



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

Wednesday, September 07, 2016
2-31 South Academic Building (SAB)
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Voting Members:

Sarah Forgie	Chair (Delegate), Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Marina Banister	Member, Vice-President (Academic), SU
Kathleen DeLong	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian
Shannon Erichsen	Member, Support staff representative
Roger Graves	Member, Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Masoud Khademi	Member (Delegate), Vice-President (Academic), GSA
Eva Lemaire	Member, Academic Staff
Glen Loppnow	Member, Associate Dean or Associate Chair, Teaching and Learning (or equivalent)
Brian Maraj	Member, Major Teaching Award Recipient
Luis Marin	Member, Graduate Student at-Large
Jeff Rawlings	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President of Information Technology
Norma Rodenburg	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and University Registrar
Carrie Smith-Prei	Member, Academic Staff, and member of GFC
Quinten Starko	Member, Undergraduate Student at-Large
Mani Vaidyanathan	Member, Academic Staff
Stanley Varnhagen	Member, Academic Staff

Presenter(s):

Sarah Forgie	Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
Marion Haggarty-France	University Secretary
Meg Brolley	Secretary to GFC and Manager of GFC Services
Jeff Rawlings	Director/Relationship Management, Office of the Associate Vice-President (Information Services & Technology)
Mani Vaidyanathan	Electrical & Computer Engineering

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Banister/Rawlings

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

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of June 1, 2016

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Banister/Rawlings

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of June 1, 2016.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Chair (no documents)

The Chair drew the committee's attention to the rescheduled meeting dates for the upcoming year; the December meeting has been moved to November 30 and the May meeting has been moved to April 26.

4. Comments from the University Secretary for the New Academic Year and Committee Orientation

Ms Haggarty-France welcomed new and returning members for the new academic year. She and Ms Brolley reviewed the committee's role and mandate, availability of resource materials, and updated the committee on items related academic governance including the GFC *ad hoc* Committee on Academic Governance and Delegated Authority.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

5. USRI (standing item)

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Sarah Forgie

The Chair provided an update on the work done in conjunction with the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) over the summer. An executive summary prepared by a graduate student working for CTL was provided to the committee which provided an overview of past reviews of teaching evaluation at the University.

The committee discussed options on how the work for the required report to GFC for April 2017 could be conducted. It was noted that many recommendations were contained in the various reports, and it was suggested that some of these could be focused on by the committee. It was also noted that using the USRI as a tool to fulfill purposes continues to be problematic. The committee discussed a number of issues related to USRIs including: eUSRIs, validity, bias, and response rates.

The Chair will continue to spearhead the work conducted by CTL on this subject. She proposed the following staged approach:

- 1) Complete a consolidated document describing the reviews of teaching evaluation tools at the U of A.
- 2) Complete a literature review of teaching evaluation tools.
- 3) Interview chairs about how they (and their FECs) evaluate teaching
- 4) Gather data about teaching evaluation at the U15 universities
- 5) Use the information from 1-4 to complete the report for GFC

Throughout the process, the Chair will continue to report regularly to CLE for discussion, input and direction.

6. Classroom Requirement project - Update (no documents)

Presenter(s): Jeff Rawlings

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:

Mr Rawlings updated the committee on the status of this project. He reported that 13 faculties had been interviewed thus far, mostly associate deans with a faculty representative. A large diversity of teaching styles and requirements within each faculty and department has been noted. Many faculties requested a delay in further information gathering until September when instructors were back on campus.

Results to date indicate that requirements vary significantly by the type of teaching space used, and there are many commonalities across the different types of learning spaces:

- Presentation based - larger lecture theaters and rooms – important features were the ability to present via whiteboard or a digital display
- Discussion based - smaller classrooms aimed at seminars and group work – these required a bit more space to allow students to work with those around them, and also required display and lots of whiteboard space.
- Versatile spaces - Re-configurable spaces which allow a hybrid model of delivery –reconfigurable furniture or easily re-arrangeable spaces featured highly.

He noted variation across faculties with some moving towards smaller classes and discussions, and some moving towards larger spaces for better efficiency. Many groups were interested in more versatile spaces with reconfigurable furniture.

Regarding technology needs:

- Needs to be taken in context with the entire room. Technology is useless without being correctly integrated into classrooms.
- Reliability of the technology was an important component
- Networking connectivity and online access are key for all spaces
- Lecture capture and wireless projection from personal devices were the two most requested new capabilities

The next steps in the project will be to complete follow-ups with faculties through surveys, focus groups or departmental meetings; and to engage with those faculties which have not yet provided input.

7. Subcommittee to Explore Teaching Tenure Stream - Update

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:

The Chair provided the following update: the subcommittee has met twice since the last meeting of CLE, and focused its discussions on how this may impact professional and non-professional faculties differently, as well as how the institution's language around FSOs fits into a teaching intensive stream. There was also a review of what other U15 schools have for language on a teaching intensive stream and defining the rationale for exploring the creation of this stream.

The subcommittee is close to finishing a white paper on the topic outlining its rationale. This will come before CLE in the coming months.

8. Formative Feedback - Update (no documents)

There was no update.

9. Mandated USRI Questions for Project Based and Online Courses - Update (no documents)

This discussion will be rolled into the greater USRI discussion.

10. Question Period

The Chair reported that, after a national search, Dr Janice Miller-Young would be joining the University on October 1, 2016, as the Academic Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning. She further noted that Roger Graves would remain at CTL as the Director of Writing Across the Curriculum

INFORMATION REPORTS

11. New Academic Director of Centre for Teaching and Learning: Dr Janice Miller-Young
12. Items Approved by the Committee by E-Mail Ballots (non-debatable) - No items
13. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings - No items

CLOSING SESSION

14. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:20 PM