

General Faculties Council
Committee on the Learning Environment
Minutes

Thursday, February 03, 2011
3-15, University Hall
1:30 pm – 4:00 pm

ATTENDEES:

Carl Amrhein, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and Co-Chair, Colleen Skidmore (Co-Chair), Renée Elio (delegate), James Eastham, Andrea Rawluk (delegate), Scott Delinger (delegate), Heather Kanuka, Ada Schmude (delegate), Rachel Milner, John Boeglin, Katy Campbell, Elaine Chow, Lili Liu, Bob Luth, Nathalie Kermaal, Frank Nargang, Sheree Kwong See (observer), Tiffany Seymour, (guest), Dallas Hunt (guest), Marlene Lewis (Coordinator and Scribe)

PRESENTERS AND GUESTS:

Carl Amrhein, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)
Lorne Babiuk, Vice-President, Research
Nathalie Kermaal, Faculty of Native Studies and GFC CLE Cross-Appointed Representative from the GFC Academic Standards Committee (ASC)
Bob Luth, Professor, Faculty of Science and GFC CLE Member Cross-Appointed Representative from the GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC)
Scott Delinger, IT Strategic Initiatives Officer
Colleen Skidmore, Vice-Provost (Academic) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Elio/Nargang

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

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Regular Session Minutes of January 13, 2011

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Liu/Boeglin

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) approve the Minutes of January 13, 2011.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Co-Chairs

The Co-Chairs commented on a number of issues of interest to members including the following: the resignation of the elected undergraduate student at-large, Dustin Chelen, had been submitted to the Co-Chair and duly accepted; the *Edmonton Journal* article of January 23, 2011 entitled *Grading Policy Taken Seriously*, written by Dean Gregory Taylor, was distributed at the meeting; information on the current status of the Copyright Access issue was discussed by the Provost and Vice-President (Academic); confirmation was provided that for the 2011-2012 academic year, GFC CLE meetings would move to the first Wednesday of each month in the same time slot of 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Assessment and Grading Update

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenters: Bob Luth, Professor, Faculty of Science and GFC CLE and Cross-Appointed Representative from the GFC

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Dr Luth distributed a revised draft of the 'Purposes of Assessment' based on feedback he had received from various constituents, noting that the Subcommittee would be meeting on a regular basis for the remainder of the current academic year. He noted that he would be distributing revised documents to a reference group of interested individuals for vetting.

Dr Luth indicated that the principles outlined in new University of Alberta Policies and Procedures On-Line (UAPPOL) are meant to articulate high-level concepts, to improve instruction and the learning environment, and are not intended to prescribe rules. He acknowledged that, according to the *Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA)*, the jurisdiction for grading resided with the Faculties.

5. University of Alberta's Dare to Deliver Academic Plan for 2011 – 2015

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenters: Carl Amrhein, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and Co-Chair, GFC CLE; Lorne Babiuk, Vice-President (Research)

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Vice-Presidents Amrhein and Babiuk introduced the item by noting that a strong focus of and within the document is on the quality of the student experience and that GFC CLE has a role to play given the Committee's terms of reference that state "[CLE] reviews and monitors implementation of the University Academic Plan with regard to teaching and learning." Ultimately, the Academic Plan is under the domain of General Faculties Council (GFC) and would receive final review (and approval) by GFC at its March 21, 2011 meeting.

Ms Rawluk noted that the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) is very pleased with the Plan but would appreciate a more explicit statement regarding student and staff wellness which GFC CLE discussed at its

January 13, 2011 meeting. Dr Amrhein acknowledged the concern and responded that staff wellness is not emphasized in the Academic Plan as this is an issue in the domain of the Vice-President (Finance and Administration) and further, the Board of Governors.

Mr Eastham was supportive of the Office of Undergraduate Research but expressed disappointment at the absence of curriculum reform. Dr Amrhein noted that writers and readers of the document had mutually expressed sensitivity around the matter of curriculum as it is a very Faculty-specific issue. He further made mention of current 'success stories' like Science 100 and Community Service Learning (CSL) in Arts.

During the ensuing discussion, the presenters addressed questions and comments expressed by members concerning the following matters: support by the Committee for the inclusion of 'childcare and housing' but recognition of the need to explore how daycare can better support student needs in the future, including how a different model of childcare could be envisioned and funded; how language like 'support, foster and encourage' in the document poses challenges with regard to operationalization; history of the student to staff ratio goals outlined in the document and how reaching a better ratio would enhance a number of areas concerning students such as scholarships, student space, number of students in classrooms, academic counselling, and support from administrators.

6. Future Direction of GFC CLE's Draft Workplan and the University's Academic Plan

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenters: Colleen Skidmore, Vice-Provost (Academic) and Co-Chair, GFC CLE; Carl Amrhein, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and Co-Chair, GFC CLE

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

The Co-Chairs introduced the item which supported the previous discussion's focus on implementation of the Academic Plan and GFC CLE's role in the process. When asked to identify next steps for CLE's involvement with the Academic Plan, members agreed that a subcommittee be struck to explore the issue, and the following members volunteered to be subcommittee members: Andrea Rawluk, Elaine Chow, Frank Nargang, Katy Campbell, and Tiffany Seymour. The Subcommittee agreed to meet prior to the next meeting of GFC CLE and provide members with an update.

STANDING ITEMS

7. GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC) Update

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

No update was provided.

8. GFC Academic Standards Committee (ASC) Update

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

No update was provided.

9. GFC Facilities Development Committee (FDC) Update

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

No update was provided.

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

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

No update was provided.

11. Question Period

There were no questions.

INFORMATION ITEMS

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

There were no items to date.

13. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items to date.

CLOSING SESSION

14. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:00 pm.