**COMMITTEE ON TEACHING**
Annual Report 2011-12

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

**Introduction**

The Committee on Teaching (COT) met regularly every other week throughout the academic year to conduct business regarding an extensive agenda related to the charge to foster and promote good teaching, to recommend and evaluate methods of assessing teaching performance, to oversee instructional support services on campus, and to advise the Academic Senate as requested. Much of the year was dedicated to redefining COT's role in light of recent budget cuts that have disrupted support for teaching and learning at UCSC. Funding for the Center for Teaching and Learning has effectively been hollowed and the Instructional Improvement Program grants, one of the only grant opportunities on campus to support new, innovative teaching, were not funded in 2011-12. Given these cuts, COT is, and remains, concerned about what appears to be a trend towards the disinvestment in resources to support teaching and learning at UCSC.

**Center for Teaching and Learning**

One of the mandates of the Committee is to provide direction to the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) in matters regarding COT business, and when required, in any matters concerning instructional support. The CTL has been without a director for over four years and its presence on campus has diminished. Teaching is a vital part of the UCSC mission, and COT continues to be concerned about the marginalization of the CTL. UCSC is the only UC campus without a functioning Center for Teaching and Learning, and COT believes that the CTL can and should be a vital resource, playing a pivotal role in enhancing teaching and learning at UCSC.

In the absence of a CTL director, Jessica Fiske Bailey, Assistant Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education, often attended COT meetings acting as the CTL's administrative manager, amongst her other duties. Unfortunately, due to other Committee commitments, strategies for re-inventing the CTL, including consulting with administration about the need to authorize the appointment of a CTL faculty director, and establishing collaborations with past Excellence in Teaching Award recipients, were not discussed at length during this academic year. COT is hopeful that next year's Committee will pursue these and other ideas for re-envisioning the CTL.

**Instructional Improvement Program Grants**

The Committee on Teaching is charged with adjudicating the Instructional Improvement Program (IIP) grants. Adjudication of IIP grant proposals is a responsibility that COT has taken very seriously and on which it has spent a great deal of its time throughout the years. In 2011-12, funding for IIP grants was suspended. While the administration's decision to suspend the program came as a surprise to the current membership of COT, funding for IIP grants had declined in recent years (see graph below). In 2010-11, the administration consulted with COT early in the year to discuss the viability of continuing IIP grants, arguing that the funds did not appear to support the greater campus good. COT responded by arguing that there are no other grant opportunities offered on campus to support new, innovative teaching. The administration eventually decided to continue the IIP by allocating $30,000 for 2010-11.

*Instructional Improvement Program Grants: Funding from 2001-02—2011-12*

| Academic Year | Number of Proposals Funded | Total Funding Awarded for IIP Grants |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 2001-02 | 28 | $143,753 |
| 2002-03 | 31 | $118,056 |
| 2003-04 | 26 | $129,522 |
| 2004-05 | 25 | $113,782 |
| 2005-06 | 24 | $107,236 |
| 2006-07 | 28 | $95,736 |
| 2007-08 | 25 | $87,547 |
| 2008-09 | 17 | $88,180 |
| 2009-10 | 7 | $68,200 |
| 2010-11 | 4 | $30,000 |
| 2011-12 | 0 | 0 |

A cornerstone of IIP grants was to motivate and encourage faculty to think seriously about how they teach, and how the learning experience of undergraduate students can be improved. Faculty were encouraged to experiment with new innovations in teaching and to assess learning outcomes and objectives. Funding for IIP grants had generally been awarded in three areas: Mini Grants (up to $2,000), Course Development Fellowships (roughly $6,000-$8,500), and Major Grants (up to $15,000). COT, in consultation with the Director for the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and the Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education, selected areas of focus consistent with campus priorities such as the following: course development focused on writing in the discipline; mentoring graduate students in teaching pedagogy; development of co-taught inter-divisional courses; innovative approaches to teaching large lecture courses; implementation of eCommmons for use in courses; and, the development of courses that satisfy GE requirements in areas with minimal offerings. In short, COT is of the opinion that these grants had a clear and definite impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning at UCSC.

The Director of the CTL was charged with working closely with grant applicants to ensure that clear learning objectives and outcomes were articulated, and that these could be adequately assessed. Given the current status of the Center, assessment of the effectiveness of recent IIP grants, as far as COT can tell, has not been conducted.

**Annual Teaching and Learning Symposium**
The Annual Teaching and Learning Symposium has not been held since 2007-08 due to the limited staffing in the CTL where the work of organizing the symposium has historically resided. Members of the administration have questioned the value of offering the symposium, arguing that they are typically attended by few faculty and costly to organize. COT discussed these concerns and is confident that offering a symposium or a series of workshops on timely topics such as online instruction, hybrid courses, or teaching large lecture courses would attract sizable faculty audiences. COT recommends that next year's committee assess options for a symposium or workshop, particularly under the greater discussion of the future of the CTL.

