



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

Wednesday, September 05, 2012
2-31, South 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
Nathan Andrews	President, Graduate Students' Association (Delegate)
Scott Delinger	Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology) (Delegate)
Ada Schmude	Vice-Provost and University Registrar (Delegate)
Rachel Milner	Academic Staff – Member of GFC
John Boeglin	Academic Staff
Trevor Woods	Academic Staff
John Fontaine	Graduate at-large
Nikki Way	Undergraduate at-large
Brock Richardson	Support Staff
Fern Snart	Dean
Florence Myrick	Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning
Deanna Williamson	Cross-Representative from the GFC Academic Planning Committee
Janet Scott Hoyt	Major Teaching Award Recipient

Presenter(s):

Nathan Andrews	Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies
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
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)
Scott Delinger	Information Technology Strategic Initiatives Officer, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Marion Haggary-France	University Secretary

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: Woods/Chelen

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

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of June 6, 2012

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 June 6, 2012.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Co-Chair

The Chair commented on a number of items of interest to members, including welcoming them to the new space in the South Academic Building (SAB); announcing several recent senior administrative appointments; and noting upcoming University events.

4. Orientation and Kick-off

Presenters: Bill Connor, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (and Chair, GFC Academic Standards Committee); Marion Haggarty-France, University Secretary; Garry Bodnar, Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

Purpose of the Proposal: To provide new and continuing members of the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) with an (annual) orientation to the legislative and administrative frameworks in which this standing committee of General Faculties Council (GFC) will operate during the Academic Year 2012-2013.

Discussion:

After a brief introduction from the Co-Chair, Ms Haggarty-France welcomed members to the new academic year in the newly-renovated space in the South Academic Building (SAB) and provided a general overview of the orientation process undertaken by University Governance, including information about online resources available to members.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

5. Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) – General Discussion

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:

Dr Milner, GFC CLE Member and Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee of the Association of Academic Staff – University of Alberta (AASUA), provided a brief summary of recent data collected by the Association from its membership regarding the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRIs), which recognized several flaws including poor questions, improper statistical analysis, feedback that assesses student experience rather than learning, and anonymity often leading to abusive and derogatory comments. As the analysis of the data moves further, she commented that discussion may revolve around making the USRIs confidential but not anonymous, providing a multifaceted evaluation for instructors rather than relying on a singular report, and adjusting the scoring scale and the analysis of the raw data to more accurately reflect the commenter's intentions.

During the ensuing discussion, members recommended the following issues be considered: members' review of a GFC CLE subcommittee-produced evaluation on teaching; consultation with graduate students who often play a complicated role of being both the instructor and the student; and clarification of the purpose of USRIs to students so they do not perceive it as an avenue to complain.

Dr Connor asked members to give some further thought on the issue of USRIs and recommended members examine Section 111.1 of the GFC Policy Manual, which provides a background on current institutional policy on teaching evaluation. He noted that GFC CLE would be asked to continue discussion on this matter at its next regularly-scheduled meeting.

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

There were no documents.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Mr Andrews updated members that, over the summer, the Subcommittee had developed a list of attributes that a University of Alberta student would be expected to have upon graduation. Since that time, discussion on this list has continued, and it is expected this item will come to GFC CLE in the near future for members' consideration. Mr Chelen continued, noting that there was a large survey process underway, which included surveying the Faculty student associations.

Several members commented that this list could be useful at both the Faculty-specific and institutional levels and in correlation with the University's current Academic Plan, *Dare to Deliver (2011 – 2015)*.

7. 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/Teaching, Learning and Technology Council Fostering Pedagogy of Technology

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Dr Boeglin noted that, considering recent changes in central (senior) administration, it may be best to postpone movement on this project at the current time. He indicated, however, that this project is still considered viable and that discussion on its progress will be undertaken in due course.

8. Working Group on Online Course/Teaching Evaluations: 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 this item is a separate and distinct issue from that raised in Agenda Item 5—the focus of the Working Group is on investigating electronic methods of conducting Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRIs) rather than the functionality and uses of the USRIs themselves. The possible deployment of electronic USRIs was recommended for various reasons, including the ability to reclaim the costly administrative time wasted on transcribing handwritten notes from hard-copy ratings. He stated that there is background work being done to examine the software options for this project; further, he indicated that discussion continues on the issue of providing students with an incentive to complete online surveys.

A member commented that electronic USRI open up the possibility of improving the ratings process by, for example, providing mid-term evaluations to assist struggling instructors or to reward those who are achieving success with the teaching.

STANDING ITEMS

9. 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:

Mr Bodnar noted that at a June, 2012 meeting of GFC CLE, members had agreed that the Committee would no longer be provided with the agendas from recent past meetings of the GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC), GFC Academic Standards Committee (ASC), GFC Facilities Development Committee (FDC), and the Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council; instead, members were encouraged to go onto the University Governance website to review this information and, if they had any queries regarding recent activities of any (or all) of these bodies, to ask in advance of an upcoming GFC CLE meeting that these questions be addressed by the appropriate representatives at that meeting.

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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:

There was no discussion.

13. Question Period

A member inquired with respect to the future plans for the University's Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), considering the new appointment of Dr Sheree Kwong See, Interim Academic Director. Dr Connor responded by outlining how the Office of the Provost anticipated this centre moving forward in the near to medium future. He commented that extensive consultation with the wider University community would inform the Provost's planning in this regard.

INFORMATION REPORTS

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

There were no items.

15. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

16. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:20pm.