



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

General Faculties Council
Committee on the Learning Environment
Approved Minutes

Wednesday, December 07, 2011
3-15, UHALL
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

ATTENDEES:

Bill Connor – Interim Vice-Provost (Academic) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE), Renée Elio, Colten Yamagishi (Delegate), Roy Coulthard, Ernie Ingles, Scott Delinger (Delegate), Norma Nocente (Delegate), Ada Schmude (Delegate), Rachel Milner, John Boeglin, Trevor Woods, Anne McIntosh, Eren Cervantes-Altamirano, Brock Richardson, Lili Liu, Deanna Williamson, Garry Bodnar (Coordinator), Emily Paulsen (Scribe)

PRESENTERS AND GUESTS:

Garry Bodnar, Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
Bill Connor, Interim Vice-Provost (Academic) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (and Chair, GFC Academic Standards Committee (ASC))
Scott Delinger, IT Strategic Initiatives Officer, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Renée Elio, Associate Vice-President (Research)
Rosemary Foster, Professor, Department of Educational Policy Studies
Jeffrey Kuntz, Doctoral Student, Educational Policy Studies
Anne McIntosh, Member, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
Colleen Skidmore, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Academic) and Chair, GFC Facilities Development Committee
Deanna Williamson, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Member Cross-Appointed from the GFC Academic Planning Committee

OBSERVER:

Jonathan Schaeffer, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Elio/Williamson

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

2. Approval of the Regular Session Minutes of November 2, 2011

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Boeglin/Cervantes-Altamirano

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) approve the Minutes of November 2, 2011.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Co-Chairs

The Co-Chair noted several upcoming events of interest to members.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. GFC Facilities Development Committee (FDC) Learning Spaces Subcommittee (LSS) Draft Report

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Colleen Skidmore, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Academic) and Chair, GFC Facilities Development Committee

Purpose of the Proposal: Over the past 20 years, Facilities and Operations has been a leader in Canada in the development and identification of best practices and principles around how the institution constructs, repurposes and renovates facilities and spaces. As the campus has changed and evolved, principles and practices for the design and development of learning spaces have been periodically reviewed and refreshed by both the institution and government. These reviews involve a variety of processes like design charettes, peer reviews and literature reviews. However, despite the excellent work, the wider academic community has not been aware, for the most part, of the processes that were used in designing new spaces. There was increasing interest expressed within the wider campus community about the quality of institutional learning spaces and about the design processes used in the development of these spaces. Two standing committees of GFC, the Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) and the Facilities Development Committee (FDC), agreed that the process for development of learning spaces should be reviewed. In 2010, the Chairs of FDC and CLE agreed that a subcommittee be created (the Learning Spaces Subcommittee) that would identify and enhance current processes to aid in the planning and design of formal and informal learning spaces across all campuses. (Excerpted from the FDC Learning Spaces Subcommittee Report)

Discussion:

Dr Skidmore introduced the draft Report to members, noting that GFC FDC would be the most appropriate body to examine issues related to and provide recommendations on the enhancement of institutional learning spaces. The Report was undergoing its first 'walkthrough' and was meant to inform the University community of the practices around learning spaces. She asked members for comments which she would relay, in turn, to GFC FDC for further revision of the document.

During the ensuing discussion, Dr Skidmore addressed questions and comments from members regarding the following matters: whether or not Faculties would have the opportunity to review and provide comment on this report; a request for clarification in the document that the Students' Union Building (SUB) is owned (in large part) by the Students' Union and not the University; a recommendation to include an example in the document of how the principles would be applied to a learning space and clarification on whether or not the principles were weighted in any way; the polarizing issue around campus about work done on new buildings rather than ensuring effort is made to improve existing spaces in any substantive fashion; description of the Facilities Alterations Requests (FAR) processes, which seek to improve current facilities/spaces; and the support for ongoing operations that would be necessary for overseeing and, as

necessary, securing spaces with moveable furniture.

5. Academic Chapter of the Comprehensive Institutional Plan (CIP)

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenters: Colleen Skidmore, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Academic); Renée Elio, Associate Vice-President (Research)

Purpose of the Proposal: To discuss the approach to revising the Academic Chapter of the Comprehensive Institutional Plan (CIP) for the coming year. The Academic Chapter of the CIP contains the access plans and the research plans for the institution.

Discussion:

Dr Skidmore presented the item to members. She explained that the first iteration of the CIP was prepared last year and was extremely well received by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology (AET). She noted that the document becomes strategically important since it guides the Ministry with regard to the University's budget allocations. This year, there was a request to simply revise and update it. Dr Skidmore noted that the Ministry had been given a presentation on CIP two days earlier and that this had been well received.

