

Committee on Teaching (COT)
MINUTES
January 10, 2012
Tuesday, 10:00am – 11:30am, Kerr Hall 129

Present: Graeme Smith (Chair Pro Tem), Pascal Garaud, Dee Hibbert-Jones, Mary Flannery (NSTF), Nicol Gaffney (SUA), Michael Tassio (ASO staff)

Absent: Daniel Selden (Chair), Maria Schonbek, Mary Thomas (GSA)

Guest: Jim Phillips, Jessica Fiske-Bailey

The minutes of November 29, 2011 were approved, followed by a brief round of introductions.

Class-Times Proposal from CEP

Members continued a discussion from the November 29, 2011, meeting regarding CEP's proposal regarding class-times. CEP's proposal is in response to a campus-wide need to accommodate more students in classrooms than is currently physically possible.

One member noted that large and medium sized classes are currently impacted, and that plans to construct 600, 400 and 200 seat auditorium classrooms are currently being reviewed. These classrooms would likely be located near Classroom "1" and "2."

Part of CEP's proposal is to reduce passing time on MWF to 15 minutes, matching TTh. COT members are concerned that this reduction will impact teaching in so far as it will result in more students disrupting classes by arriving late. While this already happens in TTh classes, instructors are better able to cope with disruptions given that they have longer periods of instruction. If the CEP proposal is implemented, COT recommends that a better infrastructure for transportation be created, including centrally located parking lots, more campus shuttles, and a campaign to encourage more students to use walking routes.

Member Updates

Missing Narrative Evaluations – One member mentioned that instructors are still alerted that they have not completed student narrative evaluations when they log into my.ucsc.edu. While this alert was reasonable in the past, given that instructors are no longer required to write narrative evaluations, it is no longer necessary. Jim Philips noted the problem and will follow up with the committee.

Online Course Evaluations

Jessica Fiske-Bailey is currently working on a report regarding the recent transition to online course evaluations and will soon be distributing it to all faculty. COT will likely be asked to comment on it.

Nicol Gaffney, offering a student-perspective, commented on the benefits of using online evaluations. He was able to put more thought and time into evaluating his courses, and valuable class time was not used. Jessica added that online evaluations are legible and are already electronic.

One member noted that students in the Arts may be less likely to complete online evaluations because their efforts are focused on completing final projects that in many cases do not require computers.

Following up on a concern voiced at the last meeting, Jim Philips confirmed that Department Managers are able to set evaluation due dates, and that a document synthesizing best practices is being developed and will be distributed amongst departments.

One member commented on the importance of evaluations for lecturers. Evaluations are a life-line for lecturers at UCSC and their continued employment is contingent on receiving high-quality evaluations. Committee members agreed that many students do not understand the importance of instructor evaluations and that there is a real opportunity for campus-wide education on this topic. Jim Philips pointed out that instructors who use mid-term evaluations are often able to make formative changes that improve instruction during the quarter.

There needs to be other mediums to evaluate the quality of instruction that instructors are delivering. Some departments evaluate instructor's teaching materials such as their syllabus, course assignments, exams, etc. Perhaps there is a way to evaluate an instructor by evaluating student success and learning trends in courses.

Members are very interested in reviewing evaluation response rates from departments that used online evaluations. To adequately evaluate the rates, COT will need current response rates and rates from previous years (before the process was online). This will position COT to comment on the success or lacking of the initiative, and make recommendations for how to proceed. Jessica Fiske-Bailey noted that she expects a decrease in the initial response rate for online evaluations, but that the research she studied stated that it will likely increase over time. Pascale Garaud agreed to request data from Applied Mathematics and Statistics, and will analyze the data with colleagues. Jim Philip expects to receive a report on response rates before the next meeting that he will share with the committee. Members were asked to think about incentives that could be developed to increase response rates.

Several members voiced concern that the decision to transition to online evaluations was hastily made primarily to reduce spending and did not adequately consider the complexity of the issue. Another member stated that once online evaluations have been introduced, regardless of their ability to capture quality responses and increased return rates, they will not go away.

Pro Tem Chair Smith agreed with many member concerns and reported that his department has received better than expected response rates from students, and that the quality of comments appears high.

Two agenda items were not discussed due to time constraints and Chair Selden's absence: Cross-Divisional Course Ideas, and Support for Teaching at UCSC. Both of these items will be discussed at forthcoming COT meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Graeme Smith, Chair Pro Tem

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