



General Faculties Council
 Committee on the Learning Environment
 Open Session Minutes

Wednesday, June 01, 2016
 2-31 South Academic Building (SAB)
 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Voting Members:

Sarah Forgie	Chair (Delegate), Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Marina Banister	Member, Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union
Gerald Beasley	Member, Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian
Shannon Erichsen	Member, Support staff representative
Roger Graves	Member, Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Firouz Khodayari	Member, Vice-President (Academic), Graduate Students' Association
Jacqueline Leighton	Member, Chair Representative, selected by Chairs' Council
Luis Marin	Member, Graduate Student at-Large
Jeff Rawlings	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President of Information Technology
Norma Rodenburg	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and University Registrar
Toni Samek	Member, Major Teaching Award Recipient
Mani Vaidyanathan	Member, Academic Staff

Presenter(s):

Sarah Forgie	Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives)
Norma Rodenburg	Assistant Registrar
Wayne Patterson	Executive Director, Human Resource Services
Roger Graves	Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Mani Vaidyanathan	Electrical & Computer Engineering
Jeff Rawlings	Director/Relationship Management, Information Services and Technology
Adam Giraldeau	Solutions and Standards, Information Services and Technology
Toni Samek	School of Library and Information Studies, Education
Marina Banister	Member, Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union

Staff:

Meg Brolley, Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Banister/Leighton

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

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of April 6, 2016

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Erichsen/Varnhagen

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of April 6, 2016.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Chair (no documents)

Presenter(s): Sarah Forgie

The Chair reported that the GFC Executive Committee received a notice of motion from a GFC member regarding USRIs. In its delegated role with regard to the GFC Agenda, the Executive Committee revised the motion to expand the focus to include items related to teaching, learning and teaching evaluation. At the May 30, 2016 meeting, GFC approved the following motion:

THAT the General Faculties Council, on the recommendation of the GFC Executive Committee, request that the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment report by 30 April 2017, on research into the use of student rating mechanisms of instruction in university courses. This will be informed by a critical review of the University of Alberta's existing Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRIs) and their use for assessment and evaluation of teaching as well as a broad review of possible methods of multifaceted assessment and evaluation of teaching. The ultimate objective will be to satisfy the Institutional Strategic Plan: For the Public Good strategy to: Provide robust supports, tools, and training to develop and assess teaching quality, using qualitative and quantitative criteria that are fair, equitable, and meaningful across disciplines.

Dr Forgie indicated that a working group would be set up to work on this item. Members provided comments including: equity concerns with the current USRI tool, concerns from faculty members about the impact of bad evaluations which are shared online or among students in a public way, students do not see how their comments have impact on teaching improvement, and the role of USRIs in the faculty evaluation committee (FEC) process.

The Chair encouraged members to email suggestions on what the working group should do, who should sit on it, and what the committee would like to see as outcomes.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Proposed Changes to the Statement on Equity in Student Affairs

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Norma Rodenburg; Wayne Patterson

Discussion: The committee discussed the proposed changes which reflect changes to the Alberta Human Rights legislation and changing norms in diversity and equity within the academy. Members were encouraged to contact the presenters with any additional comments.

5. Formative Feedback - Update (no documents)

There were no documents.

Presenter(s): Roger Graves

Discussion: Dr Graves suggested a pilot project would be useful to explore how Bluepulse could help address some of the issues such as response rate.

6. Universal Classrooms - Update

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Adam Giraldeau and Jeff Rawlings, Information Services & Technology (IST)

Discussion: Mr Giraldeau provided an overview of the distributed materials. He noted that the project on classroom requirements aims to: define the basic classroom standards for CLE and define the basic classroom technologies required for IST in the centrally booked classrooms. He noted that each faculty will be approached in a manner best suited to get that faculty's perspective. He further noted that any changes made would not begin before September 2017. The committee discussed the importance of wireless access for innovation, and sustainability issues in evergreening classrooms. It was noted that a budget for replacement had not yet been developed.

7. Subcommittee to Explore Teaching Tenure Stream - Update

Presenter(s): Sarah Forgie; Marina Banister

Discussion: The committee received a verbal update on the membership of the subcommittee: Fahim Rahman, Roger Graves, Toni Samek, Rachel Milner, Firouz Khodayari, Sarah Forgie; plus one vacancy for an academic staff member due to the resignation of Sarah Stahlke.

In addition, it was reported that the subcommittee discussed the following at the first meeting:

1. Review of what 13 of the U15 universities have in place for language on a teaching-intensive stream (Laval and McGill were not included).
2. Interview members from other universities who are in the stream.
3. Review our own language to see how the language currently in place can be used for a teaching stream.
4. Examine how non-professional faculties may be impacted differently by this than professional faculties, particularly for programs with an external accreditation body.
5. Gather student feedback on the impact they perceive with our proposed recommendations.

The next meeting is anticipated to take place in the middle of June.

8. Mandated USRI Questions for Project Based and Online Courses - Update (no documents)

Documents were distributed at the meeting.

Presenter(s): Toni Samek; Mani Vaidyanathan

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion: Dr Vaidyanathan distributed and presented preliminary results of alternative USRI questions for project-based courses. He noted that, when questions beyond the required 10 were added, responses were less likely to occur.

The committee discussed how to increase response rates including: email prompts, software tailored to the process to allow use of various devices, web access, communicating why students should fill out evaluations and how it will be used, examples of what kind of feedback is helpful, allowing time in class to complete, timing evaluations so as not to conflict with exams and timing early enough that it is relevant to the student's current experience. It was also suggested that students do self-assessment in conjunction with USRIs to recognize their role in the teaching/learning endeavour. It was also suggested that there is confusion on what the evaluation is

for; there are multiple purposes which may not be well addressed with a single tool. Members also noted challenges with this type of teaching evaluation as departments move toward innovative teaching methods.

9. Question Period

There were no questions.

INFORMATION REPORTS

10. GFC Committee on the Learning Environment - Meeting dates for 2016/17

11. Items Approved by the Committee by E-Mail Ballots (non-debatable) - No items to date

There were no items.

12. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings - No items to date

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

13. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.