COMMITTEE ON TEACHING
Annual Report 2021-22

To: Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division

The Committee on Teaching (COT) met remotely approximately every other week throughout the academic year to conduct business regarding their charge of fostering and promoting effective teaching. COT continued ongoing activities including the implementation of the Student Experience of Teaching surveys (SETs), communicating with faculty about best practices for increasing SETs response rates, and soliciting nominations and selecting recipients of the annual student-nominated Excellence in Teaching Award. COT also revised the nomination and selection process for the new Distinguished Teaching Award and selected the third year's recipient of this award. Teaching on our campus was, for another year, significantly impacted by the unusual and continued events of the global COVID-19 pandemic. COT continued to prioritize staying informed about campus decision-making related to teaching, especially through our consultations with Associate Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning (AVPTL) Jody Greene, and attempted to find ways to support instructors in this challenging climate. We outline the committee's major activities below.

I.   SETs

The campus returned to using the Standard SETs form that was approved in 2019, and slightly revised in spring 2021. Questions 5, 6, and 12 still remain for the teaching table. After several years of modifications to the SETs, it is a welcome change to be able to work with the existing survey as a tool that both supports instructors and students, and provides departments and CAP a consistent data source in the larger project of recognizing teaching as part of personnel actions. COT has continued to work with Information Technology Services (ITS) and AVPTL Greene to monitor the roll out of Blue, the platform that supports the SETs. This year we also worked on plans to add additional options for faculty to use in Blue, including mid-quarter feedback and optional questions. These two tasks will likely continue in 2022-2023.

A. Teaching Assistant (TA) SETs Update

In order to create better consistency between SETs for instructors and TAs, and to reduce bias in responses, the committee made minor adjustments to the TA form (Appendix I).

Mismatched SETs: In the spring, COT chair was informed by the SETs team that there is a small percentage of TA SETs that have been submitted for the incorrect TA. Instructional Tech (IT) Integrator Michael Nardell has been working on determining the scope of the problem (likely less than 3%), and believes that half or more of these instances could be easily resolved. However, AVPTL Greene expressed additional concerns such as courses in which students don't have an assigned TA, and suggested that students have the option to write in the name of their TA or the name of the TA with whom they most worked. Nardell then suggested a two-step solution: asking students if the assigned TA is the TA with whom they worked, and if not, asking for the name of the TA for whom their evaluation is intended. Nardell is working on this matter with Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (VPAA) Herbie Lee and AVPTL Greene. COT may

have a role to play in helping develop instructor guidance on best practices to ensure the correct TA is evaluated. COT should follow up on this concern in fall 2022.

B. Anonymity Thresholds

In 2020-21 AVPTL Greene raised the question of possibly establishing anonymity thresholds for SETs as a topic for COT. In 2021-22 COT worked on investigating perceptions of the issue among students and instructors and developing some guidance for best practices around SETs in small classes. In developing a policy going forward COT seeks to balance the risk of reprisals against students in small courses (particularly graduate courses) with the need for feedback in those courses and the possibility of unintended impacts on undergraduate majors that rely on small classes. Graduate Council (GC) expressed reservations about losing SETs in graduate courses when COT raised the possibility of setting anonymity thresholds during a visit to GC, so COT has worked on gathering more information this year.

In order to develop a fuller sense of graduate students' perceptions of these issues, we surveyed graduate students in Spring 2022 (Appendix II). Next year COT plans to analyze the results and gather data from the Office of the Registrar on the mean graduate class size and frequency of class sizes to evaluate the potential impact of establishing a threshold at various levels (e.g., 4, 10). With this information COT plans to develop advisory language to share with departments about best practices around using SETs in small classes. We'd like to couple this with suggestions on how to solicit and engage feedback in graduate courses, because some grad students expressed frustration about the perception that instructors are not responsive to suggestions. It will be important to consult GC as COT moves forward on this matter.

