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

Wednesday, February 01, 2012
2-140, Edmonton Clinic Health Academy
2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Voting Members:

Bill Connor	Vice-Provost (Academic)
Emerson Csorba	Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union
Nima Yousefi Moghaddam	President, Graduate Students' Association (Delegate)
Scott Delinger	Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology) (Delegate)
Heather Kanuka	Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Ada Schmude	Vice-Provost and University Registrar (Delegate)
Rachel Milner	Academic Staff – Member of GFC
John Boeglin	Academic Staff
Anne McIntosh	Graduate at-large
Lili Liu	Department Chair
Fern Snart	Dean
Deanna Williamson	Cross-Representative from the GFC Academic Planning Committee
Janet Scott Hoyt	Major Teaching Award Recipient

Presenter(s):

Garry Bodnar	Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
John Boeglin	Chair, Joint Subcommittee on the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment/Teaching, Learning and Technology Council Fostering Pedagogy of Technology
Bill Connor	Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (and Chair, GFC Academic Standards Committee)
Emerson Csorba	Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies
Scott Delinger	Information Technology Strategic Initiatives Officer, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Rosemary Foster	Professor, Department of Educational Policy Studies
Nima Yousefi Moghaddam	Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies
Jonathan Schaeffer	Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology)
Deanna Williamson	GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Member Cross-Appointed from the GFC Academic Planning Committee

Staff:

Garry Bodnar   Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
Emily Paulsen   Scribe

OPENING SESSION

1.   Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Delinger/Williamson

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

2.   Approval of the Regular Session Minutes of December 7, 2011

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Boeglin/Delinger

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of December 7, 2011.
CARRIED

3.   Comments from the Chair

The Chair commented on a number of items and events of interest to members.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4.   Graduate Student Teaching Initiative

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenters: Bill Connor, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (and Chair, GFC Academic Standards Committee); Renée Polziehn, Professional Development and Outreach Officer, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

Purpose of the Proposal: The Graduate Teaching and Learning (GTL) Program is designed to provide graduate students and postdoctoral fellows (PDF) with an opportunity to gain skill development in teaching and an understanding of student learning. The program is open to all graduate students and PDFs on campus. Further, the GTL Program is an optional multi-level program suited to meet the varied needs of students and Departments. Graduate students play a significant role in the teaching of undergraduate students and the undergraduate student university experience. Preparing graduate students for their teaching role should be of paramount interest to the University.

Discussion:
Dr Polziehn introduced the collaborative report to members. She described the multi-level approach of the training program, which includes pedagogy, practica, mentorship, and documentation preparation (eg,

teaching dossiers). She noted that individual participants would have a dedicated mentor and also would receive feedback from students and peers. To achieve this milestone, students would need to fulfill a 72-hour program requirement. Dr Polziehn explained that they hope that this achievement, once completed, could be duly noted on the participating student's academic transcript to demonstrate that teaching is taken seriously at this institution.

A member voiced support for this initiative on behalf of graduate students and referenced the high student enrolment. Another member noted that there are some Departments that already have extensive training for their own students with which this program could achieve some form of integration.

A member suggested that the program take advantage of the excellent resource of the University's Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), noting that collaboration between the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and CTL could serve to improve the program. It was suggested by a member that the strict but comprehensive teaching guidelines of universities in Australia and the United Kingdom be looked to for comparison rather than other institutions in North America.

A member addressed several details in the documents. These included the recommendation that there be clear expressions of "learning outcomes" rather than "objectives" and that the SMART (ie, Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely) principle be applied to the document. The member added that to have an annotation denoting completion of this program appear on the student's transcript is a huge step and must mean the training received by these participants is exemplary.

5.   On-Line Course and Teaching Evaluation

There were no documents.

Presenter: Jonathan Schaeffer, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology)

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Dr Schaeffer asked members to consider the possibility of moving course/teaching evaluations online. He explained that, technologically, this would be an easy transition but that there are other implications associated with such a change which could include low participation rates and a dramatic increase in the number of negative comments submitted by responders. He explained that the necessary technology, advice, and training would be provided centrally to the Faculties should they choose to move in this direction.

A member wished to discuss teaching evaluations in general, suggesting it may be time to review the policies/procedures associated with the University's Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRIs), but Dr Schaeffer suggested that it would be better to have discussion on what is, in his opinion, a much larger issue at a later date. He asked members to reflect at this time on the specific issue of moving away from hard-copy to online course/teaching evaluations.

Members seemed most concerned with a low participation rate. A member noted that marks could be withheld until students completed the evaluation or that, as Harvard University does, a 1% increase to the student's grade in the course could be employed as an incentive. A member noted that there is literature in the academy on how best to approach these online surveys and ensure their success.

The Chair suggested that a Motion be made to form a working group to look at the recommendation for

online teaching evaluations. Dr Schaeffer said that his Office would help facilitate such a group. He asked members to let him know if they were interested in serving; further, he emphasized that it is not a technology issue and, hence, no specialized knowledge of the appropriate online environments was necessary in order to serve.

Motion: Liu/Boeglin

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment agree to form immediately a working group responsible for providing a series of recommendations with regard to the possible implementation of on-line course and teaching evaluations, with the working group so struck to be supported by the Office of the Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology) and with the working group's recommendations to be considered in the first instance by the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment.

