



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

Wednesday, April 03, 2013
243 Central 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
Colin More	President, Graduate Students' Association (Delegate)
Josh Ryder	Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President, Information Technology (Delegate)
Sheree Kwong See	Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Ada Ness	Vice-Provost and University Registrar (Delegate)
Rachel Milner	Academic Staff – Member of GFC
John Boeglin	Academic Staff
Nikki Way	Undergraduate at-large
Fern Snart	Dean
Florence Myrick	Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning (Representative)
Deanna Williamson	Cross-Representative from the GFC Academic Planning Committee
Janet Scott Hoyt	Major Teaching Award Recipient

Presenters:

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)
José da Costa	Chair, Teaching, Learning and Technology Council Subcommittee on eTextbooks
Steven Dew	Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies
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
Andrea Patrick

Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
Scribe

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Dr Connor welcomed members of the Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council to this annual joint session held with GFC CLE.

Motion: Boeglin/Chelen

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

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of March 6, 2013

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Milner/Chelen

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of January 30, 2013.

CARRIED

2.1 Review of the Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council Notes of February 12, 2013

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

There was no discussion.

3. Comments from the Co-Chair

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

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council Subcommittee on eTextbooks: Report and Recommendations

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: José da Costa, Chair, Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council Subcommittee on eTextbooks

Purpose of the Item: This proposed set of recommendations addresses purchasing, technology, and pedagogy issues faced by the University community as eTextbooks become increasingly more common.

The impact of the recommendations put forward by the TLAT Council Subcommittee on eTextbooks, if implemented, will affect purchasing practices of etextbooks, technologies used to support etextbooks, and institutional pedagogy. Effects would be experienced by students, instructors, and support personnel at the department, Faculty, and University levels (including the University of Alberta Bookstore). Recommendations in the report move the University of Alberta from a passive position of being led by publishers to use electronic materials they want instructors and students to purchase to an active position of specifying what our instructors and students need and desire.

Discussion:

Dr Connor introduced Dr da Costa to members and welcomed him to the meeting. Dr da Costa briefed members on the contents of the TLAT Council Subcommittee on eTextbooks: Report and Recommendations, explaining that the reason for his presentation is that GFC CLE, as a Standing Committee of GFC, can review and recommend policies as part of their delegated authority. He, in turn, briefed members on the Subcommittee's Terms of Reference, membership, mandate, activities, and meeting frequency.

He reported that the main objectives of the Subcommittee were to lower the costs of academic materials and to enhance pedagogical responses for students. He reported on potential costs associated with this, the format of e-texts, points of purchase, availability of the Internet, platforms, and required technical support.

Dr da Costa noted that, within the research findings, etextbooks have been shown to enhance student experiences, especially for those students who require closed-captioning or descriptive captioning services.

He concluded by stating that the Report recommends that the University of Alberta should organize a conference on this subject to explore best practices and to take a leadership role towards establishing national standards.

During the ensuing discussion, members expressed several comments and questions in relation to this item, including, but not limited to: this represents a transformative shift for educational methodologies; concerns about the costs of etextbooks; a suggestion for a second task force to examine possible policy recommendations stemming from the Report; whether or not the Report could be presented to the AASUA (Association of Academic Staff – University of Alberta) Teaching and Learning Committee; the possible financial implications stemming from the rapid pace of change within technology; selling *versus* licensing in relation to etextbooks; that the Report properly identifies all of the relevant issues in relation to etextbooks; whether or not future policies within this realm might limit a professor's choice of teaching materials; and that now is not the time to move forward with a formal policy.

Dr Connor thanked Dr da Costa for his presentation, and he added that the Report should be discussed further at GFC CLE in order to formulate a plan forward. He noted that TLAT Council will be updated, in turn, on the progress of this issue.

5. GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies Report: Final Report For Discussion

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: To inform GFC CLE on the work done by its Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies, to discuss the Subcommittee's Final Report, and to possibly circulate the report to and consult with all appropriate stakeholders.

