



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

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

Wednesday, February 05, 2020
2-31 South Academic Building (SAB)
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

John Nychka
Cathy Adams
Joel Agarwal
Dale Askey
Radim Barta
Ivan Fair
Bora Kim
Pascal Lupien

Brian Maraj
Norma Rodenburg
Victoria Ruetalo
Mani Vaidyanathan
Christine Wiesenthal
non-voting:
Mike MacGregor
Janice Miller-Young
Yimmie Sonuga

REGRETS:

Marion Haggarty-France
Milad Nazarahari
Amber Sayed
Jennifer Tupper

Staff:

Heather Richholt, Scribe

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair of CLE

Motion: Agarwal/Adams

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the agenda.

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of December 4, 2019

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair of CLE

Motion: Maraj/Miller-Young

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the minutes of December 4, 2019.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Chair (no documents)

- Teaching Effectiveness
- Assessment and Evaluation of Teaching Policy Suite

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair of CLE

Discussion:

The Chair introduced the new GFC Secretary, Yimmie Sonuga.

The Chair spoke about the work on effective teaching and learning and the reworking of GFC Policy 111, Teaching and Learning and Teaching Evaluation. In response to a question about potential implications to faculty evaluations and academic freedom, he explained that training and education could be provided but that nothing would be imposed on the Faculties. He noted that work would continue over the spring and summer with a target to have draft policy documents available for GFC consultation beginning in September 2020.

The Chair gave a brief outline of the provincial government's new model for performance based funding and Investment Management Agreements. He noted that the metrics were not finalized yet but that a percentage of the Campus Alberta Grant funding would be tied to performance measures, with the percentage increasing over the next 3 years.

The Chair indicated that a member of CLE was needed to sit on the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (TLEF) selection committee. He asked that anyone interested in participating in this adjudication committee contact him for more details.

The Chair also noted that the committee was operating under its new terms of reference, including updated composition, as of January 1, 2020.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Open Education at the University of Alberta

Materials and presentation before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Joel Agarwal, Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union; Krysta McNutt, OER Project Lead, Centre for Teaching and Learning

Purpose of the Proposal: To propose that CLE discuss the (a) value and practicality of open education at the University of Alberta, (b) the landscape of open education at the University of Alberta, and (c) propose recommendations for improvements and focus for the future.

Discussion:

Mr Agarwal and Ms McNutt gave a presentation regarding: the benefits of open education resources (OERs); creative commons licensing; some examples of the types of resources available and the Faculties using them; the cost benefit to students, especially in light of the rising cost of tuition; the challenges for instructors who may not be familiar with the technology or OERs available in their field; and some strategies to create awareness and increase the use and development of OERs.

During the discussion members asked how instructors could get support and help finding the OERs that are available; early adopters in the Sciences; the use of materials that are in the public domain; OER conference topics; the potential for OER publication to be considered equivalent to textbook publishing in the context of faculty evaluations; available funding and grants to support the development of OERs; the hidden cost of OERs including responding to inquiries, outside attacks, hosting fees, and keeping materials up-to-date; the involvement of the University Libraries to develop central infrastructures for OERs; large publishing companies offering digital subscriptions, like auto-billing of textbooks; and subject-matter librarians who have knowledge about available resources.

5. Effective Teaching and Learning: A Framework for Multifaceted Assessment

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair of CLE; Janice Miller-Young, Academic Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning

Purpose of the Proposal: To gather feedback on the work of the Centre for Teaching and Learning to develop a framework to describe effective teaching. The framework will guide efforts to provide robust supports, tools, and training to develop and assess teaching quality in the University. The framework may also be used to identify qualitative and quantitative criteria that are fair, equitable, and meaningful across disciplines for teaching assessment and evaluation. In this way, it may be used in developing policy to replace and revise GFC Policy 111.

Discussion:

The Chair referred to the draft framework and asked for feedback.

Members discussed: the use of the framework as a guideline or tool for effective teaching; the shift between outcomes and objectives; elements that were outside of an instructors control; course scheduling and the need for optimization of space across campus; contributions to the learning environment such as instructor availability to students outside of class time, office hours, and supervisor meetings; advice on how to apply this framework to faculty evaluations; how instructors could take advantage of training and other supports that were available; the subjective nature of this type of framework; and the idea that most instructors were operating within acceptable parameters and the outliers were the concern - how to recognize those who were exceeding expectations and those who were struggling, and offer recognition and support.

The Chair noted that revised documents would come forward once the feedback had been incorporated and that the framework would inform the upcoming development of new policy and procedures around teaching and learning.

6. The Future of Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRIs)

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair of CLE

Purpose of the Proposal: The proposal is before the committee to discuss the future of USRIs and to gather thoughts and feedback from committee members.

Discussion:

The Chair noted that there was no plan to get rid of USRIs but that there were issues with them that needed to be addressed.

Members discussed the issues with USRIs including: the literature on bias; whether they are multifaceted; whether students are qualified to evaluate pedagogy; and whether there is evidence to support that the data collected is useful or an accurate measure of the learning experience. Members further discussed online delivery, the potential to have measures for the clinical experience, and if USRIs help to keep instructors accountable.

7. Question Period

Presenter(s): John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives), Chair of CLE

Discussion:

A member asked about the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Supervisory Tool: Supervisor-Student Guidelines and Standardized Annual Progress Report which had come to the committee for early consultation. The Chair answered that it would come back to the committee for further discussion.

8. Updates

A. Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

Dr Miller-Young noted that planning for the Festival of Teaching and Learning was underway and would be held on April 30 and May 1.

B. Information Technology

There was no update.

C. Libraries

There was no update.

D. General Faculties Council

Ms Sonuga noted that annual replenishment of GFC was upcoming and the elections for Students' Union and GFC student representatives would be held February 24 to March 6.

INFORMATION REPORTS

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

There were no items.

10. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

11. Adjournment

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