Dr Elio continued the presentation by speaking to the research section of the CIP's Academic Chapter; she emphasized the attempt made through the CIP to send a message about the need for more funding for core institutional research infrastructure. She noted that this kind of research serves the Capital Region and benefits both government and industry. Diversified excellence and internationalization were also mentioned as key messages. Dr Elio further noted that there was a concern regarding Aboriginal, Métis, and rural student initiatives across the academy. Through discussion with Faculties, undergraduate study abroad programs, student engagement, student/professor ratios, and development of a strong online presence were also brought up as issues of concern.

During the ensuing discussion, Drs Skidmore and Elio addressed questions and comments from members regarding the following matters: several members asked whether or not there would be an opportunity to read the full CIP before it is submitted to the Provincial Government; the tradition of the University of Alberta to serve the greater community; and the desire to build a greater scholarly community which includes strong interdisciplinary interaction.

6. Report from the Active and Collaborative Teaching Spaces (ACTS) Advisory Committee

There were no documents.

Presenters: Rosemary Foster, Professor, Department of Educational Policy Studies; Jeffrey Kuntz, Doctoral Student, Educational Policy Studies

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Dr Foster presented the item to members. She introduced her colleague, Jeffery Kuntz, who was a participant in the new collaborative classroom ECHA (Edmonton Clinic Health Academy) 2-140. Dr Foster also took this opportunity to distribute to members the current Terms of Reference for the Active and Collaborative Teaching Spaces (ACTS) Advisory Committee.

Dr Foster described her experiences teaching in this innovative classroom, emphasizing how it was conducive to collaboration and provided great flexibility since all furniture was mobile and easily rearranged. Mr Kuntz, in turn, described his experiences in this room as a student, commenting likewise on the benefits of moveable furniture and also the computer access that promotes inquiry learning and a sense of immediacy. He also noted how innovative this new classroom was as it changed the traditional lecture style of teaching.

Dr Foster continued, noting how much interest there was from the University community to use this space. She also spoke about the ClassSpot software available in ECHA 2-140, stating that it was easily incorporated into the teaching process.

During the ensuing discussion, the presenters addressed questions and comments from members regarding the following matters: the importance of investing in the research of teaching; commentary on the University becoming a leader in innovative teaching; the challenge of changing habitual classroom behavior for both instructors and learners; the view the room (ie, ECHA 2-140) could be considered an experiment with opportunities for improvement; the possibility of contacting the University's Department of Drama to assist in helping instructors to both project and move in the unconventional space; adding a moveable podium for speakers who are not comfortable without it; and the need for improvement in older buildings around campus.

The Coordinator noted that GFC CLE would be afforded an opportunity to view first hand ECHA 2-140 at its February 1, 2012 meeting.

7. GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies Report: Update

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Anne McIntosh, Member, GFC Committee of the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

In the absence of the Co-Chairs of the GFC CLE Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies, Ms McIntosh, a member of this subcommittee, noted that the group had been meeting and was making progress.

STANDING ITEMS

8. GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC) Update

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Deanna Williamson, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Member Cross-Appointed from the GFC Academic Planning Committee

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Professor Williamson informed members of the GFC APC-approved Rangelands Research Institute (RRI)

in Southern Alberta acquired through a donation to the University of some 12,000 acres of rangeland. She noted that GFC APC also approved at its November 23, 2011 meeting the Administration's annual general tuition fee proposal, including the market modifier increases, all in accordance with the annual Consumer Price Index (CPI).

9. GFC Academic Standards Committee (ASC) Update

There were no items.

Presenter: Bill Connor, Interim Vice-Provost (Academic) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (and Chair, GFC Academic Standards Committee (ASC))

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Dr Connor noted that there had not been a meeting of GFC ASC since the last meeting of GFC CLE.

10. GFC Facilities Development Committee (FDC) Update

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Garry Bodnar, Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

There was no discussion.

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

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Scott Delinger, IT Strategic Initiatives Officer, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Dr Delinger briefly summarized the items that had been discussed at the November 15, 2011 meeting of TLAT Council.

12. Question Period

The Chair suggested that members give thought to future issues for discussion by GFC CLE and commit to a half-hour discussion in the New Year about innovative possibilities in 2012.

INFORMATION REPORTS

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

There were no items.

14. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

15. Adjournment

The Co-Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:15pm.