



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

Wednesday, December 04, 2013
2-31 South Academic Building (SAB)
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Voting Members:

Bill Connor	Co-Chair, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction)
Gerald Beasley	Member, Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian
John Boeglin	Member, Academic Staff
Katy Campbell	Member, Dean (Selected by Deans' Council), Extension
Dustin Chelen	Member, Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union
Scott Delinger	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology)
Colin More	Member (Delegate), President, Graduate Students' Association
Sheree Kwong See	Member, Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Jacqueline Leighton	Member, Chair Representative (Selected by Chairs' Council)
Florence Myrick	Member, Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning)
Ada Ness	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and University Registrar
Brock Richardson	Member, Support Staff Representative (Category B1.0), Elected by GFC
Toni Samek	Member, Major Teaching Award Recipient, Staff Representative
Stanley Varnhagen	Member, Academic Staff
Nikki Way	Member, Undergraduate Student-at-large

Presenter(s):

John Boeglin	Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Subcommittee on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology
Bill Connor	Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
Scott Delinger	Information Technology Strategic Initiatives Officer, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Sheree Kwong See	Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Genevieve Maheux-Pelletier	Educational Developer, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Dale Olausen	Senior Research Analyst, Office of Strategic Analysis

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.

Dr Connor stated that Item #4 (Developments in Digital and Blended Learning) was withdrawn from the Agenda due to the presenter's inability to attend today's GFC CLE meeting. The Co-Chair noted this item would be brought forward to the next Committee meeting. He also asked that his 'Comments' be deferred to the end of the meeting in order to accommodate guest presenters.

Motion: Delinger/Chelen

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

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of October 2, 2013

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: More/Chelen

THAT the Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of October 2, 2013.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Co-Chair

Given time constraints, there were no comments from the Co-Chair.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) Vision, Mission, and Relationship to Governance Committees

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Sheree Kwong See, Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

Purpose of the Proposal: The relationship between CTL and University governance committees, in particular GFC CLE, is unclear and worthy of discussion and clarification. As background for discussion, the Interim Director will make a short presentation outlining the vision and mission of CTL and then articulate the relationship between CTL and GFC CLE in this vision for discussion and endorsement with members of this GFC standing committee.

Discussion:

Before presenting her item and in response to a request from the Co-Chair, Dr Kwong See provided a brief overview of the recent blended and digital learning initiatives and the administrative structures created to support them, resulting from a series of recommendations advanced by the President's Visioning Committee, created in the Spring of 2012. She spoke of the establishment of the Digital Learning Pilots: Research and Development Committee (DLP:R&D), with its oversight of the DINO 101 pilot, the University's first MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) funded by the Faculty of Science, and blended learning-course pilots, funded by the Faculty of Education; and the collaboration occurring between the Faculty of Education's Centre for Research in Applied Measurement and Evaluation (CRAME) and the Alberta Innovates Centre for Machine Learning (AICML). She concluded her remarks by referencing the establishment of the Provost's Digital Learning Committee (PDLC), which is to support the implementation of digital learning activities broadly across the institution and to consider ways in which digital learning can be blended with traditional delivery models.

At this point, Dr Kwong See turned to the discussion item regarding CTL's Vision and Mission and the Centre's relationship to governance committees. In her presentation, aided by a PowerPoint presentation, she addressed the following: the Vision and Mission for CTL; what it is CTL does, how CTL delivers to the wider community, and how CTL leads; detail on how CTL works to transform learning experiences at the institution through inspiration, enabling strategies, and an appropriate reward system, reflective teaching practices, including teaching and learning events, teaching development, underpinned by teaching and program support services, and teaching excellence, scholarship, and innovation, supported by awards and funding.

Dr Kwong See continued by: describing in greater detail the teaching and learning events provided by CTL, including, for example, the Festival of Teaching and a number of different symposia; describing in detail the teaching and program support services provided by CTL, including, amongst other services, professional development workshops, instructional resources, consultation services, and a wide range of other programming; describing in detail the awards and funding supported by CTL, including, for example, the Vargo Chair, the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (TLEF), and a range of special funding calls; illustrating the administrative structure of CTL, including its staff complement, its Faculty Affiliates, its Educational Developers, and its Technology Services; and providing a description of the work undertaken by CTL to create bridging networks with a range of other units on campus (eg, the Sustainability Office, the University Libraries) and the ways in which it works to leverage expertise in Faculties.

Dr Kwong See then spoke, specifically, to its relationship with GFC CLE and the manner in which she envisioned CTL supporting the Committee in its activities, policy writing and revision, and the implementation of proposals and policy approved by the Committee (or, by extension, General Faculties Council). She concluded her presentation by commenting, as well, on ways in which CTL could work with Faculties as an operational arm for initiatives such as the non-credit teaching certificate program.

