



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

Wednesday, October 03, 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)
Sheree Kwong See	Interim 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
John Fontaine	Graduate at-large
Nikki Way	Undergraduate at-large
Brock Richardson	Support Staff
Lili Liu	Department Chair
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

Presenter(s):

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
Bill Connor	Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (and Chair, GFC Academic Standards Committee)
Ada Schmude	Vice-Provost and University Registrar (Delegate)

Staff:

Garry Bodnar	Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
Andrea Patrick	Scribe

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Smart/Kwong See

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

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of September 5, 2012

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Milner/Williamson

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of September 5, 2012.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Co-Chair

The Co-Chair, after welcoming the new members to the Committee, commented on a number of items of interest to members

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Availability of Data on Grading Patterns

There were no documents.

Presenters: Bill Connor, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (and Chair, GFC Academic Standards Committee); Ada Schmude, Vice-Provost and University Registrar (Delegate)

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Ms Schmude noted that the Office of the Registrar prepares a CCID password-protected annual report on grading patterns and makes that data available to central administrators, Deans, Associate Deans, Chairs, and Associate Chairs. This information is available so Departments can gather information and track grading trends and is protected because smaller class data poses privacy concerns, as some students can be identified. She clarified that her Office will evaluate additional individual access applications, as well, for those requesting it. She noted that her concern is that faculty members do not know that this information exists and, therefore, opportunities to use the data are being missed. The Co-Chair suggested that new instructors could use the data to aid them as their teaching careers begin.

During the ensuing discussion, members noted the following concerns: the suggestion that the data be available to instructors as well as students; that Deans, Chairs, and others do not know that the report

exists; and that the possibility of accessing this data should be highlighted at new professors' orientation(s).

5. Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) – Continuing 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:

The Co-Chair stated that he would like to elicit the opinions of members on possible future actions regarding Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI), specifically as it relates to the findings of the document entitled, "Evaluation of Teaching at the U of A, Report of the Sub-committee of the Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)," dated January 9, 2009.

After a comprehensive discussion about the report, its findings, and personal accounts of the benefits and disadvantages of the current USRI model, members made several recommendations for future action, including: acting on some of the simple recommendations of the Sub-committee now and tackling the larger issues on a longer term basis; improving the training and communication processes around USRI usage at the student, instructor, and Department and Faculty levels; and, as a first step to further action, obtaining an expert opinion on the design and usage of the USRI. Dr Connor noted he would work with Dr Snart (in her capacity as Dean of the Faculty of Education) to possibly attain an expert from within the Faculty of Education to speak to these issues.

Further, the Co-Chair proposed that a Working Group be struck to provide a more detailed report to the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) and solicited members from those present. After a brief discussion, the membership of this group included: Dr Connor (Chair), Mr Chelen, Mr Richardson, Dr Kwong See, Dr Milner, and Mr Andrews.

Mr Bodnar reminded members that a Working Group must work around existing policy or else go through the proper channels to change it. He quoted Section 111.2 of the GFC Manual:

"Evaluation of teaching shall be multifaceted. Multifaceted evaluation shall include the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction set out in Section 111.3 and other methods of assessing teaching designed within the individual Faculties to respond to the particular conditions of that Faculty. Such assessments shall include one or more of the following: input from administrators, peers, self, undergraduate and graduate students, and alumni. (GFC 09 JUN 1995) (GFC 24 NOV 1997)"

The Co-Chair thanked members and indicated GFC CLE would continue discussion on these important issues at future meetings of the Committee this academic year.

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

There were no documents.

Presenters: Nathan Andrews, President, Graduate Students' Association (Delegate); Dustin Chelen, Vice-President (Academic), SU

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Mr Chelen stated that the Subcommittee continues to move forward and make progress, and Mr Andrews added that the Subcommittee is moving in a positive direction and should have an update for members at the next GFC CLE meeting (November 7, 2012), including the list of attributes that they have assembled.

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: Bill Connor, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Dr Connor noted that the Chair of this subcommittee, Professor John Boeglin, was not able to attend today's meeting. He indicated that the work being undertaken by this group continued, albeit at a slower pace than originally anticipated.

There was no discussion.

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

There were no documents.

Presenter: Bill Connor, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:

Dr Connor noted that Dr Delinger was not able to attend today's meeting. There was no discussion.

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:

There was no discussion.

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

There were no questions.

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

Evaluation of Teaching at the University of Alberta/Report of the Sub-committee of the [GFC] Committee on the Learning Environment [CLE] - For Your Review [E-Mailed to Members on September 14, 2012]

CLOSING SESSION

16. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:55 pm.