**Excellence in Teaching Awards**
The Excellence in Teaching Awards recognize faculty who engage students through innovative course design, special learning techniques and materials, and their own personal qualities as teachers and mentors. Students nominate faculty and COT selects awardees. Similar to the process used in 2010-11, students were emailed a link to an online nomination form, gathering the name of the faculty member, the discipline, the related course, student contact information, and a statement of nomination. Students submitted three hundred and eighty-nine (389) nominations for one hundred eighty-one (181) eligible faculty. COT selected eight faculty to receive the Excellence in Teaching Award for 2011-12, including one faculty member to receive the Ron Ruby Award for Teaching Excellence in the Division of Physical and Biological Sciences. The Excellence in Teaching Awards ceremony was held after the Academic Senate Meeting on May 18, 2012, and the awards were presented by Chancellor Blumenthal. The recipients were as follows:

- Lora Bartlett, Education
- Nandini Bhattacharya, Mathematics
- Gabriel Elkaim, Computer Engineering
- Andrew Fisher, Earth & Planetary Sciences
- Deborah Gould, Sociology
- Paul Nauert, Music
- Steven Ritz, Physics
- Bakhtan Singaram, Chemistry and Biochemistry (Ron Ruby Award)

The committee congratulates the 2011-12 recipients and welcomes two of them as new members of COT in 2012-13.

**Online Instructor Evaluations**
The Fall of 2011 marked the launch of the Online Instructor Evaluations (OIE) system. COT has long been involved in consulting with the administration regarding the transition to OIE, including authoring a report endorsing OIE and delivering it to the Senate on May 19, 2006. Unfortunately, in 2010-11, COT was unable to devote much time to this topic, though it was made aware that some faculty had expressed concern about the validity of online evaluations. Given the year of dormancy in discussing OIE, the Fall launch caught members of this year's Committee by surprise. COT is concerned that, if precautions are not taken, OIE will contribute to what we see as a trend towards diminishing the value of teaching at UCSC. Teaching is one of the primary ways in which faculty are assessed in the academic personnel process and teaching evaluations play an integral role. As for Lecturers, teaching evaluations are essential for the assessment of their performance and a compromise in the volume and quality of student responses would be disruptive. COT is unaware of any precautionary plans the administration has taken to ensure that the volume of student responses remains high, and that, more importantly, the quality of student responses will not diminish. Moreover, COT is of the opinion that departments and colleges need the fullest amount of flexibility to customize their evaluations to best suit their course, department, and divisional needs.

**Statistical Reasoning General Education Requirement**
Members of COT raised concern that there are far too few courses currently being offered that satisfy the Statistical Reasoning General Education (GE) requirement. This shortage has resulted in extensive student wait-lists in courses that offer the GE, most notably in courses offered by the Department of Applied Mathematics and Statistics. The committee discussed the potential for COT to work in concert with other Senate committees, such as Educational Policy, to identify departments whose subjects yield the possibility for courses that satisfy the Statistical Reasoning GE, and to make recommendations for course proposals.

**"C-" Grading Option**
On several occasions, COT discussed the lack of a "C-" grading option at UCSC. While not within the purview of the committee, members reasoned that adopting a "C-" will provide faculty with more freedom to accurately assign grades, especially from the perspective of converting numerical values to meaningful letter grades. Additionally, the option might be utilized to give students a "passing" grade that is insufficient for moving on in a series of courses. Lastly, adopting the "C-" will bring UCSC into alignment with all other UCs, a distinction that may become more important as more UC online courses are enrolled with students from multiple UCs.

**Divisional Structures and College Core Courses**
Members of COT also discussed the desirability of making it easier to mount team-taught cross-divisional courses on topics likely to draw a wide constituency of students from a variety of different disciplines. The committee felt that the College Core Course system needs avenues to encourage and make possible more ladder-rank faculty participation. There was no broad consensus among COT members on how to proceed with these issues, and it can only be hoped that subsequent COT configurations will follow through with these issues.

**Advising the Academic Senate**
A major task for the Committee on Teaching, as for any Academic Senate Committee, is reading, discussing, and writing formal responses to various documents presented to COT by the Academic Senate or the administration. These included the following:

- ITS External Review (October 2011)
- Proposal from the Interim VPDUE to Change Course Time-Slots (October 2011)
- COT to all Senate faculty regarding the role of COT as resource for faculty (October 2011)
- Proposal from the VPAA to add a Classroom Climate Question on Instructor Evaluations (two responses: October and November 2011)
- COT to the Senate Chair regarding COT's role in the development and implementation of pedagogical innovations on campus (March 2012)
- Draft Strategic Academic Plan for Silicon Valley (April 2012)
- ACCCCI Draft UCSC Climate Study Faculty Survey (May 2012)
- Revised proposal from the VPDUE to Change Class Time Slots (June 2012)

In reading some of these proposals, COT grew concerned about their role in the decision making process where changes to the character and quality of teaching at UCSC are at stake. In some cases, UCSC administrators or administrative bodies have asked COT to comment on innovations or plans for the future that we felt, as presented to the committee, were in fact already a fait accompli.

**Work for Next Year's COT**
- Re-envision the Center for Teaching and Learning
- Consult with administration about the future of Instructional Improvement Program grants
- Address the viability of the Annual Teaching and Learning Symposium
- Assess the effectiveness of the process used to select Excellence in Teaching Awards
- Monitor and assess the Online Instructor Evaluation system

Respectfully submitted,
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August 31, 2012