



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

Wednesday, May 01, 2019
2-31 South Academic Building (SAB)
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Sarah Forgie, Chair
Joel Agarwal
Radim Barta
Robert Desjardins
Geoff Harder (delegate)
Eva Lemaire
Brian Maraj
Janice Miller-Young
Jeff Rawlings (delegate)

Norma Rodenburg
Mani Vaidyanathan
Stanley Varnhagen
Christine Wiesenthal

REGRETS:
Joel Agarwal
Dale Askey
Janice Causgrove Dunn

Mike MacGregor
Jennifer Tupper
Janet Wesselius

Staff:
Meg Brolley, Coordinator
Heather Richholt, Scribe

OPENING SESSION

Tour of Digital Scholarship Centre

Geoff Harder, Associate University Librarian, provided members with a tour of the Digital Scholarship Centre, scheduled to open in fall 2019.

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Maraj/Wiesenthal

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

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of March 6, 2019

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Maraj/Varnhagen

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Open Session Minutes of March 6, 2019.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Chair (no documents)

Presenter(s): Sarah Forgie, Vice Provost (Learning Initiatives) and Chair, GFC CLE

The Chair reported on the recipients of the GFC University Teaching Awards Committee adjudicated awards:

2019 William Hardy Alexander Award for Excellence in Undergraduate

Teaching:

- Alexander Gainer
- Rachel Prusko

2019 Provost's Award for Early Achievement of Excellence in Undergraduate

Teaching:

- Hao Liang
- Anna Lund

2019 Rutherford Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching:

- Greg Anderson
- Judy Davidson
- Michael Dyck
- Neil Haave
- David Kennedy

2019 Teaching Unit Award:

- U of A Range Team Instructors: Barry Irving, Edward Bork, Lisa Raatz, Cameron Carlyle (Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences)

2019 Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching:

- Alexander Fidyk
- Diane Kunyk

The Chair also noted that this was the final meeting for committee members whose terms expire in June and thanked Stanley Varnhagen and Eva Lemaire for their service on CLE. She also welcomed Radim Barta who would be serving as delegate for the Graduate Students' Association Vice-President (Academic) for the upcoming year.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Requirement for Use of Long-Form Handwriting for Examination Purposes

Presenter(s): Patricia Jagger, Graduate Student, Faculty of Education

The Chair reminded members that the committee had agreed to investigate the use of long-form handwriting for examination purposes following a recommendation presented by COSA in October 2018. She welcomed Ms Jagger and noted that the Centre for Teaching and Learning had engaged Ms Jagger to research the topic and develop a white paper. Ms Jagger requested input from the committee to inform the direction her research would take.

Discussion:

Members discussed the impact of what happens in the K-12 system; student concerns about software crashing; cost to implement and operate; the different cognitive processes involved in handwriting and typing; whether it was appropriate for all disciplines; accessibility issues including access to technology, wireless connections, skills and knowledge; physical abilities and skills related to handwriting and typing; whether it could be offered as an option; competitiveness with other universities; how exams would be proctored; implications to the 'over-use' of technology on writing skills; and the future of cursive writing.

5. Learning Spaces on Campus

Item was deferred.

6. Draft Teaching Policy - Update

Presenter(s): Sarah Forgie, Vice Provost (Learning Initiatives) and Chair, GFC CLE

The Chair reported that GFC discussed the Draft Teaching Policy at the March 18, 2019 meeting. She indicated that members expressed support for the draft policy and asked questions and commented on: professional development, robust multifaceted evaluation, mentorship of postdoctoral fellows and graduate students, teaching evaluation, and resources and support for teaching.

Discussion:

Members discussed issues inherent to encouraging innovation, the use of the word "teacher", and supervision of graduate students.

7. Draft Teaching Assessment and Evaluation Policy

- Pilot USRIs, St Joseph's College
- Framework for Constructs of Teaching

Presenter(s): Sarah Forgie, Vice Provost (Learning Initiatives) and Chair, GFC CLE; Janice Miller-Young, Academic Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning; Cheryl Poth, Associate Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning

The Chair deferred the discussion on the Draft Teaching Assessment and Evaluation Policy until the next meeting when updated documents would be available.

Dr Poth and Dr Miller-Young reported on a pilot with St Joseph's College, which used a new questionnaire based on the literature and on samples from other institutions. They noted that students and instructors responded positively to the change with students noting that questions that are more specific allowed them to comment more clearly. A report would be shared with the committee in the fall.

Dr Poth discussed how USRIs were currently used as the main evidence to measure a variety of things. She indicated the need to have evidence that provided confidence that what was being measured was valid, and that it was multifaceted, multimodal, feasible, and intertwined. Dr Poth further spoke about the constructs underpinning what is being measured which, once identified, could be aligned with the purpose of the evaluation. A framework for constructs of teaching would identify what should be measured and how it could be measured.

Discussion:

Members discussed and provided comments on: USRIs were not effective to measure everything we want to measure; the need for formative and summative components of teaching assessment; progress should not be constrained by current practices but USRIs should be maintained until replaced; feedback could be solicited part way through the course and the responsiveness of instructors measured at the end of the course; importance of student engagement; more flexibility on questions to reflect instructional goals, subject matter, and delivery mode; timing of assessment should be considered; how innovation could be encouraged; how effective teaching was defined; and the need to increase the importance and perceived value of teaching. Dr Miller-Young indicated work would continue on identifying constructs that were measurable and this would come to the committee for discussion.

8. Question Period

There were no questions.

9. Updates

A. Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) - Dr Miller-Young noted that the Festival of Teaching and Learning would be held May 2, 2019. She also mentioned the inaugural Teaching Institute, which would

happen the week of August 19th - three days of workshops and presentations to help develop teaching skills for new and mid-career instructors. Dr Miller-Young also noted that CTL had recently submitted a self-study and would report back to the committee in the fall.

B. Information Technology - There was no update.

C. Learning Services – There was no update.

D. General Faculties Council – Dr Lemaire reported that GFC had recently discussed a Proposal for PhD minimum funding, and Facilities and Operations' Integrated Asset Management Strategy; and approved the Workplace Impairment Policy, and revised terms of reference for GFC and the GFC Academic Planning Committee.

E. Academic Success Centre – Dr Desjardins noted that the Centre would be expanding their services and that he would announce more information in the fall.

INFORMATION REPORTS

10. Report of Safety and Security Working Group

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

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

There were no items.

12. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

13. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.