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

Wednesday, October 02, 2013
2-31 South Academic Building (SAB)
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Voting Members:

Bill Connor	Ex-Officio Co-Chair, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction)
Colin More	Ex-Officio Member (Delegate), President, Graduate Students' Association
Dustin Chelen	Ex-Officio Member, Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union
Gerald Beasley	Ex-Officio Member, Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian
Genevieve Maheux-Pelletier	Ex-Officio Member (Delegate), Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Ada Ness	Ex-Officio Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and University Registrar
Scott Delinger	Ex-Officio Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President of Information Technology
Brock Richardson	Elected Member, Support Staff Representative, Elected by GFC
Stanley Varnhagen	Elected Member, Academic Staff
Trevor Woods	Elected Member, Academic Staff
Florence Myrick	Appointed Member, Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning)
Katy Campbell	Appointed Member, Dean (Selected by Deans' Council), Extension
Toni Samek	Appointed Member, Major Teaching Award Recipient, Staff Representative

Presenter(s):

Dustin Chelen	Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union
Bill Connor	Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
Genevieve Maheux-Pelletier	Educational Developer, Centre for Teaching and Learning (and Delegate of the Interim Director for the Centre for Teaching and Learning)

Staff:

Garry Bodnar, Coordinator and Scribe, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

OPENING SESSION

1.   Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Delinger/Campbell

THAT the Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Agenda.

CARRIED

2.   Approval of the Open Session Minutes of September 4, 2013

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Beasley/Chelen

THAT the Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of September 4, 2013.
CARRIED

3.   Comments from the Co-Chair

There were no documents.

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

Discussion:

The Co-Chair commented on a number of relevant issues to members.

ACTION ITEMS

4.   Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) Policy Interpretation and Implementation Working Group

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Dustin Chelen, Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union

Purpose of the Proposal: To have GFC CLE strike a working group to determine how to promote consistent interpretation and implementation of GFC Policy Manual Sections 111.2 and 111.3 (Teaching and Learning and Teaching Evaluation) and to discuss draft Terms of Reference for a Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) Policy Interpretation and Implementation Working Group.

Discussion:
Mr Chelen, in briefing members on the proposal now before the Committee, referred to recent reviews undertaken by GFC CLE of the University's USRIs, with one undertaken in 2009 and another in 2012-2013. The more recent review resulted in a GFC CLE subcommittee report that served to recommend, amongst other things, the striking of USRI policy interpretation and implementation working group with membership that included representatives from GFC CLE and beyond. Mr Chelen continued by speaking to the purpose and mandate of this working group, as set out in the material before members on this occasion.

Dr Connor clarified that members were being asked today to consider whether or not to strike this working group. He noted that, if the group were struck, they would be charged with returning to GFC CLE with proposed Terms of Reference based, in part, on advice provided by members at today's meeting.

During the ensuing discussion, members expressed several comments and questions, including, but not limited to: commentary that teaching online is different than teaching in person, with advice the working

group should familiarize themselves thoroughly on these differences as they move forward; an observation that the School of Library and Information Studies in revamping its USRIs to accommodate the new online Master of Library and Information Studies (MLIS) degree; clarification around the role of the Association of Academic Staff – University of Alberta (AASUA) Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) and the role a representative of this body would play if this individual were to attend meetings of GFC CLE; clarification with regard to the final bullet under section 2 of the document before members and a query as to its relevance; a query as to whether or not any members of GFC CLE were interested in serving on this working group; the suggestion that Contract Academic Staff: Teaching (CAST) representatives should be asked to participate in the work undertaken by this group; and clarification as to who would chair this group.

Dr Connor noted that his Office would be responsible for calling the first meeting of this working group in order to refine its Terms of Reference and to provide clarity as to its membership.

Motion: Chelen/Varhagen

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve, under delegated authority from General Faculties Council, the (proposed) striking of a working group to determine how to promote consistent interpretation and implementation of GFC Policy Manual Sections 111.2 and 111.3 (Teaching and Learning and Teaching Evaluation) and, in doing so, to ensure continuity, at a minimum, one member from the GFC CLE Subcommittee on the Status of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) should be a member of the working group.

CARRIED

DISCUSSION ITEMS

5.   Review of Items for Possible Consideration by the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) – Continuing Discussion

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

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Dr Connor invited members to suggest possible items to populate future GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) agendas; he noted that, on at least two occasions over the past year, members had been invited to do this. He continued by stating that GFC CLE would be drawn naturally into issues related to blended learning and related topics—he noted that, at the December, 2013 meeting of GFC CLE, with Professor Mike Carbonaro (Faculty of Education) in attendance, members would be invited to discuss issues related to digital learning, for instance.

During the ensuing discussion, members expressed several comments and questions, including, but not limited to: discussion regarding graduate supervision, with the Provost's Fellow currently dealing with this topic to be invited to attend an upcoming meeting of GFC CLE; the issue of an academy-wide teaching plan; updates on the implementation and use of the University's (UAPPOL) grading policy and related procedures (as, the Co-Chair suggested, a recurring item on GFC CLE agendas); a 'teaching and learning book club', where members each took turns speaking about something they had read or otherwise encountered on teaching and learning (eg, an article, a book, something encountered in the classroom,

etc) that was exceptionally interesting and, as result, worth sharing with others; and creation of an inventory or checklist setting out those things instructors should know at the time they start their classes (eg, policies on deferred examinations, teaching evaluations, etc), with, perhaps, the University's Centre of Teaching and Learning taking the lead on developing such a checklist. On the last point, Dr Maheux-Pelletier (in attendance at today's meeting as the Interim Director of CTL's delegate) agreed she would take this idea back to the Centre for further discussion and possible development.

Dr Connor noted this would all continue to be a 'work in progress' and that, over time, the Committee would delve into some of the above-noted topics further.

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

There were no documents.

Presenter: Genevieve Maheux-Pelletier, Educational Developer (and Delegate of the Interim Director), Centre for Teaching and Learning

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:
Dr Maheux-Pelletier briefed members on the recent activities scheduled by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), providing a general overview of the workshops, courses, activities, and ongoing services provided by this unit to the wider University community. She also noted that the Peer Consultation Program was now up and running.

7.   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) (and Delegate of the Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology))

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:
Dr Delinger updated members with regard to recent activities undertaken by his Office on the deployment of online course teaching evaluations (on a trial project basis) by certain Faculties at the University of Alberta. He stated that he had once again taken on this initiative after the recent departure of his colleague, Mr Josh Ryder, for a position in the United States. Results for Spring and Summer Term trials have been posted on the Vice-Provost (Information Technology) (VPIT) website. Currently, certain Departments within the Faculties of Science and Engineering are participating in these trials.

Dr Delinger concluded his remarks by stating he would make available for discussion at the November, 2013 meeting of GFC CLE a report generated by his unit outlining in greater detail the results of the trials conducted at the University with electronic Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (e-USRI).

STANDING ITEMS

8.   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

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
There was no discussion.

9.   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

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
There was no discussion.

10.   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

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
There was no discussion.

11.   Question Period

There were no questions.

INFORMATION REPORTS

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

There were no items.

13.   Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

14. Adjournment

The Co-Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:20 pm.