C. Question Bank

The new SET platform BLUE supports instructor designed questions and there has been interest on COT as well as in the broader community in utilizing this functionality once the implementation of the BLUE platform was stable. In recognizing that we want to continue the work of AVPTL Greene and previous COT committees on revising the SET questions to reduce bias and improve the information in responses to questions, COT felt it was important to provide instructors with a question bank that they could choose from to better ask questions about particular topics in their courses that are not already covered by the regular SET questions. COT formed a subcommittee (Chair Jones, Soleste Hilberg, Robin Dunkin) to draft a question bank from which instructors could choose questions if they wish. The subcommittee consulted with AVPTL Greene as well as ITS Rebecca Peet on the content of the questions as well as the technical parameters and roll out. The entire committee reviewed the questions in the question bank at our final COT meeting. After consulting with IT regarding implementing a trial of custom questions in COT member Robin Dunkin's summer course, it was decided that there is additional work to do before the custom question functionality is ready for roll out. We will reconvene on this issue in fall 2022 with the intention of trialing the custom questions in a few select courses in fall 2022. Finally, a messaging campaign will accompany the roll out in the first week of instruction to ensure that all instructors are aware that BLUE can now be used for mid-quarter feedback and instructors can utilize the question bank as well as create their own questions.

D. Student Response Rates on SETs

Collaboration with ITS and Routinized Messaging
COT has continued to monitor SETs return rates. These rates declined from an overall rate of 47.2% in fall 2018 to 38.2% in spring 2019, and then, unsurprisingly given the circumstances of shelter-in-place conditions and remote instruction, they declined further during 2019-20 with a low of 19.9 in winter 2020. This past year (2021-22), the response rates dropped slightly in fall and winter but increased overall in spring. We note some variation in rates across divisions which suggests that perhaps some targeted outreach might be worth exploring next year. This year COT worked with ITS to help improve communications by shifting messaging to canvas and regularizing a calendar for communication strategies for each quarter.

Table 1: SET Return Rates AY 2021-22

TERM	Arts	Hum	PBSci	BSOE	Soc Sci	Colleges	Overall
Fall 2021							
	37	46	45	44	47	54	45
Winter 2022							
	32	45	42	51	47	40	43.82
Spring 2022							
	33	45	42	47	47	43	43.42

II.   Teaching Awards

This year COT worked with the Office of the Chancellor to clarify and affirm the Chancellor's ongoing support for the teaching awards program and to establish an award amount of $1000 for all recipients of the COT administered teaching awards. The committee also shifted the timing of the review of nominations for the awards, completing the 'Distinguished' in winter quarter and the 'Excellence' in spring. We recommend this approach going forward to improve workload distribution, though further consideration of timing, given the hecticness of spring events, may also be appropriate. We also developed two different events with particular interest in promoting the Distinguished in Teaching Award, which had had no public event since its founding due to COVID disruptions. Our goal with these reorganized events was to bring greater attention to the recipients and the awards themselves.

A. Excellence in Teaching Awards

COT is charged with the administrative oversight of the Excellence in Teaching Awards (ETA). In adjudicating these awards, we look for evidence that the nominee has thought deeply about teaching and learning and effectively applies that thinking in their teaching. ETA winners are based on student nominations.[1] In 2021-22, COT evaluated nominations by 335 students, for over 235 different instructors. We see this as evidence of the extraordinarily strong commitment by UC Santa Cruz faculty and instructors to students and their learning. At the same time, we note that the number of nominations has fallen in recent years; COT should keep monitoring this

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[1] In 2019-20, in an effort to reduce the workload on strained faculty and staff, COT eliminated the step of requesting statements of teaching from nominees and letters of support from department chairs or other faculty members.

and, if necessary, revisit the mechanisms for soliciting nominations. Faculty recipients each received a $1,000 cash award. Peter Weiss received the Ron Ruby award, funded separately by the PBSci division, with a $2000 cash award.[2]

2021-22 Excellence in Teaching Award Recipients (in alphabetical order):

