

Committee on Teaching (COT)
MINUTES
October 29, 2013, 11:30 – 1:00 p.m., Kerr Hall Room 129

Present: Charlie McDowell, *Chair*, Maria Elena Diaz, Kirsten Silva Gruesz, Jim Phillips, *sits with*, Michael Chemers, Annapurna Pandey (NSTF), Michael Tassio (ASO Staff)

Absent with notice: Matthew McCarthy

Introductions

COT welcomed Committee on Committee member Marilyn Walker as a guest to this meeting.

Routine Announcements (none)

Planning for Campus-wide Discussion on Pedagogy

Members continued the conversation from October 29 regarding a December campus-wide conversation on pedagogy. Additionally, Chair McDowell sought feedback on the possibility of offering a joint forum with the Committee on Affirmative Action and Diversity (CAAD) in Winter or Spring on unconscious bias, stereotype threat, and micro-aggressions in the classroom.

COT discussed timing and logistics for the winter colloquium: “So you think your class is more interesting than a MOOC?” The event will be on January 24th. The Call for presentations needs to garner some excitement so that faculty will want to participate. If enough submissions come in the format could be to have 10 “flash talks”, with there being 5 talks, then questions, then another 5 talks with questions. Each talk would be no more than 5 minutes, and will be timed! 10 talks; 5 talks, questions, 5 more talks. The proposals will be due Friday, December 6 so that COT can review them. COT members agreed they would do outreach to faculty to get submissions.

LTC is still intending to do an event in Fall quarter, Director Phillips will draft an announcement to vet with COT.

COT discussed the potential for a topic for a Spring colloquium co-hosted with CAAD that would draw a target audience of faculty who don’t normally come to COT events. The committee agreed it would try to focus the event around research done in this area, and to reach out to involve underrepresented groups. One member referred to the work of NYU’s Joshua Aronson: http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/faculty_bios/view/Joshua_Aronson COT acknowledged that these issue impact student evaluations of faculty.

Increasing the Submission Rates of Online Course Evaluations

The Council of Provosts (CoP) has requested Senate feedback from CEP and COT on their enclosed proposal to encourage more students to submit online course evaluations (OCE). There is a concern that low submission rates following the campus transition to the online submission process may have unforeseen consequences. In particular, because the renewal of Core Course Instructors is determined in a large part by their evaluations,

having few evaluations to make renewal decisions is unsatisfactory. COT has long been involved in the discussion regarding OCE. In their 2011-12 Annual Report, the committee stated the following: “COT is concerned that, if precautions are not taken, OCE 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.”

The COP has produced recommendation to incentivize OCE submissions by withholding grades, and COT considered other incentives. UC Riverside has incentivized OCE submissions by making grades immediately available to students who have submitted evaluations; students who have not, have to wait until the Registrar’s official grade posting date. Other incentives the committee considered; tying the OCE to learning objectives, charging a returnable fee, allotting class time to complete evaluations, granting extra credit. As it stands now, the departments have the most control over creating incentives. Department Managers can monitor the response rates as they come in, so that departments could apply incentives as necessary. Many of these solutions have logistical obstacles, such as in-class completion requiring student access to computers, wi fi or smart phones and having paper back up if there are technical failures. Training for students about the importance of surveys/evaluations may be a good idea. This could be done at the college level with a very short 5-minute online course that all students are required to take.

Ultimately COT determined they need more data to address the problem of declining return rates. Data is needed for the outliers at both ends, to determine factors effecting high and low response rates. COT questioned if there was relation to class size, use of FITC quiz, completion on the day of the final, etc. COT has requested UCSC data on submission rates and it is expected in the near future.

Silicon Valley Academic Plan

COT reviewed the new version of the Silicon Valley Academic Plan. The plan raised a number of concerns about UCSC’s expansion in the Silicon Valley that the committee would like to see addressed.

COT expressed concern at the extent to which the plan appears to put UCSC in a position of financing Silicon Valley private industries' research through academic programs and research at the new campus. While relationships between faculty/students and industry may be beneficial to UCSC, the plan did not clearly consider the cost to other programs and services such as the Library, IT resources, and undergraduate teaching, which would be required to maintain relationships. Along these lines, members questioned to what extent the proposed engineering programs in Silicon Valley would be expected to be self-sustainable—or even profitable—initiatives that would not compromise the already limited UCSC campus resources.

COT expressed caution about the significant campus resources that would be required to sustain the Silicon Valley academic plan, including twenty new FTE. COT questioned how these resources, which represent a considerable investment directed to a mostly graduate engineering program in the Silicon Valley, may (or not), be diverted from other areas of campus, and voiced concern that the plan offers little for our undergraduate education mission and may supplant funds that support it. A cost-benefit analysis of the additional FTE that includes the educational benefits for all of our students needs to be provided.

Related to the last point, members questioned the meaning of “situating” faculty in the Silicon Valley. What teaching expectations will these faculty have to the Silicon Valley campus, and to the main campus?

Given the geographic difference in campus locations, the plan requires a new level of collaboration and support between the expanding and planned programs (mostly in the School of Engineering) and campus IT resources, Learning Technologies, and the Library. The plan gives no clear indication of how these costs will be covered, and at best suggests that UNEX will continue to cover costs. While the COT was not able to consult with UNEX Dean Rogers, it is not clear from the plan that UNEX can provide these resources and direct costs, nor is it clear that the School of Engineering has been in dialog with ITS, Learning Technologies, or the Library.

Members cautioned that the new version of the plan has narrowed in scope from previous plans, focused now more on programs in the School of Engineering and expressed concern that it will be difficult to build faculty support for this plan unless there is a clear benefit to faculty in other divisions. COT is concerned about the educational mission of the Silicon Valley plan, noting that many of the expanding and planned programs are more oriented towards vocational training than current academic programs on campus.

Industry funds things even if there is not expectation that they will come to fruition. Story about Microsoft and the game Halo. Developed player models... hired three people... was funded through Microsoft until recommendations were made, from which they made hires.

Meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.