

**Committee on Teaching (COT)**  
**MINUTES**  
**November 26, 2013 12:00-1:30 p.m., Kerr Hall Room 129**

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

**Members' Items:**

A concern was raised about an issue reported recently in the City on Hill Press. The article reports on the possibility of closing down writing tutoring by LLS (Learning Support Services). COT agreed this needs to be a future agenda item.

Member McCarthy reported on the ACIT meeting where the issue of synthesizing cross-campus enrollments was discussed. This is an ongoing discussion that COT hasn't weighed in on in a long time.

Director Phillips reported that captioning and accessibility for online materials continues to be an issue for UCSC that very few staff/faculty are working on. This keeps popping up and could quickly become a serious issue (e.g. student lawsuit against campus/faculty.)

**Online Course Evaluations (OCE)**

COT reviewed the data on OCE response rates for 2011, 2012 and Fall of 2013 which show a steady decline. The committee discussed what percent ensures validity of responses. There were various views of 50% being a representative of the class, and whether those with very high or low evaluations are more likely to respond. In small classes of say twenty, even 1 or 2 negative would comprise 5-10% of evaluations, and that's if every student submits an evaluation. This is of particular import to Lecturers, whose reappointments may rely heavily on teaching evaluations.

Pre-OCE evaluations were not kept centrally, so it will not be possible to study response rate retrospectively. Director Phillips clarified that Learning Technologies manages eCommons. They collect evaluations, but APO needs to have evaluations integrated into a data warehouse. This is an ongoing process. He indicated APO should be responsible for the research because they are involved in institutional data. If we solve the response rate problem, the real issue becomes what the questions are. We need to get past this problem so we can focus on the bigger question of the quality of the questions.

There are also concerns that evaluations are related to grade inflation; the easier the instructor, the higher the evaluations. The committee noted there are a lot of problems with using evaluations as primary index for review of faculty quality in teaching. There is opportunity to study alternate or supplemental approaches to teaching evaluation.

The data show that some departments have been more successful at maintaining good response rates. COT agreed that there needs to be outreach to these units to understand what they are doing. The committee was undecided if this was an action item for COT or the administration. A discussion with a broad range of faculty about the role of evaluations in assessing teaching may be beneficial. The switch to OCE from paper evaluations to save money, to have quick

access to data analysis and more flexibility in tailoring questions in the review of instruction (there is a set of core questions, but there is built-in flexibility). Some of these goals have been met, but with declining response rate the essential function of supporting instructional quality may not met.

Continuing from the last meeting, there was discussion of incentives for students including applying peer pressure in classroom – once a certain percent of students submit OCE (80%, e.g.), every student gets extra credit, giving class time to complete and increasing accessibility – like using smartphone app.

Some students have expressed a preference for paper evaluations, citing privacy concerns. OCE is completely confidential; this is a problem of student perception that needs to be addressed by learning technologies.

COT came to general consensus that departments and faculty have the greatest influence in effecting response rates and will give this primary recommendation: use class time for OCE responses. If this cannot happen because of wireless coverage, the campus needs to solve this problem.

We can prepare for better return rates by:

- Have last class meeting at a location with wireless access, or at a computer lab. (Director Phillips agreed to find a campus wireless map.)
- Be selective in choosing date/time for evaluations (at final class, e.g.)
- Consider increasing class participation by giving extra-credit (either if a group goal is met or individually)
- Have faculty remind students of the anonymity of evaluations; work on changing the student perception

COT will work on helping faculty work to improve student responses.

Meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.