



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

Wednesday, January 30, 2013
2-31, South Academic Building
2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Voting Members:

Bill Connor	Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (and Chair, GFC Academic Standards Committee)
Dustin Chelen	Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union
Nathan Andrews	President, Graduate Students' Association (Delegate)
Scott Delinger	Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President, Information Technology (Delegate)
Sheree Kwong See	Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Ada Schmude	Vice-Provost and University Registrar (Delegate)
Rachel Milner	Academic Staff – Member of GFC
John Boeglin	Academic Staff
Trevor Woods	Academic Staff
Nikki Way	Undergraduate at-large
Lili Liu	Department Chair
Janet Scott Hoyt	Major Teaching Award Recipient

Presenters:

Nathan Andrews	Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies
John Boeglin	Chair, Joint Subcommittee on the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment/Teaching, Learning and Technology Council Fostering Pedagogy of Technology
Dustin Chelen	Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies
Bill Connor	Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (and Chair, GFC Academic Standards Committee)
Scott Delinger	Information Technology Strategic Initiatives Officer, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Josh Ryder	Information Technology Strategic Initiatives Officer, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Sheree Kwong See	Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning, and Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on the Status of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction

Staff:

Garry Bodnar Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
Andrea Patrick Scribe

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Delinger/Scott Hoyt

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

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of December 5, 2012

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Way/Kwong See

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of December 5, 2012.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Co-Chair

Dr Connor commented on a number of relevant issues to members.

ACTION ITEMS

4. GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Subcommittee on the Status of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRIs) Terms of Reference for Approval

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Sheree Kwong See, Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning, and Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on the Status of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI)

Purpose of the proposal: At the October 3, 2012 meeting of GFC CLE, the Committee's Chair proposed that a 2009 report of a previous GFC CLE subcommittee examining the evaluation of teaching at the University of Alberta and, in particular, use of USRIs be revisited and called for a group of volunteers to form a subcommittee to lead discussion and make recommendations based on the 2009 document. The proposed Terms of Reference for this subcommittee are now being forwarded to GFC CLE for review and formal approval.

Discussion:

Dr Kwong See explained that, following a suggestion by Dr Connor at the October 3, 2012 meeting of GFC CLE, a number of members met as a subcommittee to review and recommend on the issue of USRIs at the

University of Alberta. She presented the Subcommittee's Terms of Reference to members and invited members to provide feedback. She clarified that while the Subcommittee cannot unilaterally decide on the issue of USRI usage, they can identify the issues that GFC CLE should focus on.

Dr Connor added that the Subcommittee's challenge will be to act on this issue without further delaying the review on this topic, adding that there is a lengthy history of this item being discussed and considered within the governance process.

In the ensuing discussion, members expressed several comments and questions in relation to this item, including, but not limited to: that the Terms of Reference might not address certain larger issues surrounding USRI usage; that the project should be short term; that the Terms of Reference are realistic and a good first step in identifying what direction to take in terms of USRI usage; that the Subcommittee will include the issue of online evaluations; and that the Subcommittee will be discussing the philosophy of USRI usage, as opposed to the methodology involved.

Motion: Boeglin/Andrews

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve, under delegated authority from General Faculties Council, the proposed Terms of Reference for the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) on the Status of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRIs) Subcommittee, as set forth in Attachment 1, to take effect upon final approval.

CARRIED

Dr Kwong See identified a minor typographical error in the material and asked that it be corrected in the final, approved version.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

5. Consultation with the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) on Future Directions of the University of Alberta's Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) (no documents)

There were no documents.

Presenter: Sheree Kwong See, Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning, and Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on the Status of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Dr Kwong See provided members with a brief history of the University of Alberta's Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). She stated that following the dismantling of University Teaching Services (UTS), CTL was established in 2009 and a process of review of the program's leadership, goals, and direction was initiated. She added that when she was named Interim Director of CTL, she started a process of collecting feedback from across the academy in an effort to direct future changes and strategies within the Centre. She reported that the results of her consultation across the institution has yielded many interesting findings, including that CTL is not particularly well known across the University, that some in the community have an unfavorable opinion of CTL, and that there are certain smaller groups, primarily contained within Faculties, that also have teaching and learning mandates and that these are not connected in any meaningful fashion to CTL.

Dr Kwong See stated that, although currently CTL is small and understaffed, as part of their mandate to assist the professoriate their plans include creating innovative workshops which will pair experienced professors with CTL staff, providing “real life” elements within their teaching strategies. She also reported that she has established networks across several Faculties which will assist CTL in planning and designing educational experiences that address current needs and concerns. She hopes to disseminate monthly some form of communication about CTL’s activities. She added that another plan includes hosting a monthly event where teaching award recipients will speak about their successes (as well as failures) as teachers. She emphasized that the long term goal of CTL is to provide a synergistic, University-wide conduit for members of the University of Alberta surrounding teaching and learning. She added that CTL will generate an annual report beginning next year.