- micha cárdenas, Arts, Games and Playable Media
- David Draper, Statistics
- Elena Finkbeiner, Coastal Science and Policy
- Kyle Robertson, Philosophy
- Brenda Sanfilippo, Writing Program
- Gina Ulysse, Feminist Studies
- Peter Weiss, Chemistry and Biochemistry, Ron Ruby Award Recipient
- Daniel Wirls, Politics

To celebrate the past three years of teaching awards recipients, COT and the Chancellor's office organized an afternoon outdoor gathering and reception at the Cowell Provost House on June 3rd to distribute the physical awards and recognize the winners. This event replaced the previous tradition (on hold for the past two years due to COVID) of a luncheon with the recipients and the Chancellor. The idea behind this shift was to bring greater attention to the awards and the recipients, given that some past winners have felt like it was almost a secret. COT invited the divisional deans and department chairs of individual recipients as well. Chancellor Larive and EVC Kletzer attended and participated in the event. There seemed to be a good spirit at the event, and the majority of recipients attended. Senate staff (Rebecca Hurdis and Michele Chamberlin) did extraordinary work to make the event happen so successfully, even in the absence of campus catering and other logistical support. COT should consider whether this format and timing is one to pursue going forward; the last week of classes was a hectic one, and putting the event together was a significant labor commitment from staff. Next year's number of awardees will be smaller, so it may make sense to return to a luncheon model, which might also return the organization to the chancellor's office.

B. Distinguished Teaching Award

This year, COT invited nominations for the third annual Distinguished Teaching Award, created in 2019-20. In contrast to the student-nominated Excellence in Teaching Award, this is a campus-wide faculty-nominated award. Department chairs, Program chairs, and College Provosts were invited to nominate one person from their department or program for "The Distinguished Teaching Award." This year the committee discussed ways to make diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) more central to the process of selecting winners. COT updated the nomination form to begin addressing some of these concerns. Next year, COT plans to again review the language of the call and the form to help course sponsoring organizations best understand how to prepare nominations.

Previously, the committee used a simple nomination form, designed last year, asking nominators to comment on three questions:

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[2] The PBSci Division notified COT in April 2020 that they were increasing the Ron Ruby award from $750 to $2000. The ETA awards were increased from $400 to $1000 in 2021-22 following the Chancellor's commitment to continued financial support of the awards going forward.

- How does the nominee contribute to the culture of teaching on campus?
- How does the nominee utilize a research-based pedagogical approach?
- How has the nominee contributed to educational equity?

This year, we transitioned to using a Google form and modified the questions down to two to help reduce the burden of workload:

- Please tell us how your colleague has contributed to a transformative change in the culture of teaching on campus beyond their own classroom.
- How has your colleague contributed to educational equity within your department and across campus?

There was an additional option to provide more comments if necessary. The committee received 10 nominations from outstanding faculty across the five divisions. Every COT member read all of the submitted nominations, created a short list and met to discuss the candidates and make the difficult decision. COT members were delighted to choose Nick Mitchell, Associate Professor of Feminist Studies and Critical, Race and Ethnic Studies, as this year's Distinguished Teaching Award winner.

COT, in conjunction with Alumni Week, held their inaugural event on Wednesday, April 20, 2022 from 12:00pm to 1:30pm via zoom.[3] With introductory remarks by Chancellor Larive, this event gathered the three inaugural recipients of the Distinguished Teaching Award (Ingrid Parker (Ecology and Evolutionary Biology), John Tamkun (Molecular, Cell and Developmental Biology), and Jackie Gehring (Legal Studies) in conversation with Sylvanna Falcón (Latin American and Latino/a Studies) to discuss their contributions to the culture of teaching that has long distinguished UC Santa Cruz.[4] The roundtable discussion focused on how these outstanding teachers engage their students, drawing on their research in creating dynamic learning experiences for UC Santa Cruz students. We heard from some attendees and participants that the online format made it possible for people to attend. It also simplified the creation of a recording that can be circulated and posted to support the goal of bringing greater attention to the awards. Several participants mentioned appreciating the conversational format (as opposed to a formal talk from an individual recipient). Next year COT should consider what format of event is most desirable, perhaps in conversation with Nick Mitchell, this year's awardee. In terms of timing, we had considered trying to align the event with CITL's convocation, but CITL preferred another time. Next year COT should review the scheduling options early to determine the best options.

