



General Faculties Council
 Committee on the Learning Environment
 Open Session Minutes

Wednesday, March 02, 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)
Shannon Erichsen	Member, Support staff representative (Category B1.0), elected by GFC
Roger Graves	Member, Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Luis Marin	Member, Graduate Student at-Large
Navneet Khinda (Delegate)	Member, Vice-President (Academic)
Jeff Rawlings	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President of Information Technology
Norma Rodenburg	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and University Registrar or Delegate
Toni Samek	Member, Major Teaching Award Recipient, Staff Representative
Quinten Starko	Member, Undergraduate Student at-Large
Harsh Thaker	Member, Vice-President (Academic)
Mani Vaidyanathan	Member, Academic Staff

Presenter(s):

Sarah Forgie	Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives) and Chair, GFC CLE
Roger Graves	Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Navneet Khinda	President, Students' Union (SU)
Karsten Mundel	Associate Dean, Augustana Campus
Toni Samek	School of Library and Information Studies, Faculty of Education
Mani Vaidyanathan	Electrical & Computer Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Rawlings/Erichsen

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

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of January 20, 2016

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Rawlings/Graves

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of January 20, 2016.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Chair

The Chair provided comments on the structure of past CLE sub-committees including membership and reporting arrangements.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Universal Classrooms - Update

Materials were distributed at the meeting and are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Mani Vaidyanathan

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:

Committee members noted that this item has been raised with the CTL Advisory Committee on data gathering, and also that IST is currently working on renewing classroom technology. These two units will discuss further how to best couple these two activities.

It was further noted that classrooms are booked centrally through the Registrar's Office and it is important that this component be considered as part of the discussion. CLE may wish to consider a presentation on current policies for central room bookings.

5. Formative Feedback - Update

Materials were distributed at the meeting and are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Roger Graves, Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:

Dr Graves noted that teaching is ideally assessed in multiple ways. He spoke to the material distributed noting that Blue Pulse provides a feedback system that allows faculty and students to communicate with each other and allows instructors the time to make changes or improvements during the course.

A member reported on midterm evaluations currently in use in the School of Library and Information Studies noting that these are voluntary and provide communication between the instructor and anonymous students which remains between these two parties. Instructors are able to respond to feedback from students and either: institute a change; respond that it is too late in the term for a change; or indicate that a change will not be made and an explanation of why this is. This mid-term evaluation is encouraged for every course and is seen as helpful by students and instructors.

A member noted that this functionality is also available through course evaluation but that a culture that values mid-term evaluation is needed for uptake. Mr Rawlings will provide some statistics on current use of this feature.

Dr Graves and Mr Rawlings will provide the committee with further information and data on usage of current systems at a subsequent meeting.

6. Mandated USRI Questions for Project Based and Online Courses - update

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Mani Vaidyanathan and Toni Samek

Purpose of the Proposal: To provide additional information on GFC mandated USRI questions for 100% online courses.

Discussion:

It was noted that courses are being taught in new and different ways and that USRI questions should have the flexibility to reflect this difference. Courses which provide a non-traditional approach include project based courses but also online, advanced research, and practicum courses. A member noted that instructors want a contrast between delivering structured learning and mentoring type opportunities. It was noted that the classic ten questions may be insufficient and a suggestion of retaining five classic questions with the other five questions based on the type of course being evaluated.

ACTION ITEMS

7. Proposed Terms of Reference for GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Subcommittee to Explore Teaching Tenure Stream at the University of Alberta

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Navneet Khinda, President, Students' Union (SU)

Purpose of the Proposal: To approve the terms of reference to establish a CLE Subcommittee to explore the opportunities and challenges for creating a teaching tenure stream at the University of Alberta.

Discussion:

Ms Khinda reported that the proposed subcommittee would explore the opportunities and challenges of creating a teaching tenure stream and provide a report reflecting discussions, review of current practices at other institutions and research on the topic. Section 4 of the proposed terms of reference was revised to reflect that a draft report would be presented to CLE for the October 2016 meeting, with the understanding that the committee would determine the next steps at that time.

Motion: Khinda/ Vaidyanathan

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) approve, with delegated authority from General Faculties Council, the revised terms of reference CLE Subcommittee to Explore Teaching Tenure Stream at University of Alberta, as set forth in Attachment 1.

CARRIED

DISCUSSION ITEMS

8. Proposal for a new scheduling initiative for Augustana Faculty

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Karsten Mundel, Director, Learning and Beyond and Assistant Professor, Augustana Campus

Purpose of the Proposal: To discuss the proposed new scheduling initiative at Augustana Campus.

Discussion:

Dr Mundel presented the Augustana scheduling initiative which seeks to increase the quantity and quality of experiential learning, connecting with rural communities and international experiences. He noted that this initiative may also address student stress and mental health issues in a small way.

He emphasized that this is not a change in the length of the term, but a reorganization within the existing term. Students would take one course in the first three week block, and then take four courses in the following 11 week session. This would allow the three week block to be used strategically for an intensive experience plus lighten the load from five to four courses for the remainder of the term.

In response to a question on how an extended or intensive writing experience would be implemented in a three week block, Dr Mundel noted the writing centre has been closely involved in addressing this. A member noted that it was important to ensure students appreciate the time commitment involved in an intensive three week course.

On the question of how this initiative will be evaluated, Dr Mundel noted that a faculty member had a TLEF grant to gather two years of baseline data, surveying students in the first few days of classes and another survey mid-term. In addition, focus groups, and other qualitative pieces will be employed with students, faculty and staff. The committee that looks at academic skills will also be involved in the evaluation of the initiative.

On the question of transferability of courses, Dr Mundel noted that the credits allocated to the courses will not change, so current transfer status would be maintained.

Dr Mundel noted that class time will be lengthened from 50 to 60 min and 75 to 90 min to accommodate the eleven week classes.

9. Question Period

There were no questions.

INFORMATION REPORTS

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

There were no items.

11. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

12. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:10 p.m.