

**Committee on Teaching (COT)
MINUTES**

December 10, 2013, 11:30 a.m. -1:00 p.m., Kerr Hall Room 129

Present: Charlie McDowell, *Chair*, Maria-Elana Diaz, Matthew McCarthy, Kirsten Silva Gruesz, Jim Phillips, *sits with*, Matt Robinson (ASO Staff), Suzanne Millward (ASO Staff)

Absent with notice: Michael Chemers, Annapurna Pandey (NSTF)

Announcements

Chair McDowell announced that analyst Michael Tassio had accepted a job with VPAA Lee and would no longer serve COT. The committee hopes to work with Analyst Tassio to restart the Center for Transformative Learning (CTL).

Online Course Evaluations

Director Phillips updated the committee on an ongoing situation with online course evaluations for fall 2013. Between November 22, 2013 and December 8, 2013, 995 surveys were created by department managers. This presents a maximum of ~57,000 survey responses for the quarter. 21,877 online evaluations were successfully submitted by students. Unfortunately, ~9,500 student submissions were impacted by a glitch in the eCommons system, causing the submissions to be “pending” rather than “submitted.” Some students continued to attempt to submit and were successful, but ~5,320 submissions were lost. In light of this, certain departments have decided to extend the submission deadline for online course reviews, but no central decision has been made.

COT asked about the cause of this large data loss. Director Phillips explained that this problem had been identified in spring 2013 and a patch was developed to mitigate the problem. Asahi Net International (ANI), UCSC’s provider for eCommons, neglected to transfer the patch during the summer 2013 upgrade. When the problem was recognized, UCSC ITS decided not to re-implement the patch during finals week, due to the standard practice of freezing any code changes to eCommons during the end of a semester. One potential solution to avoid this decision would be to move the online course evaluations away from eCommons, separating the evaluations and the regular course materials.

COT contended that this is a potential disaster for the online course evaluation system, which has already encountered resistance. The data from these evaluations is used during the academic personnel review process, and a loss of ~20% of the quarterly data could be devastating. COT asked if there exists a better way to complete the evaluations without the risk of bugs like this. Director Phillips explained that UCSC is in a two-year agreement with ANI and eCommons, but it is a one + one agreement that UCSC could opt out of for the second year. He would welcome COT’s advice on a better product for UCSC’s learning management system (LMS).

The committee then reviewed a draft response to the UCSC Council of Provosts (CoP) regarding incentives for increased response rates on online course evaluations. Though the committee could not endorse CoP's proposals to offer financial incentive to students or withhold grades until course evaluations are complete, COT agreed that low response rates on evaluations are a serious problem. Particularly in small classes, there is a threshold of responses that must be reached for the data to be meaningful. Since this data is used in personnel decisions, it must be as accurate as possible.

Review of Proposals for COT Senate Pedagogy Forum

COT will host a Senate event on January 24, 2014 entitled "So you think your lecture course is better than a MOOC?" The committee called for proposals for "lightning talks" from UCSC faculty during this event. Six submissions were reviewed and approved for inclusion in the event. The committee would like to have ten total talks, and will send another call for proposals in January.

Meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.