III. Other Issues

A. COT members additionally serve as representatives on a variety of campus committees. These include subcommittees within ITS as well as committees within other campus units. We list below the main committees to which COT members contributed this year, and briefly describe those contributions.

- Canvas Steering Committee: This committee did not convene during this academic year. COT inquired whether the new proposed VPAA and VCIT Technology-Enhanced Teaching and Learning Working Group will replace this group.

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[3] For a recording to the event, go here: https://youtu.be/_jcXh_FNuGI

[4] For the agenda and questions discussed at the spring DTA 2022 event go here.

- Disability Resource Center (DRC) and Senate Workgroup: Beginning in winter 2022, COT had a representative attend the informal Senate/ADA/DRC coordination meetings, which took place about twice a quarter. Organized by Matthew Mednick and Lucy Rojas, these informal meetings were part of an effort to improve communication among these campus groups. The meetings were useful venues for sharing information and questions about best practices for instructors and the operations of the DRC. COT helped coordinate questions and suggestions to support ongoing collaboration through more effective information-sharing. Next year this constellation of people will not continue to meet, though there was a desire for finding ways for the Senate, DRC, and ADA to keep channels of communication open. One possibility for COT to explore for 2022-23 is inviting the DRC director or another staff member to visit COT periodically.
- Baytree Bookstore Committee: From December of AY 21-22, COT had a representative at eight meetings on the implementation of an online campus bookstore developed for UCSC by Akademos. While the transition began in the fall and winter, it was complete for spring quarter. This year was focused on the technological aspects of implementation, with additional discussion of marketing strategies and user experience. Both a student and a faculty advisory board will be established to provide ongoing communication regarding user experience.

B. COT, along with other Senate committees, reviewed and wrote responses to proposed divisional and systemwide policies or revisions, including the following:

Systemwide:
- Systemwide Proposed SR 478 (IGETC)
- Presidential Policy re Abusive Conduct and Bullying
- Systemwide Proposed SR 478 (IGETC): Second Round
- Systemwide Senate Regulation 424.A.3

Divisional:
- VPAA's Online Charter Programs Initiative
- DRC's Request for Faculty Notification Accommodate
- CP/EVC's Pilot Support Structures for Free Speech and Protest
- Academic Integrity Policy Proposal
- VPDUE's Commencement of Academic Activity
- DRC's Request for Access to Canvas
- VPAA's Revised Proposed Remote Work Guidelines for Senate Faculty
- Proposal for International Center
- Summer Campus Initiative Executive Summary
- VPAA and iVCIT Technology-Enhanced Teaching and Learning Workgroup Proposal
- VPAA WASC/WSCUC Accreditation Theme Suggestions

Additionally, COT in conjunction with the Senate Chair and CEP Chair, sent recommendations for the DRC to Associate Vice Chancellor Ebonée Williams on June 24, 2022. The correspondence provided suggestions on ideas for supporting effective communication through formatting, communication venues, and process.

C. COT consulted regularly with AVPTL Jody Greene to continue to find ways to work closely with CITL though our consultations were somewhat less frequent than in 2020-21. We also consulted with Leslie Kern, ITS Learning and Instructional Tools Product Manager and the ITS SETs team (Rebecca Peet, Brian Boulware, and Mike Nardell) to help facilitate better links between COT and the groups within ITS who are focused on instructional technology.

