



General Faculties Council
Academic Planning Committee
Approved Minutes

Wednesday, June 08, 2011
3-15 University Hall
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

ATTENDEES:

Carl Amrhein (Chair), Lorne Babiuk, Phyllis Clark, Rory Tighe, Jessica Zvonkovic, Roy Coulthard, Deanna Williamson, Ernie Ingles, Joanna Harrington, Christina Rinaldi, Loren Kline, Bob Luth, Heather Green, Marc Arnal, Susan Barker, Chris Skappak, Emerson Csorba, Gerry Kendal, Fay Fletcher, Garry Bodnar (Coordinator), Lindsey Hornland (Scribe)

PRESENTERS AND GUESTS:

Carl Amrhein, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and Chair, GFC Academic Planning Committee
Gerry Kendal, Vice-Provost and University Registrar
Bob Luth, Provost's Fellow and Associate Chair, Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Members agreed to the Agenda as set forth.

THAT the GFC Academic Planning Committee approve the Agenda.

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Minutes of May 25, 2011

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Kline/Luth

THAT the GFC Academic Planning Committee approve the Minutes of May 25, 2011.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Chair

The Chair acknowledged Dr Dru Marshall, Deputy Provost, imminent departure from the University of Alberta to assume the position of Provost and Vice-President (Academic) at the University of Calgary. He also provided additional comments of interest to members.

ACTION ITEMS

4. Office of the Registrar and Student Awards' Proposed Expansion of the University of Alberta Bridging Program

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenters: Bill Connor, Special Advisor to the Provost; and Gerry Kendal, Vice-Provost and University Registrar

Purpose of the Proposal: To expand the University of Alberta Bridging Program to include a Stage 1 and Stage 2 which will provide students an option to ladder from the first to the second. The University of Alberta Bridging Program was begun in 2003, and it has been evolving and growing since that time. The Bridging Program allows international students who present competitive averages or better, but who have lower than the minimum English language requirements, to be admitted to a participating Faculty while upgrading their language skills in the Faculty of Extension's English Language Program. Upon successfully completing the Bridging Program, students may either continue their degree programs in their Faculty of registration or apply to transfer to another Faculty. At present, the participating Faculties are Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences, Arts, Augustana, Native Studies, and Science.

Both university and private foundation programs in Canada admit students with a lower level of language proficiency than our established Bridging Program, so in order to be competitive, our Bridging Program is adding a new level of language training (Bridging Program Stage 1) that will prepare otherwise qualified students to enter the established program (Bridging Program Stage 2). The proposed English language admission requirements would apply to applicants entering this new Bridging Program Stage 1.

The proposed requirements pose no risk to academic standards for the following reasons:

1. The proposed standards are comparable to or higher than requirements of competing programs in Canada.
2. Students in the Bridging Program Stage 1 will not be allowed to take credit courses until they have successfully completed Stage 1.
3. Their continuation in the University will require progression to Bridging Program Stage 2, where they will be required to pass both ESL 140 and ESL 145, the present completion requirement for Bridging Program students.

Discussion:

Dr Connor presented the proposed expansion to the Committee by noting several benefits of the Bridging Program. He explained how this expansion will ultimately allow the University to recruit more international students by providing more comprehensive programming that, in turn, will allow for better retention of these individuals.

During the ensuing discussion, Dr Connor addressed questions and comments expressed by members concerning, but not limited to, the following matter: success rates of international students who will be taking the Program and data on the success rates for those who have already taken a condensed program; the limited number of Faculties involved in the Bridging Program; the use of the Program in undergraduate studies opposed to graduate studies; how students will adjust and if they'll be able to integrate back into their regular studies once they have completed the Program.

The Chair noted the importance of the Bridging Program and recognized the effect it could have on other universities across Canada.

Motion:

THAT the GFC Academic Planning Committee approve, under delegated authority from General Faculties Council, the proposed expansion of the University of Alberta Bridging Program to include a Stage 1, with newly-defined admission requirements, and the renaming of the current Bridging Program to the University of Alberta Bridging Program Stage 2, as submitted by the Office of the Registrar and Student Awards and as set forth in Attachments 1 and 2 of the documentation, to take effect upon approval and for publication in the 2012-2013 University Calendar.

CARRIED

4A. Proposed Name Change for the Alberta Ingenuity Centre for Carbohydrate Science to the Alberta Glycomics Centre

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

5. Assessment and Grading at the University of Alberta: Update on Initiative and Draft Policy Suite

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenters: Bob Luth, Provost's Fellow and Associate Chair, Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion and feedback on the initial draft of the proposed Assessment Policy and related Procedures and University Calendar modifications. Further, it was noted that the new policy and procedures, when approved, will replace Sections 52 (*Examinations*) and 60 (*Grading*) of the GFC Policy Manual. Revisions are also proposed to Section 23 of the *University Calendar*.

Discussion:

Dr Luth introduced the proposal and indicated the importance of continued feedback from various stakeholders throughout the development of this policy. The proposed policy changes were created in response to problems and miscommunication of the University's current grading system. He noted that the policy set forth has many of the same procedures originally found in the *Calendar*; it is those that deal with Assessment Policy and Grading Procedures that have been changed more significantly.

Materials were presented to the Committee to demonstrate examples of how similar grading has been utilized at other institutions. Dr Luth explained that, although there is not a required curve for grades, a natural curve will likely appear, especially in large classes.

During the ensuing discussion, Dr Luth addressed questions and comments expressed by members concerning, but not limited to, the following matter: how these policy changes can become a vehicle for further development of the University's core competencies; how descriptors, such as "good" and "excellent," will be made uniform across departments; the need for learning outcomes to be more explicitly tied in throughout the document, and the need for professors to be utilizing learning outcomes; how the policy will allow students to be compared to one another, across departments, for awards and scholarships if there is no set standard; the suggested use of relative performance to help compare students, instead of curving; the importance of ensuring students, and professors, are clear on exactly what the framework is once the policy has been set.

Mr Ingles and the Committee thanked and congratulated Dr Luth on the work he has done thus far on the proposed Assessment Policy and related Procedures (and *Calendar* revisions).

6. Question Period

There was no discussion.

INFORMATION ITEMS

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

No items to date.

8. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

No items to date.

CLOSING SESSION

9. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:30 pm.