

Committee on Teaching (COT)
MINUTES
February 21, 2012, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m., Kerr Hall 129

Present: Daniel Selden (Chair), Pascale Garaud, Maria Schonbek, Graeme Smith, Mary Flannery (NSTF), Peter Rovegno (GSA), Nicol Gaffney (SUA), Michael Tassio (ASO staff)

Guests: Jim Phillips

Absent: Dee Hibbert-Jones

The minutes of February 7 were approved.

Updates from the Chair

Chair Selden and COT member Pascale Garaud consulted with Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education (VPDUE) Richard Hughey regarding Professor Garaud's proposal to analyze data from the newly established Online Instructor Evaluations and to compare it to data collected in previous years. VPDUE Hughey welcomed the proposal. COT agreed to send a memo to department chairs notifying them of the study and to request that they share data necessary to conduct it.

Statistical Reasoning General Education Requirement

The campus capacity to fulfill the Statistical Reasoning (SR) general education requirement is not being met and many students are not being able to get into SR courses. This problem has become especially acute following the restructuring of the general education requirements and their implementation in fall 2010. COT members questioned the reasons for the requirement in an effort to understand whether or not many non-statistics specific courses could fulfill the requirement. There are currently only a few non-statistics specific courses that fulfill this requirement.

In identifying what role COT might play in assisting departments in thinking about the types of courses they might offer to fulfill the SR requirement, members unanimously agreed that it would be beneficial to consult with members of the Committee on Education (CEP) sub-committee for course approvals. A consultation with members from this sub-committee will likely clarify COT's questions about what other types of courses might satisfy the education goals and outcomes required to get the SR.

A COT member who teaches in Applied Mathematics and Statistics noted that there are always sizable waiting lists of students hopeful to get into SR courses, and that not all divisions have departments that offer courses that satisfy the SR requirement. Chair Selden noted that this might be an opportunity to bring CEP members together with divisional leaders and COT representatives for productive conversations about courses that could be developed or modified to satisfy the SR requirement.

One COT member questioned whether or not departments (especially in the sciences) could, for instance, offer courses in statistical reasoning that are specifically geared towards students majoring in their subjects. If so, this could prove more beneficial to the student's educational experience and better assist them in completing their degree requirements in less time. Further, might courses that previously satisfied the Quantitative (Q) General Education Requirement now satisfy the SR

requirement? COT members are interested in studying the list of courses that used to satisfy Q, and to know what they satisfy following the restructuring.

COT representatives from the Graduate Student Association (GSA) and the Student Union Association (SUA) agreed to reach out to their constituents to gain a better pulse on the depth of the problem. From the undergraduate perspective, COT hopes to get more information on the struggles students are having enrolling in SR courses; from the graduate perspective, COT hopes to gain insight from graduate students on courses they have taken or been employed as a Teaching Assistant in, that might be a good candidates for the SR requirement.

It was noted that Instructional Improvement Grants, currently suspended due to budgetary constraints, have been previously used for course development—including specifically to develop courses that satisfy the SR requirement.

Considerations Regarding the “C-” Grading Option

COT members discussed the merits of recommending that UCSC adopt a “C-” grading option. Members voiced two central reasons in favor of the “C-” grade. First, there currently is not a sufficient way for instructors to differentiate between students who score average and borderline in their course work. While these student performances can differ significantly, they are currently represented with the same grade, “C.” Permitting a “C-” grading option would provide the opportunity to sufficiently differentiate between these performances. Second, the “C-” grading option could be utilized as a way to give a student a passing grade, but not a grade sufficient for moving on to the next in a series of courses nor for satisfying a major requirement.

COT members agreed to return to this conversation after looking at grading options at other UCs. Chair Selden expressed interest in writing to CEP to discuss grading options.

Teaching Excellence Nomination Form and Guidelines

COT members discussed the revised Teaching Excellence Nomination Form and Guidelines. The Nomination Form was unanimously approved, and minor changes were requested to the Guidelines.

During this discussion, a member raised the notion of recognizing faculty members who have routinely been nominated for teaching awards but not selected. Chair Selden asked that this conversation be deferred until the April 3 COT meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Selden, Chair
Committee on Teaching