



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

Wednesday, June 05, 2013
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
Dustin Chelen	Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union
Hasin Haroon	President, Graduate Students' Association (Delegate)
Sheree Kwong See	Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Rachel Milner	Academic Staff – Member of GFC
Nikki Way	Undergraduate at-large
Florence Myrick	Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning (Representative)
Deanna Williamson	Cross-Representative from the GFC Academic Planning Committee
Amanda Gregoris	Graduate Student at-Large
Lili Liu	Chair (Selected by Chairs' Council)

Presenters:

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
José da Costa	Chair, Teaching, Learning and Technology Council Subcommittee on eTextbooks
Steven Dew	Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies
Sheree Kwong See	Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning, and Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on the Status of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction

Staff:

Andrea Patrick	Acting 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.

Several items were rearranged on the Agenda to accommodate guests.

Motion: Chelen/Liu

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Agenda, as reordered.

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of May 1, 2013

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Liu/Williamson

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of May 1, 2013.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Co-Chair

The Chair commented on a number of relevant issues to members. Dr Connor also thanked several members whose terms on GFC CLE were coming to an end.

ACTION ITEMS

4. GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Subcommittee on the Status of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRIs) Final Report for Approval

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Sheree Kwong See, Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning, and Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on the Status of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRIs)

Purpose of the Item: At the October 3, 2012 meeting of GFC CLE, the Committee's Chair proposed that a 2009 report of a previous GFC CLE subcommittee examining the evaluation of teaching at the University of Alberta and, in particular, use of USRIs be revisited and called for a group of volunteers to form a subcommittee to lead discussion and make recommendations based on the 2009 document. A draft report of this subcommittee was brought to GFC CLE on May 1, 2013 for discussion, and the final report is now being forwarded to GFC CLE for approval.

Discussion:

Dr Kwong See reminded members that this report had been brought as a discussion item at GFC CLE's last meeting. She noted that the wording of the report before members had not changed in any way since that meeting but, now, the item was presented to members for their formal approval. The formation of a subcommittee, as recommended within the report, intended to advise on next steps, is planned for September, 2013 to allow for the replenishment of this group.

Motion: Williamson/Myrick

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) approve the final Report of the GFC CLE Subcommittee on the Status of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRIs), as submitted by the

Subcommittee's Chair and as set forth in Attachment 1.

CARRIED

5. GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies Report: Final Report For Discussion

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: To recommend to the Office of the Provost next steps in the adoption of student attributes attained upon graduation from the University of Alberta. This subcommittee, as *per* its Terms of Reference, has reviewed literature, consulted widely, determined common themes for attributes, and provided recommendations for possible models for implementation.

Discussion:

It was clarified for members by Dr Connor and by the Acting Coordinator that the approval of this final report acted as the Committee's endorsement.

As some members were under the impression that the document would be brought back to GFC CLE for discussion rather than as an 'action' item, Mr Chelen explained that he and Mr Bodnar, GFC CLE Coordinator, had had a discussion with regard to placing this item for action on this agenda; with the agreement of the Committee's Co-Chair, this was confirmed as an appropriate route to follow. Mr Chelen noted that the report was intended to provide recommendations on implementation, primarily to include the list of attributes on course syllabi, but to ensure, too, that it does not become a work-intensive task for professors calling for the re-evaluation of his or her pedagogy. Dr Dew added that the Subcommittee feels that the mandate given to them at this point has been exhausted.

There was lengthy discussion that the report insinuates that the University currently does not instill the listed attributes in its graduates and that this report implies a need to change. Many felt this would be inaccurate, considering that the attributes list was derived from a student survey; although, as Dr Dew clarified, the survey was one of many pieces of data used to compile the list. It was argued by a member that this document should serve to celebrate the successes of the University of Alberta instead of implying insufficiencies, especially in the present political climate.

It was also noted by a member that the report seems to suggest undertaking the task of measuring the soft skills listed as attributes, which is an extremely complicated and controversial undertaking

The presenters of this report noted that there was no intent to imply under-performance and that the list was simply to consider what the University should do, which does not suggest it is not already being done.