During the ensuing discussion, members expressed a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: a query as to where the University's Libraries fit into the governance structure of the institution and what their connection was to University governance; commentary on CTL's staff complement, particularly in relation to the number of continuing, stable academic staff and their ability to ensure academic freedom was maintained relative to teaching and learning; the need to engage the broader University community in discussion on the role, vision, and mission of CTL; clarification on whether or not CTL is a service unit or a unit that is prepared to discuss the 'hard' issues associated with teaching and learning and how these affect the University's front-line academic staff engaged daily in teaching and learning activities; a request to share Dr Kwong See's PowerPoint presentation delivered at today's GFC

CLE meeting with the Committee's membership, a request to which Dr Kwong See agreed; commentary about what was seen as the positive linkage between CTL and GFC CLE; commentary on the funding that supports CTL and its wide range of activities; the role of CTL in curricula development; the perceived gap between GFC CLE and CTL on learning issues, the role of the libraries in the learning environment, and the ways in which campus spaces enhance both teaching and learning; the perceived weakness of GFC CLE on its ability to take firm 'action'; and whether or not the final report of the Renaissance Committee would be coming forward at some point to GFC CLE for discussion.

Dr Connor noted that it was his intention to bring this topic back to GFC CLE for further discussion and refinement at a future meeting—this is, he stated, the beginning of a discussion upon which he hopes the Committee will continue to build. He indicated that he and Dr Kwong See would be happy to discuss these issues with individual members, as they saw fit.

6. Slash Courses (400/500) at the University of Alberta

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenters: Sheree Kwong See, Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL); Genevieve Maheux-Pelletier, Educational Developer, CTL

Purpose of the Proposal: Slash courses (400/500) exist at the University of Alberta and, in the current budget climate, may become more common in the future. A review of the literature and of policies both internally and externally suggests little thought has been given to the nature of these courses. There is potential for development of recommendations and policy around such courses. CTL would like to bring this topic forward for discussion and future action at GFC CLE.

Discussion:

Dr Kwong See introduced this discussion item to members by noting that so-called 'slash courses' were becoming increasingly popular at the University of Alberta and that it was timely, thus, for CTL to initiate discussion on how the institution will handle these courses from both developmental and policy perspectives on a go-forward basis.

Dr Maheux-Pelletier continued the presentation by stating it appears not much thought has gone into how these types of courses affect the learning environment for those students enrolled in them. They appear to be created for the most part, she stated, on *ad hoc* bases by the units offering them. Similarly, there appears to be a paucity of pedagogical research around these types of offerings—students who have taken these courses either complain that they are too challenging or, alternately, not challenging enough. At the University of Alberta, there is little policy with regard to slash courses to ensure both students and staff make the most out of their experiences in such offerings; instead, the focus appears to be on administrative issues (eg, how will these courses be timetabled and administered).

During the ensuing discussion, members expressed a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: commentary that it is good to initiate these discussions and, in engaging in debate on this topic, the University should also consider credit/non-credit course offerings and other 'creative' courses offered by this institution; commentary that, despite the uncertainty of how these types of courses evolved at the University of Alberta, they appeared to work quite well in certain Departments; whether or not data exists that speaks to the issues encountered by students registered in and instructors of slash courses and whether or not the institution has data that corroborates the notion that the offering of these courses has created problems at the University; a query as to how we maximize the teaching in these courses for the

benefit of all students enrolled in them; an expression of concern about double dipping in these types of courses; commentary that, in the School of Library and Information Studies, slash courses have actually proven to be positive recruitment tools for students contemplating graduate studies after completion of their undergraduate programs; an expression of concern with the application of the grading policy for the undergraduate and graduate students enrolled together in a slash course and the potential for inequity; whether or not the creation of slash courses is a reaction to budgetary pressures and whether they will become more and more popular in the future, as a result; and commentary that such courses provide opportunities for the integration of undergraduate, graduate, and professional learners in one milieu.

The Co-Chair noted that this is an interesting topic that will undoubtedly continue to be discussed by GFC CLE in the near to medium future.

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

There were no documents.

Presenter: Sheree Kwong See, Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:

Dr Kwong See reported on upcoming workshops and symposia sponsored by CTL, including the University of Alberta Blended Learning Symposium to be held on December 5, 2013 in the Edmonton Clinic Health Academy (ECHA), as offered jointly by the Provost's Digital Learning Committee (PDLC) and CTL. The purpose of this symposium, she stated, is to engage participants in a 'conversation' about supporting learning and the undergraduate student experience at the University using blended learning strategies. The day, which includes a keynote address by Dr Ron Owston, Dean, Faculty of Education, York University, showcases, and a panel discussion, is open to all members of the University community and will be an opportunity for participants to find out more about the role blended learning is currently playing in the lives of undergraduate students and the future possibilities it presents.

