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

Wednesday, October 01, 2014
2-31 South Academic Building (SAB)
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Voting Members:

Robert Luth	Chair (Delegate), Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Mikael Adolphson	Member, Associate Dean or Associate Chair, Teaching and Learning (or Equivalent)
Gerald Beasley	Member, Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian
Scott Delinger	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology)
Shannon Erichsen	Member, Support Staff Representative (Category B1.0)
Sheree Kwong See	Member, Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Jacqueline Leighton	Member, Chair Representative, Selected by Chairs' Council
Glen Loppnow	Member, Associate Dean or Associate Chair, Teaching and Learning (or Equivalent)
Ada Ness	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and University Registrar
Kathryn Orydzuk	Member, Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union
Mani Vaidyanathan	Member, Academic Staff
Stanley Varnhagen	Member, Academic Staff

Presenter(s):

Mickey Adolphson	Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning), Faculty of Arts (and Chair, University Writing Committee)
Sheree Kwong See	Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Robert Luth	Associate Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
Stanley Varnhagen	Member, GFC CLE Subcommittee on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology

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.

Presenter: Robert Luth, Associate Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

Dr Luth noted that, because he had decided a discussion on Item #4 (Report on the Activities of Digital Learning Pilots: Research and Development (DLP: R&D)) was premature at this time, this item had been withdrawn from the Agenda.

Motion: Delinger/Beasley

> THAT the Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Agenda, as amended.
> **CARRIED**

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of September 3, 2014

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Robert Luth, Associate Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

Motion: Vaidyanathan/Varnhagen

> THAT the Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of September 3, 2014.
> **CARRIED**

3. Comments from the Chair

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

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Arts Pedagogy Research and Innovation Laboratory (APRIL)

There were no documents.

Presenter: Mickey Adolphson, Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning), Faculty of Arts

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:
Dr Adolphson introduced this item to members by providing the rationale underpinning the creation of the Arts Pedagogy Research and Innovation Laboratory (APRIL) by and in the Faculty of Arts. In order to assist his presentation of this initiative, he projected the Laboratory's current website for members' information.

Dr Adolphson provided a demonstration of a number of projects undertaken within the context of APRIL, with focus on a particularly successful project that sought to significantly improve international students' performance in their Arts-based studies. This project adopted a "flipped classroom" approach, implemented within a required introductory course for Economics majors—this proved to be very successful for the Faculty, with significant positive results. The website and the information contained therein will be updated, he noted, on a regular basis and are accessible to anyone interested in reviewing the projects and their results. He commented that APRIL was supported by an advisory board comprising Arts alumni from a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds.

Dr Adolphson concluded his presentation by noting this undertaking served to develop important competencies for Arts students in order to ensure their success, both before and after graduation; fed information back into the classrooms; was destined to be part of larger Province-wide arts network; and was of high priority for the Faculty, with he and his colleagues working hard to prove its value to the Faculty of Arts (and beyond).

During the ensuing discussion, members provided a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: clarification with regard the nature of "flipping" classes and whether or not advice on this was sought from the University's Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL); a query as to what the Faculty of Arts will do now with the findings from the Economics-based project and whether this will influence further pedagogy (eg, courses offered) in the Faculty; a suggestion that a further future update on this initiative would be helpful for GFC CLE; the suggestion that the experiences gained *via* APRIL and by offering MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) could lead to the creation of a 'white paper' that GFC CLE could consider, possibly resulting in institutional policy revisions; and a question as to what the University would do in the situation where it improves student performance so markedly that all of our students hover at the upper end (ie, in the top percentile).

6.   University Writing Committee – Report/Update

There were no documents.

Presenter: Mickey Adolphson, Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning), Faculty of Arts (and Chair, University Writing Committee)

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:
Dr Adolphson explained to members what the University Writing Committee (UWC) was, how it came about, its mandate and membership, and the context for writing centres and related initiatives in this discipline across the institution. He noted the UWC, created in 2008, was intended to bring disparate factions on writing together centrally and was asked to report on an ongoing basis to the Teaching, Learning and Technology (TLAT) Council until that body was disbanded approximately 18 months ago. He stated that, currently, there appeared to be no real vision or structure around writing at the University of Alberta and that there was no meaningful, unifying force for the disparate groups and individuals at the institution who were focused on writing. He posed a question as to where UWC should now report and sought members' views on this issue; he also queried members on how they felt writing fits into the larger teaching and learning environment at the University of Alberta.

During the ensuing discussion, members provided a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: a query as to what it was TLAT Council originally charged UWC with considering; that GFC CLE might be a good forum for further discussions on writing at the University of Alberta, with some uncertainty on how this could be realized; a question as to whether or not UWC is meeting the goals for which it was established or whether or not the Committee has run its course; an expression of concern that UWC appears an 'orphan' body and should be considered for reorganization and institutional recognition, given how important and critical writing services are to students; and a general query as to whether or not there were other large institutional issues and skills (eg, critical thinking) that required the same level of attention and championing given to writing and clarification as to why writing had been selected years ago for this special focus/attention.