Kresge Classroom and Space

As the construction of the new 600-person classroom and associated smaller classrooms at Kresge was well underway during the 2021-2022 academic year, COT reached out to Jolie Kerns, Director of Physical and Environmental Planning. Jolie Kerns as well as Jean Nilsson, Chair Jones, Robin Dunkin, and Rebecca Hurdis met in January of 2022 to discuss the planning for ensuring that these classrooms are as flexible as possible to accommodate a wide range of pedagogical styles including active learning. Jean followed up on February 3, 2022 to say that the smaller classrooms had already been fully planned to have flexible seating and ample white board access. The larger 600-person lecture hall has fixed seating but does have some more active learning-friendly aisles that will facilitate greater accessibility between teaching teams and students. An outcome from this meeting beyond information gathering for the already underway Kresge classroom complex, is a commitment by Jolie Kerns to involve COT in future classroom building projects from the outset to ensure faculty voices are present in the conversation from the beginning of classroom design.

IV.   **Carry Forward**

- SETS:
    - Continue to communicate with faculty and department chairs about the changes to SETs, best practices for encouraging increased response rates, potential strategies for using reports and custom items in Blue (See COT memo to faculty sent on June 9, 2021, Appendix III).
    - Follow up with Mike Nardell (IT) and Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (VPAA) Herbie Lee and AVPTL Greene on efforts to resolve concerns over mismatched TA SETs.
    - Follow up with Mike Nardell and Brian Boulware from ITS on testing and rollout of custom questions for SETS.
    - Work with CITL and ITS to roll out mid-quarter feedback and optional additional questions for SETS.
    - Identify anonymity thresholds for small classes, including graduate classes, to guide future assessment strategies. Develop guidance on how best to gather feedback in graduate courses.
- Outreach to the newly configured Teaching and Learning Center to talk about best strategies for communication and consultation.
    - Continue to consider ways to support faculty (in conjunction with CITL) in further developing alternative ways to assess teaching excellence (beyond SETs)
- Awards events: review the events organized in 2021-22 and evaluate what approach makes most sense going forward. (e.g., how many events to have? What kinds of events to have? When to schedule?)
- Consultations:

- ○ Explore how best COT can work with ITS to support instructional and learning technologies. Consultation was less frequent in 2021-22, likely due to the extremely heavy workload for ITS.
- ○ Explore how to create a routine consultation with DRC. COT may be an appropriate venue for aspects of this, but it might also be something for SEC to undertake, given the interest that multiple Senate committees (CAAD, CEP, GC) have in issues related to the DRC.
- ○ Reconvene discussion with ITS on university wide recommendations for audience response systems to reduce burden on students.

Thank you to all the members of COT for their contributions of time, energy, and reflection this year. Our work was greatly enriched by having perspectives from students and instructors from across the university. The work of the committee simply could not happen without the expertise and patient guidance of our analyst, Rebecca Hurdis. The committee benefited enormously not only from her extraordinary organization skills but also from her institutional memory, foresightedness, and remarkable goodwill in the face of another unpredictable year.

Respectfully Submitted;

COMMITTEE ON TEACHING
Noriko Aso
Robin Dunkin   Clara Weygandt, NSTF Representative
Soleste Hilberg   Alexie Barbee, SUA Representative *(W)*
Albert Narath *(F, W)*   Theresa Hice Johnson, GSA Rep.
Tanya Merchant *(S)*
Catherine Jones, *Chair*

August 31, 2022

Appendix I. Standard TA SETs

Modified Fall 2021

Student Experience of Teaching (SET) Survey
Teaching Assistant Form
A Collaboration of COT and CITL, in consultation with IRAPS and ITS

SURVEY
The purpose of this anonymous survey is:
1. To seek your reflection on your experience with your TA in support of your learning in the course;
2. To provide your TA with feedback that may be helpful to them in assessing and improving their effectiveness.

The TA will not see the forms until after grades have been submitted and SETs for the course have been completed.

STUDENT INFORMATION
1. What is the name of your Teaching Assistant?

