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

Wednesday, November 05, 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)
John Boeglin	Member, Academic Staff
Scott Delinger	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology)
Shannon Erichsen	Member, Support Staff Representative (Category B1.0)
Jacqueline Leighton	Member, Chair Representative, Selected by Chairs' Council
Glen Loppnow	Member, Associate Dean or Associate Chair, Teaching and Learning (or Equivalent)
Colin More	Member (Delegate), President of the Graduate Students' Association
Ada Ness	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and University Registrar
Kathryn Orydzuk	Member, Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union
Fahim Rahman	Member, Undergraduate Student-at-large
Trish Rosseel	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian
Toni Samek	Member, Major Teaching Award Recipient, Staff Representative
Mani Vaidyanathan	Member, Academic Staff
Stanley Varnhagen	Member, Academic Staff
Sarah Wall	Member, Academic Staff (Category A1.0) and GFC Member

Presenter(s):

John Boeglin	Chair, GFC CLE Subcommittee on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology
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, 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.

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

Motion: Leighton/Boeglin

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

2.   Approval of the Open Session Minutes of October 1, 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 (CLE)

Motion: Delinger/Vaidyanathan

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of October 1, 2014.
CARRIED

3.   Comments from the Chair

The Chair invited members to introduce themselves; he then commented on a number of relevant issues.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

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

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: To continue the presentation of results from the July, 2014 survey of academic staff and students and to seek input from GFC CLE members on the repopulation of the GFC CLE Subcommittee on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology.

Discussion:
Dr Boeglin provided members with a brief outline of this item. He then, aided by a PowerPoint presentation, delivered a detailed presentation regarding the specific details and results of the surveys of academic staff and students conducted in July, 2014.

Dr Boeglin continued by reporting on the activities of the Subcommittee since its inception and noted that, at this particular point in time, additional members are needed. He suggested that it comprise six members. He stated that Professor José da Costa (Faculty of Education) and Ms Kathryn Orydzuk, Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union (SU) (and GFC CLE member) have agreed to be on the Subcommittee, noting that it would be best if there were wide representation on this body. He added that it would be helpful, as well, if GFC CLE could provide the Subcommittee with a specific mandate.

During the discussion surrounding this item, members provided a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: clarification regarding responses to the faculty survey from members of the Faculty of Engineering; clarification regarding the definition of "technology" within the surveys; whether a list of instructional technological tools was provided to survey participants; clarification regarding the ultimate usage of this data from the surveys; whether analysis has been done in terms of the provided examples of instructional technologies used within the surveys; whether the survey data could be broken down to separate responses based on the individual instructional technologies; a suggestion to include Information Services and Technology (IST) representation on the Subcommittee; a suggestion to narrow down the focus on the actual learning component of the issue; clarification regarding the usage of the data, based on the design of the survey questions, and how this relates to the recommendations which could be developed by the Subcommittee; whether the surveys collected data on training in instructional technology platforms; clarification regarding the intended meaning of the use of technology; a request for more information in relation to the original aim of the surveys; a request for the survey questions to be re-distributed to members; and commentary that there may be instructors who do want to incorporate technology within the classroom but have specific barriers to utilization and that the identification of those barriers would be beneficial.

5.   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 (CTL)

Purpose of the Proposal: For discussion/information.

Discussion:
Dr Kwong See provided members with information on recent and upcoming activities hosted by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), including:

- Catalysts: Scholars at Risk: Scratching Old and New Surfaces of Postsecondary Teaching
- Active Learning Strategies for Classroom Time in Science, Technology, and Engineering
- WAC: Grammar and Error in Student Writing: Causes and Effects
- Designing Better Assessments: Aligning Outcomes with Assessments
- Designing Your Blended Course (Three Parts)
- Active Learning Strategies for Classroom Time in Health Sciences, Social Sciences, and Humanities
- Teaching Writing in Large Classes
- New Professor Teaching Orientation
- The University of Alberta Festival of Teaching

6.   Work Plan (2014-2015) for the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) – Further Discussion

There were no documents.

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

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:
The Chair reported to members on the status of several ongoing topics relevant to GFC CLE, including writing, student attributes and competencies, and learning spaces.

The Chair invited members to comment on the topic of learning spaces.

Members, during the discussion of this particular topic, expressed a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: a request for an update on the list of ongoing deferred maintenance projects; a request for more board space within classrooms; clarification surrounding the distribution of technologies across different disciplines; that large classrooms cannot easily accommodate additional board space; that technological limitations can impact teaching styles; that the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is positioned to provide assistance to instructors with teaching technologies; that certain technologies do not work properly within certain classrooms; that instructors were not consulted prior to the last technology overhaul (ie, the aggressive move to set up smart classrooms); that this issue is certainly relevant to GFC CLE; that technology does not define quality teaching; that more space in classrooms is needed for instructors to interact with students in a variety of ways; that blackboards and chalk are, in some instances, still required; a suggestion for GFC CLE to focus on how to accommodate different teaching methods and preferences; that a training classroom is being developed by CTL in remodeled space in Cameron Library; that another important issue is quality study spaces for students; a suggestion to identify the elements of an ideal classroom; that the discussion should be inclusive of how to best enhance learning and not just teaching; and the observation that technologies change frequently and quickly.

Discussion on this issue continued, with members noting the following: that there should be more flexibility afforded to professors to utilize sabbatical leaves to investigate their teaching options in relation to available technologies; that, historically, professors have been allowed time to develop courses and work with course developers; that more technology usage does not always translate into better teaching; that, during the development and construction of classrooms, sometimes architectural considerations outweigh pedagogical ones; that this discussion should include the issue of recording lectures; that, through governance channels, priorities and principles for properly establishing the ideal learning environment in classrooms can be achieved; a query whether there are frequent status reports on the updating of classrooms; a query whether the ideal classroom can be achieved and properly implemented; that there is information available online with regard to available technologies within classrooms; that classrooms lack basic tools such as whiteboard markers and erasers and, often, instructors must bring these supplies with them to these venues; and that another area of focus should be open learning spaces and study spaces.

Mr Bodnar clarified the role of the GFC Facilities Development Committee (FDC) with regard to the development and formal consideration of facilities-related proposals and, further, the critical role of Facilities and Operations in decision-making processes, both from administrative and governance perspectives.

On the issue of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI), Dr Kwong See provided members with a brief overview of the work previously carried out by the (now-former) GFC CLE Subcommittee on the Status of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRIs). She reported that one of the recommendations of the Subcommittee, whose final report had been signed off by GFC CLE in June of 2013, included as a possible future strategy the creation of a new working group to establish methods to promote the consistent interpretation and implementation of the USRI 'tool' and that, perhaps, as well, the group could also move GFC Policy Manual Section 111 (Teaching and Learning and Teaching Evaluation) into the University of Alberta Policy and Procedures On-Line (UAPPOL) environment.

Members expressed a number of comments and questions in relation to this issue, including, but not limited to: clarification with respect to the implementation of electronic USRIs; clarification on the mandate of the aforementioned working group; that various Facuties intepret GFC policy differently and that trying to formalize a University-wide policy on this would be contentious; and a suggestion for contract academic staff to be represented on the working group.

Dr Kwong See stated that this topic could be brought back for further discussion and that she would undertake to work on this further.

STANDING ITEMS

7. Question Period

There were no questions.

INFORMATION REPORTS

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

There were no items.

9. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

- Follow-up from the 01 October 2014 CLE Meeting [E-Mail from the Chair of the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)] [E-Mailed to Members on October 15, 2014]

CLOSING SESSION

10. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:00 pm.