Discussion:

Mr Chelen briefed members on the contents of the Report, adding that in conjunction with the increasing interest worldwide to focus on outcome-based learning, the Report recommends the recognition of seven core attributes, as established by the Subcommittee: Ethical Responsibility, Scholarship, Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, Creativity, and Confidence. He briefed members on the processes and consultation route used to prepare the Final Report.

Mr Chelen continued by noting that the Report highlights different models of implementation, including student-centred and faculty-centred models. He stated that the Subcommittee is also looking for members' input on formulating the next steps forward.

Dr Dew explained that the Report represents a national trend and that it could be utilised as a roadmap for how the University of Alberta could start the process of adopting official, academy-wide attributes and competencies.

During the ensuing discussion, members expressed several comments and questions in relation to this Report, including, but not limited to: whether the attributes are meant to relate to a course or to a program; the scope of the Report; concerns about assessing the success of the attributes; clarification about how the attributes could be defined across all programs; concerns about measuring attributes and competencies; that students are already receiving these attributes and competencies through their existing University of Alberta experiences; that standards used within the professional accreditation process do not apply to all programs; clarification about how the attributes and competencies may be applied within professional programs; commentary that the attributes and competencies add a redundant layer to existing quality assurance measures; whether or not students and Faculties will agree with the aims of the Report; and that the Report needs to allow for more flexibility.

Dr Connor stated that the Report would continue to be discussed at GFC CLE in order to establish a plan for moving the item forward.

6. University of Alberta's Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL): Update from the Interim Director

There were no documents.

Presenter: Sheree Kwong See, Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Dr Kwong See reported that, during recent consultations regarding possible areas of focus for the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), she received feedback reflecting the community's need for a space to contribute to CTL as well as the need for more professional development activities. She reported on several upcoming programs being hosted by the Centre and that this unit has addressed capacity needs by adding a number of associate directors with expertise in a number of areas.

7. GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Subcommittee on the Status of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI): Update

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: To update GFC CLE of the Subcommittee on the Status of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) progress.

Discussion:

Dr Kwong See reported to members that the Subcommittee has met several times and continues to work on the issues related to its mandate. She stated that the Subcommittee would very likely have a report to share with members for discussion at the next meeting of GFC CLE.

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 (CLE)/Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council Fostering Pedagogy of Technology Report

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Dr Boeglin stated that he would like GFC CLE to adopt the Subcommittee's mandate, as the work of the Subcommittee fits more appropriately within GFC CLE's Terms of Reference; he added that the initiative might be better served if the work of the Subcommittee could be taken on by this Standing Committee of GFC, with delegated authority to review and recommend policies.

He reported that the aim of the Subcommittee remains to evaluate pedagogy towards the enhancement of learning and collaboration, focussing on the needs and wishes of students and professor, and that a survey is being developed to determine these factors.

Dr Stanley Varnhagen, Member of the TLAT Council, stated that the focus and activities of the Subcommittee and Report represent a long-term investment of time and commitment of members and deserve to be utilised in relation to future strategies.

Members expressed a number of questions and comments in relation to this item, including, but not limited to: clarification about the scope of the Subcommittee; the scope of the survey in terms of identifying what students and faculty members might require; and clarification on what will be done with the information that is gathered from the surveys.

Dr Connor asked members of GFC CLE if there were any objections to officially adopting the Subcommittee as an entity strictly of the Committee, and there were none expressed.

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

There were no documents.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Mr Ryder reported that the Working Group has continued to meet and has established metrics for the trials, adding that there are plans to approach a Faculty this Spring to initiate a limited scale trial in the Summer, with a larger scale trial in the Fall. He reported that the Working Group has been collecting historical data about Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) usage, specifically related to completion rates.

A member recommended that Mr Ryder contact a representative within the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry to discuss their USRI policy and practices.

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

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

17. Adjournment

Dr Connor thanked members of the Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council for attending today's joint session with GFC CLE.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:05 pm.