The Chair provided a brief overview of the respective roles played by GFC CLE and the former TLAT Council. He stated that he felt it was important to discuss these issues with the Provost and Vice-President

(Academic), perhaps at a Vice-Provosts' Council (VPC) meeting, and determine whether or not UWC should report now directly to the Provost or, instead, to GFC CLE. Members agreed this was an appropriate means of following up on their discussion. Dr Luth stated that, after his consultation, he would report back on this matter to GFC CLE at the Committee's November 5, 2014 meeting.

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

There were no documents.

Presenter: Sheree Kwong See, Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:
Dr Kwong See provided members with an update about the various activities organized this Fall by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), including: details surrounding the CTL Peer Consultation Program; CATALYSTS, a conversation series on teaching; a series of workshops on a wide range of issues and topics (eg, teaching philosophies, critical thinking and writing, preparing a teaching dossier, mindfulness deployed in the classroom setting, etc).

The Chair commented on a CATALYSTS session he had recently attended, noting that he had found it very helpful and also great fun. He encouraged members to consider attending upcoming sessions.

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

There were no documents.

Presenter: Stanley Varnhagen, Member, GFC CLE Subcommittee on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:
Dr Varnhagen presented an oral update to members on the continuing progress made by the GFC CLE Subcommittee on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology. He indicated that he and Dr John Boeglin, the Subcommittee's Chair, hoped to have a report for next month's GFC CLE meeting for members to consider.

He then continued by presenting to members a series of PowerPoint slides that spoke to the data collected as a result of the staff and student surveys conducted by the Subcommittee over the Summer of 2014. In his presentation, he covered, amongst other issues: the frequency of use of instructional technologies by both students and staff; the frequency with which instructional technologies were deployed in courses; student and staff use of mobile technologies for course-related tasks other than note taking; the expectations of instructors for students to use mobile devices in the classroom; the reasons survey respondents typically used technology in their courses; the use of instructional technology and its effect on respondents' course evaluations; and the likelihood of students to take courses that make innovative use of instructional technologies.

During the ensuing discussion, members provided a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: a query whether or not Drs Varnhagen and/or Boeglin experienced any big 'surprises' as they evaluated the data collected; whether or not it was deliberate not to include reference to respondents'

Faculties; clarification on the data collected regarding flipped and blended courses; whether definitions were provided in the survey to ensure respondents clearly understood the questions being asked; and the nature of the detail (or lack thereof) gathered from respondents on their backgrounds, disciplines, *et cetera*.

Dr Varnhagen thanked members for their comments and questions and stated that, should any have further queries, they were welcome to contact him.

Dr Luth then posed a question as to what the 'next steps' would likely be for this subcommittee. Dr Varnhagen replied that he saw the work undertaken by this group as spurring further discussion and possible policy creation. Dr Luth also queried whether or not the Subcommittee needed to be replenished as far as its membership is concerned, and Dr Varhagen responded that, although this required some further reflection on his and Dr Boeglin's part, it was likely this may be necessary at this point in time.

9. <u>Work Plan (2014-2015) for the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) – Further Discussion</u>

There were no documents.

Presenter: Robert Luth, Associate Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Dr Luth, in launching discussion on this item, noted that members had had the opportunity to begin discussing a 'work plan' for GFC CLE at its September 3, 2014 meeting. He stated he felt it important that the Committee continue to discuss possible issues and initiatives it wished to tackle during the course of this academic year (ie, 2014-2015).

Discussion:
During the ensuing discussion of possible items for future consideration by GFC CLE, a member raised the matter of 'attributes and competencies' for University of Alberta students. There was acknowledgement that a great deal of good work had been done over the past three years by a subcommittee of GFC CLE on this issue and that the final report out of this subcommittee had been discussed in considerable depth by General Faculties Council (GFC) at its March 24, 2014 meeting. Several members of GFC CLE felt there might be further work to be done by the Committee in this area, to which the Chair responded by indicating he would discuss the status of the recommendations set out in the aforementioned subcommittee report with the Provost and seek from him guidance on how the Provostry will continue to move forward on this initiative. Dr Luth committed to reporting back to GFC CLE in due course.

A member asked whether or not the final report of the GFC CLE Subcommittee on Attributes and Competencies had been forwarded to the Faculties for review and feedback.

A member made reference to another recent-past subcommittee report--this was the report prepared jointly by GFC CLE and the GFC Facilities Development Committee (FDC) on institutional learning spaces. Again, some members felt there might be value in GFC CLE discussing a range of issues associated with the University's learning spaces and their support of the institution's academic mission. On this point, Dr Luth stated that, before any final decision was made by GFC CLE on this specific topic, he would discuss this further with the current Chair of GFC FDC and see if there were ways in which lines of communication could be set up between these two GFC standing committees. Again, Dr Luth committed to reporting back to GFC CLE on this in due course.

Dr Luth then posed a question of the Committee: where does the University of Alberta want to go on the matter of the institutional digital learning environment? Should there be a vision, a mandate, and associated framing principles, he queried. He asked members to reflect on these issues carefully and indicated he would share with them a link to the report of the President's Visioning Committee and, as well, a link to a document prepared at the University of British Columbia (UBC) on what that institution is currently doing in this arena. He would then come back to GFC CLE and determine how the Committee would like to proceed, with, he hoped, something concrete developed no later than year's end. Members agreed to this approach.

STANDING ITEMS

10.   Question Period

There were no questions.

INFORMATION REPORTS

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

There were no items.

12.   Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

13.   Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:50 pm.