8. Presentation of Grades from 2012/2013 in Comparison to Previous Years

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; Dale Olausen, Senior Research Analyst, Office of Strategic Analysis

Purpose of the Proposal: To share with GFC CLE grading data since the implementation of the Assessment and Grading Policy in the Fall Term, 2012.

Discussion:

Dr Connor introduced this item by noting that this was an opportunity to review grading data collected by the University subsequent to the implementation of the UAPPOL Assessment and Grading Policy in the Fall of 2012. With that brief introduction, he turned to Mr Olausen who, in his presentation (supported by a PowerPoint presentation), spoke to: general information gleaned from his analysis of the data collected in 2012-2013 *versus* that accumulated from previous academic years (ie, pre-Fall, 2012); the acorn data warehouse in which this information was stored and upon which he had based his analysis; grading analysis for course levels 100 to 299, all Faculties in; grading analysis for course levels 300 to 599, all

Faculties in; grading analysis for graduate-level courses, all teaching Faculties in; his regression analysis; and a description of the trends that appear to have emerged from these analyses.

Dr Connor noted that grading will continue to be tracked and analyzed over time.

During the ensuing discussion, members expressed a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: commentary on how it was interesting to see how Faculties are adapting to the new grading policy, what the early trends appear to be, and how they will conceivably change over time; whether or not there have been, since the new grading policy's adoption, grade inflation; whether or not Faculties have submitted their unit-specific grading guidelines to complement the institutional grading policy; and commentary from the Co-Chair that the uptick in grades experienced in some areas may be attributable, in part, to the fact the University of Alberta is admitting increasingly better-qualified applicants.

Dr Connor thanked Mr Olausen for this presentation and stated there was merit in sharing this data and the accompanying analyses with both the GFC Academic Standards Committee (ASC) and Deans' Council.

9. GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Subcommittee on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology: Overview of Proposed Survey Questions

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: To seek input from GFC CLE members on drafts of the faculty- and student-oriented surveys prepared by the GFC CLE Subcommittee on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology

Discussion:

Dr Boeglin began his update by commenting that, in April, 2012, GFC CLE Subcommittee on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology had submitted to members a detailed report entitled "Using technology to further enhance the teaching and learning environment at the University of Alberta." In this report, the authors had presented an overview of some of the major achievements that had taken place over the past two decades in terms of integrating technology into the University's teaching and learning environments. He commented that, while much has been said about what technologies instructors are using, much less is known about whether these technologies are meeting institutional teaching and learning needs. In an attempt to get at this information and gain a better understanding of the challenges around the use of technology for teaching and learning activities, the Subcommittee proposed conducting a campus-wide survey on this matter that would involve academic staff as well as students, an initiative that was endorsed at the April 4, 2012 meeting of GFC CLE. Since then, members of the Subcommittee have had a series of meetings with Administration, as well as a series of meetings amongst Subcommittee members, in an attempt to try and move forward with this initiative.

Dr Boeglin continued by stating that the Subcommittee is now presenting the results of the group's discussions for feedback from GFC CLE. He asked that members bear in mind that these documents are draft versions and still require a considerable amount of work. He indicated the Subcommittee is well aware of issues regarding survey length, formatting, the necessity to reorganize question order, and so on. He commented that all of the logistics as to how the surveys will be administered and related activities will be worked out once the Subcommittee has a better idea of what the final versions of the surveys will

appear. The results of the surveys, when implemented, will be used to enhance the support that allows the University to enact improvements that better meet institutional teaching and learning needs. He concluded by referencing the timelines associated with the surveys: updated versions of the documentation will be circulated to GFC CLE in early January, 2014 for feedback by e-mail; the Subcommittee will survey and meet with other interested parties as they deem appropriate for commentary on the surveys; and presentation of the final versions will take place at January 29, 2014 GFC CLE meeting. He stated that, in the meantime, members should feel free to e-mail any comments and/or suggestions to either himself or to Subcommittee member, Stanley Varnhagen.

There was a brief discussion during which a member expressed concern with several of the draft questions and another asked what level of feedback the Subcommittee expected from GFC CLE members.

10. Electronic Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (e-USRI) Spring/Summer 2013 Pilot Report

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: The CoursEval™ Pilot Study is reporting on the progress toward University-wide adoption of electronic Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (e-USRI).

Discussion:

Dr Delinger spoke to the report before members and the results contained therein. He noted that the pilot regarding the deployment of e-USRI will continue in Fall Term, 2013. He commented there were some challenges faced procedurally because of the recently-approved shift in the term withdrawal deadlines.

During the ensuing discussion, members expressed several comments and questions, including: concern that there appeared to be a 'bug' in the e-USRI system that prevents students using it from getting the follow-up e-mails this system indicates they should receive; commentary that clarity of process on e-USRI would be helpful for instructors; and a query with regard to the nature of written responses being gathered from those students using this system.

STANDING ITEMS

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. 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.

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 Co-Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:05 pm.