



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

Wednesday, October 05, 2016
 2-31 South Academic Building (SAB)
 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Voting Members:

Kathleen DeLong	Acting Chair, Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian
Sarah Forgie	Chair (Delegate), Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Marina Banister	Member, Vice-President (Academic), SU
Allen Berger	Member, Dean Representative, selected by Deans' Council
Shannon Erichsen	Member, Support staff representative (Category B1.0), elected by GFC
Ali Talaei	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
Norma Rodenburg	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and University Registrar or Delegate
Carrie Smith-Prei	Member, Academic staff member, member of GFC
Quinten Starko	Member, Undergraduate Student at-Large
Mani Vaidyanathan	Member, Academic Staff
Stanley Varnhagen	Member, Academic Staff

Presenter(s):

Kathleen DeLong	Acting Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian
Sarah Forgie	Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives)
Wendy Rodgers	Deputy Provost
Trina Innes	Chief Sustainability Officer, Office of Sustainability
Naomi Krogman	Director of Sustainability Scholarship and Education, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

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

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of September 7, 2016

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of September 7, 2016. **CARRIED**

3. Comments from the Chair (no documents)

New members were welcomed to the meeting and it was noted that the new Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning term had just begun.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. USRIs - How do Administrators Evaluate Teaching - Draft Interview Questions

Materials in front of members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Sarah Forgie

Discussion:

The committee engaged in a discussion on the distributed document. Dr Forgie indicated that two PhD students from the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) would help with the interviews and do the analysis.

A member noted that the continual discussion on this tool reflect that it is trying to combine qualitative and quantitative methods. A member suggested that qualitative data could be gathered by asking students to justify their answers to the 10 questions.

It was also noted that the USRI rating of an individual is relative to others and reports average scores of about 4.2 on a 5 point scale; as the rating is so high, instructors may be less willing to try untried teaching methods which could risk them falling below this average and negatively impact their FEC. There was a discussion on the use of innovation agreements which would provide context prior to the use of new methods by instructors and limit the potential risk to lower USRI scores.

A number of other suggestions were made with respect to the draft questions including more neutral options and open ended responses to questions, defining effective teaching and other terms to ensure consistency, asking how useful USRIs are in providing feedback to instructors, whether the information is used cumulatively or as subsets, how the information is used with respect to type of staff (eg sessional, tenure, etc), inclusion of clinical instructors and preceptors, comparisons to 2008 results, low response rates, consideration of how students are different (eg mandatory/elective course, student's program/faculty).

Dr Forgie invited members to send further comments and suggestions to her after the meeting.

5. University of Alberta Sustainability Plan 2016-2020 Including A Plan for Deepening Sustainability Education and Scholarship at the University of Alberta

Presenter(s): Wendy Rodgers; Trina Innes; Naomi Krogman

Discussion:

Ms Innes gave an overview of the plan noting that this is the second iteration of the plan. She noted that there is a lot of interest from the community and from government and that much of the interest is related to climate change.

Dr Krogman spoke to the opportunities for innovative learning and courses which encompass environmental and social justice issues. She indicated that these can prepare students to face the challenges ahead. She noted that there are a number of certificates currently being offered at the undergraduate level and that graduate students have expressed interest in more opportunities to discuss social change. Dr Krogman noted that there was interest expressed by professors in incorporating sustainability into courses and the value of a better community of practice. Dr Rodgers noted that sustainability is a joint responsibility of the Provost and the Vice President (Facilities and Operations).

Members, during the discussion, expressed several comments and questions including concern about mandating sustainability courses and the opportunities to incorporate sustainability concepts into existing courses. There was a discussion on grants to support staff and students to access and participate in green initiatives; Ms Innes indicated that further information on grant sources was available in the report. A member noted that there are many courses which have sustainability content but are not labelled as such.

6. Question Period

A member asked if there is a role for the committee to play in *For the Public Good* deliverables.

INFORMATION REPORTS

7. Items Approved by the Committee by E-Mail Ballots (non-debatable)

There were no items.

8. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 pm