2. What is your intended or declared major? If undecided, please write "undecided."

SECTION TYPE
3. What was the attendance policy regarding sections for this course?
- All Mandatory
- All Optional
- Some Mandatory/Some Optional

INTERACTION WITH TA
4. How many times did you attend section or lab with the TA this quarter (10-week term)?
- 0 times
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-7
- 8 or more times

5. How many times did you meet with this TA in office hours or by appointment?
- 0 times
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-7
- 8 or more times

SURVEY:
Instructions to students: ***Please respond as to how frequently the TA did each of the following.*** *If you did not have direct experience of a practice mentioned below, please select "unable to comment."*

*(Scale is: unable to comment/**never/occasionally/somewhat frequently/frequently/very frequently**).*

6. ~~The TA communicated material and concepts clearly.~~ The TA explained concepts in ways that supported my learning.

7. The TA organized sections/lab meetings well.

8. Section meetings/labs included opportunities for students to contribute and interact.

9. The TA provided sufficient support and encouragement for my participation in sections/labs.

10. When needed, the TA was able to help me prepare for assignments (papers, quizzes, exams).

11. The TA provided useful feedback on my assignments if part of the TA duties.

12. The TA was able to answer my questions and clear up misunderstandings about the course material and concepts.

13. The TA made me feel as though I could succeed in this class.

14. The TA was available in scheduled office hours or by appointment outside of class time (whether or not I attended office hours.)

15. ~~The TA was effective in supporting my learning in the course as a whole.~~ **Activities during sections were well structured and had clear goals.**

Suggestions/Comments
Your insights can be valuable to the TA as they seek to improve the learning experience of other students in the future.

16. Please describe any specific teaching practices that your TA used that particularly helped you to learn the material and/or develop your own critical perspectives on the material.

17. Please describe any specific teaching practices that your TA used that helped you engage with the course material or that encouraged you to feel that you could succeed in the course.

18. Please describe any specific teaching practices that were less helpful for your learning, or offer constructive suggestions that might improve your TA's effectiveness.

Appendix II. Graduate Student Survey re SETs in Graduate Seminars

Graduate Student Survey

The Committee on Teaching (COT) is seeking feedback from UC Santa Cruz graduate students regarding SETs (Student Experience of Teaching) in graduate seminars. We are seeking your insights in order to understand whether the imperfect anonymity of SETs responses in small classes impedes the ability of grad students to provide feedback to instructors. We're also interested in your ideas about alternative or additional ways for grad students to share feedback on courses.

This is a confidential and anonymous survey. Responses will not be shared with departments or instructors. Although you may take courses and complete SETs for instructors in many departments, we ask that you limit your responses to your primary department. The results will be reviewed internally by members of the Academic Senate to inform policies and best practices with SETs. It should take about 10 minutes to complete.

* Required

1. **Division** *

   Mark only one oval.

   - Arts
   - Baskin School of Engineering
   - Humanities
   - Social Sciences
   - Physical and Biological Sciences

2. **Department or Program (optional)**

   _____

3. **Are SETs an effective tool to provide feedback to instructors for graduate seminars?** *

   Mark only one oval.

   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Somewhat agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree
   - No opinion

urvey re Anonomity Thresholds

4. Do you regularly complete SETs for your graduate seminars? *

    Mark only one oval.

    ( ) Yes

    ( ) No

5. Do you have concerns about the possibility of retaliation for information you provide through the SETs?

    Mark only one oval.

    ( ) Yes

    ( ) No

    ( ) Maybe

    ( ) Other: _____

6. Have you experienced or witnessed retaliation in your department based on SETs feedback? *

    Mark only one oval.

    ( ) Yes

    ( ) No

    ( ) Maybe

7. How responsive are your instructors to the feedback provided? *

    Mark only one oval.

    ( ) Very Responsive

    ( ) Somewhat Responsive

    ( ) Not Responsive

    ( ) Don't know

8. Does your department engage with the feedback received from SETs? *

   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No

   ◯ Don't know

9. If yes, please provide brief details.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

10. What obstacles do you think get in the way of your completing SETs?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

11. What would make you feel comfortable in providing feedback via the SETS? Do you have *
    suggestions on other ways of sharing feedback that might complement SETS?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____