- Principle-based improvement of SETL instruments with specific suggestions on instruments and protocols; and
- Involvement of numerous stakeholders on an ongoing basis in the development and implementation of SETL.

During the discussion, members asked questions and expressed opinions including but not limited to:
- from a practical standpoint, what would the peer review implementation look like;
- progressive development and the need to change the culture around teaching; and
- whether the Taskforce report could be used to create a guide for a multifaceted evaluation of teaching.

7.   Update on the Provost's Taskforce on Remote Teaching and Learning

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

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

Discussion:
The Chair provided a brief update on the work of the Taskforce noting that, following discussions at GFC in early 2021, the Provost formed a Taskforce on Remote Teaching and Learning to work on the challenges with the remote learning environment, including challenges related to synchronous learning, participation grades, and online proctoring.

The Chair noted that the Fall 2021 Recommendations for Instructors guide was shared with instructors in August 2021.

During the discussion, members asked questions and expressed opinions including but not limited to:
- a request for data regarding the usage of Smart Exam Monitor and Examlock;
- the importance of timely communication; and
- how these recommendations related to plans for a longer-term online strategy.

8.   Teaching, Learning and Evaluation Policy
      – Appendix A

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair CLE; Toni Samek, Professor (School of Library and Information Studies) and Chair of Appendix A (*student input survey*) Working Group; Tyler Kuhnert, Faculty Relations Officer and Project Advisor, Appendix A (*student input survey)* Working Group

Discussion:
The Chair explained that this item was before the committee to provide a progress update, share the draft policy suite, and continue discussions related to the advancement of the Teaching, Learning and Evaluation Policy for the University of Alberta. He shared that the establishment of the new Policy Suite in UAPPOL and the concurrent rescission of Section 111 of the GFC Policy Manual was intended to update the institutional approach towards teaching and learning in alignment with *For the Public Good* and other strategic initiatives. He noted efforts to:
- incorporate the principles of the Effective Teaching Framework and communication of expectations into one central policy suite;
- house clear processes related to student input on the evaluation and/or experience of teaching within the Policy's procedures;
- include revised student input questions; and
- provide clear guidelines on multi-faceted evaluation of teaching.

Dr Samek and Mr Kuhnert gave a presentation on the work of the Appendix A (SPOT Survey) Working Group: Draft Student Survey, and asked for feedback on the following question groupings:
- Respect & Inclusivity;
- Learning Experience;
- Course Design & Management;

- Assignments & Assessments; and
- Student Self-Supported Learning.

During the discussion, members asked questions and expressed opinions including but not limited to:
- what could and could not be learned from student surveys;
- how to gather constructive suggestions rather than reflections;
- the general idea of teaching excellence;
- challenges for some clinical teachers in the Health Sciences who were not responsible for course development;
- a recommendation to replace third person "students" with a first person word such as "I" or "me";
- a recommendation to replace "instructor" with "instruction" to focus on teaching rather than on the person;
- a suggestion that the use of the past tense invites bias and that it was better to use an active rather than passive voice;
- concern about the interpretation of responses to the question of how engaged a student was;
- a suggestion to borrow language from a research grant proposal and craft a question which asks students to rank in comparison to other courses, Top 5%, 20%, 50%, etc.;
- removing reference to the environment, which is not the responsibility of the instructor, and instead focusing on what the instructor did to innovate or accommodate within the environment;
- options for courses with multiple instructors;
- whether skills could be the focus instead of excellence; and
- the use of specific language around course objectives.

9. Question Period

There were no questions.

INFORMATION REPORTS

10. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

- Report on Library Pandemic Response – 2020
- Remote Meeting – First cycle of GFC Standing Committees

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

CLOSING SESSION

11. Adjournment
- Next meeting of CLE: October 27, 2021
- Next meeting of GFC: October 25, 2021

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