Throughout the discussion, members expressed several comments and questions relating to this issue, including, but not limited to: that CTL’s services are not well known across the academic community; that a perception that CTL is “unwelcoming” and “complicated” does exist; that CTL is too small and under-resourced to be effective across a large institution; that CTL should receive more resources to boost effectiveness; that CTL could do more to address the needs of graduate students; that there is an overlap between services that CTL offers and certain of those offered by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research; that the former UTS used to do everything that the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research now provides; that CTL provides great services considering their small size and budget; that CTL could do more to encourage the relationship between technology and pedagogy; that services provided by CTL are beneficial to the community, specifically new faculty mentorship and work towards undergraduate student attributes; that the University of Calgary’s newly-announced Institute for Teaching and Learning reflects a strong commitment to this area, one that should be mirrored by the University of Alberta; that every group across the campuses of the University should be included in the consultation process; that budget concerns have resulted in diminishing inter-Faculty education programs; that UTS began to wane as a result of the lack of outreach; that feedback among faculty members is positive about the New Faculty Orientation program, hosted by CTL; that there is increasing use of technologies that promote teaching and learning efficiencies; that the Calgary Centre requires technological updates; and that CTL will address online teaching and learning endeavors and as well as offer services online.

Dr Connor added that there should be a monthly update in relation CTL’s activities as a recurring item on the GFC CLE Agenda.

6. Moving Forward – Discussion on Possible Items for Consideration by the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) (2012-2013 Academic Year) (no documents)

There were no documents.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

During the discussion surrounding possible agenda items for future GFC CLE meetings, members offered the following suggestions:

- the teaching experience (diversity/challenges faced by instructors in varying environments across the institution);
- the Assessment and Grading Policy (where are we one year after implementation? how has the

- community adapted to its use? what further strategic thought should be given to this issue?);
- academic materials innovations (e-books/e-textbooks, how the future of class materials can benefit the learning environment);
- online learning (MOOCs; how can the University of Alberta differentiate itself from other institutions in the online environment? what can we offer that will serve to make us truly 'special'?).

The Chair noted that this discussion would continue at future meetings of GFC CLE.

7. GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies Draft Report for Discussion

There were no documents.

Presenters: Nathan Andrews, Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies; Dustin Chelen, Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies

Purpose of the Proposal: To update GFC CLE on the GFC CLE Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies' progress.

Discussion:

Mr Chelen stated that the Subcommittee will be meeting to discuss how the attributes can be incorporated into each Faculty as a starting point to review possible models of implementation. Mr Andrews added that the final direction of the Subcommittee still remains unclear, however.

Dr Connor reported that the Acting Provost was impressed with the Subcommittee's recent report.

8. Joint Subcommittee on the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)/Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council Fostering Pedagogy of Technology Report: Update

There were no documents.

Presenter: John Boeglin, Chair, Joint Subcommittee on the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment/Teaching, Learning and Technology Council Fostering Pedagogy of Technology

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Dr Boeglin reported that the Subcommittee has been meeting and has received good feedback; he will be meeting with Dr Connor to discuss some ideas for future momentum.

9. Working Group on Online Course/Teaching Evaluations: Update

There were no documents.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Dr Delinger introduced Mr Josh Ryder, Information Technology Strategic Initiatives Officer, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic), to members as the person who was carrying this project forward. Mr Ryder, in turn, provided updates in relation to online courses and teaching evaluations. He reported that they are currently developing a common evaluation and are gathering common evaluation criteria. He stated that the Faculty of Extension is conducting a trial of a program called 'Blue'. He added that there is a lot of concern across Faculties that electronic USRIs will alter response rates; given this concern, his team is gathering evidence on this issue, along with user feedback. He stated that a working group may be formed to address increasing and ensuring participation.

Members expressed some questions and comments in relation to this issue, including, but not limited to: that the Faculty of Extension is not representative of most Faculties; that an institution-wide USRI must be paper or electronic, but not both; that response time continues to be a concern; and clarification on the date of the next Working Group meeting.

STANDING ITEMS

10. GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC) Update

There were no documents.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

There was no discussion.

11. GFC Academic Standards Committee (ASC) Update

There were no documents.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

There was no discussion.

12. GFC Facilities Development Committee (FDC) Update

There were no documents.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

There was no discussion.

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

There were no documents.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

There was no discussion.

14. Question Period

There were no questions.

INFORMATION REPORTS

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

There were no items.

16. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

- Discussion Item at the January 30, 2013 Meeting of the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment ****Action Required**** [Regarding Possible Items for Discussion at Future Meetings of GFC CLE]

CLOSING SESSION

17. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:05 pm.