CARRIED

6. Moving Forward – Discussion on Possible Items for Consideration by the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) (2011-2012 Academic Year)

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:
The Co-Chair noted that, given the length of this meeting and the impending presentation to be provided on the capabilities of the current meeting venue (ie, ECHA 2-140), it would be prudent to defer this item until the next regularly-scheduled meeting of GFC CLE to ensure there was fulsome discussion. Members agreed.

7. GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies Report: Update

There were no documents.

Presenter: Nima Yousefi Moghaddam, Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Mr Moghaddam reported briefly that the (above-noted) Subcommittee has not met recently. He indicated that the Co-Chairs of this group were still discussing with senior staff in the Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic) a range of issues related to the work to be undertaken by the Subcommittee—he noted this will continue to be monitored and reports will be filed accordingly with GFC CLE.

There was no further discussion.

8. Joint Subcommittee on the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)/Teaching, Learning

and Technology (TLAT) Council Fostering Pedagogy of Technology Report

There were no documents.

Presenter: John Boeglin, Chair, Joint Subcommittee on the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment/Teaching, Learning and Technology Council Fostering Pedagogy of Technology

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Professor Boeglin explained to members that the Subcommittee had agreed to present a proposal for discussion and, hopefully, approval at the joint CLE-TLAT (Teaching, Learning and Technology) Council meeting on April 4, 2012. Over the next few months, the Subcommittee will work on: recruiting members to sit on the proposed advisory committee, scheduling advisory committee meetings to, among other things, finalize its terms of reference, and to resume advisory group activities in August by which time questions for the proposed survey should be finalized and the logistics of that survey worked out. He noted that the Subcommittee was aiming to implement whatever recommendations came out of work it undertook in the Academic Year 2013-2014.

There was no further discussion.

9.   Demonstration of the Pedagogical Potential of Room 2-140, Edmonton Clinic Health Academy (ECHA)

There were no documents.

Presenters: Jonathan Schaeffer, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology); Rosemary Foster, Professor, Department of Educational Policy Studies

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Dr Schaeffer introduced this demonstration of the pedagogical potential of Room 2-140 (Edmonton Clinic Health Academy (ECHA)) by noting that the concept behind this facility was to move away from the traditional model of teaching to allow for instructors and researchers to experiment with new methodologies and techniques.

Dr Foster explained that she had chaired the advisory committee responsible for overseeing this collaborative and innovative classroom. She emphasized the importance of the flexible furniture arrangements. She noted that they are looking into the option for a portable podium and showed members the many technological features of the room, including several monitors with embedded computer hard drives, the document camera, and the room's teleconferencing capabilities. She noted that instructors had been hesitant to use the space in the beginning but that, as individuals gain greater familiarity with its capabilities and word of its varied functionality spreads, requests to book the room have dramatically increased.

Members noted that there could be improvements made with respect to the sound baffling in the room as well as the provision of more electrical outlets.

Dr Foster stated that the software ClassSpot is used in this facility, and Dr Schaeffer indicated its use will

be reviewed at the time its three-year license comes up for renewal.

During the ensuing brief discussion, members discussed ways in which venues such as this could inspire new teaching styles/methods and the importance of ensuring that universities were at the forefront of such thinking.

STANDING ITEMS

10.   GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC) Update

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Deanna Williamson, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Member Cross-Appointed from the GFC Academic Planning Committee

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Professor Williamson related that GFC APC approved at its January 11, 2012 meeting the Master of Business Administration (MBA)/Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Pharmacy Combined Degrees program and the Master of Coaching (MCoach) Degree program. She also noted the Committee had considered and approved a proposed name change for the Department of Dentistry, which is now the School of Dentistry. She commented that members, when discussing the Students' Union-sponsored Greek and Gold Week proposal which has a goal of enhancing student wellness and providing a variety of programming to enhance students' success academically, had had varying views of this initiative, some of which were supportive and others which questioned whether or not such a venture, itself, would meet with success.

11.   GFC Academic Standards Committee (ASC) Update

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

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:
Dr Connor noted that GFC ASC had addressed the prospect of the (proposed) Green and Gold Week, as well as discussing the possible elimination of deferred examination fees.

12.   GFC Facilities Development Committee (FDC) Update

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Garry Bodnar, Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Mr Bodnar reported to members that GFC FDC was the first in a number of legislative bodies to be

consulted on the new Draft Discrimination, Harassment and Duty to Accommodate Policy Suite, as provided by the Office of the Vice-President (Finance and Administration).

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

There were no documents.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Dr Delinger noted that, since the last meeting of GFC CLE, there had not been a meeting of TLAT Council.

14.   Question Period

Dr Schaeffer impressed upon members the need to increase the University's online presence. He stated it would be strategic for the University to have a pedagogical discussion about the University's vision for its future online and its online courses. He was noted that experts on the technology and the delivery of technology are currently in extremely high demand.

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

Change in Date for the January, 2012 Meeting of the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) (E-Mailed to Members on December 8, 2011)

Terms of Reference for the Active and Collaborative Teaching Spaces (ACTS) Advisory Committee (E-Mailed to Members on December 8, 2011)

Link to the Current University of Alberta Comprehensive Institutional Plan (CIP) (E-Mailed to Members on December 9, 2011)

University of Alberta's Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) Annual Report (2010-2011 Academic Year) (E-Mailed to Members on December 12, 2011)

CLOSING SESSION

17.   Adjournment

The Co-Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:00pm.