In spite of the concerns regarding the implications and future uses of the document, members spoke of the great work done by the Subcommittee in compiling the list and the usefulness it could provide.

Mr Chelen said that he would be willing to take this document to University Relations for guidance on rewording to dispel any concerns of unwanted implications, if members wished.

A member pointed others to the introduction of the report which clearly stipulates that it is intended to

contain guiding principles rather than anything of a prescriptive nature.

[Note from the Acting Coordinator: After the initial vote on the Motion was taken and the Motion was carried, at the request of the Co-Chair, Dr Connor, there was a re-vote on the Motion, as the member who placed the original Motion on the floor had opposed it; the Motion was therefore moved, seconded, and voted on again. Of note, both votes were carried by members. It should be noted, as well, that procedurally, this was an extraordinary move, contrary to GFC's procedural rules.]

Motion: Chelen/Way

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) approve the final Report of the GFC CLE Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies, as submitted by the Subcommittee's Co-Chairs and as set forth in Attachment 1.

CARRIED

DISCUSSION ITEMS

6. Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council Subcommittee on eTextbooks: Report and Recommendations – Continuing Discussion

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: José da Costa, Chair, Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council Subcommittee on eTextbooks

Purpose of the Item: This proposed set of recommendations addresses purchasing, technology, and pedagogy issues faced by the University community as eTextbooks become increasingly more common.

Discussion:

Dr Connor informed members that although this item was for discussion, a Motion could be put forward to adopt it as a GFC CLE subcommittee report since the Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council, which originally established this group, has been disbanded.

Dr da Costa explained that the Subcommittee was unable to reach a final consensus, and it was hoped that GFC CLE would take on the report to make a decision on how to proceed. Dr da Costa noted several key points that the report addressed, which included, but were not limited to: the inevitability of eTextbooks and the necessity for the institution to understand how to deal with them; the need to be proactive in making decisions so that the University is not led by the publishers; the unclear state of data storage; joining other institutions so that the University can form a coalition moving forward in a positive direction; the need to consider how freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation affects eTextbooks; purchasing details; and how to integrate eTextbooks with pedagogy. It was also noted that the larger issue of open education resources could also be addressed if a new subcommittee is struck to look into these issues in greater depth.

Dr Connor expressed his wish to see this as a recurring item since there is, at this point, no obvious conclusion. Members discussed deriving Motions from the report. After a discussion regarding the state of the report and its readiness, members determined to put a Motion on the floor to adopt it as a GFC CLE subcommittee report. Members would be petitioned for possible membership if and when a new subcommittee is struck.

Motion: Milner/Liu

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment, under delegated authority from General Faculties Council, adopt the scope of the former Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council Subcommittee on eTextbooks, effective immediately and as set forth in Attachment 1.

CARRIED

7. University of Alberta's Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL): Update from the Interim Director

There were no documents.

Presenters: Sheree Kwong See, Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning

Discussion:

Ms Kwong See provided members with an update of several Centre for Teaching and Learning events over the summer including Moodle training, advisory committees, the summer symposium (on the topic of technology in the classroom), and the planning and implementation of orientations for new professors.

There were no questions.

8. GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Subcommittee on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology: Update

There were no documents.

Presenter: John Boeglin, Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Subcommittee on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology

Discussion:

Dr Connor informed members that Mr Boeglin was not able to attend the meeting to present this item because he is currently serving as Acting Dean, Campus Saint-Jean. Through correspondence with Dr Boeglin, Dr Connor provided an update, speaking of the Subcommittee's continued activity, which includes drafting survey questions and consulting with various groups. It is expected that documentation will be ready for GFC CLE's review in September or October, 2013.

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

There were no documents.

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

Discussion:

As Mr Ryder was unable to attend today's meeting, there was no update on this matter at this time.

STANDING ITEMS

10. 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.

11. 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.

12. 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.

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

14. Question Period

There were no questions.

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

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

17. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:40 pm.