

**Committee on Teaching (COT)**  
**MINUTES**  
**October 2, 2012, 10:00-11:30 a.m., Kerr Hall 129**

Present: Charlie McDowell, Chair, Deborah Gould, Kirsten Silva Gruesz, Martin Weissman, Nandini Bhattacharya (NSTF), Gabi Cruz (SUA)

Absent: None

Guest: Jim Philips, Director of Learning Technologies

**COT Charge and Process**

Members discussed the committee's charge and Chair McDowell explained COT's advisory role in the Senate. Members noted that some of the items within COT's charge, such as the adjudication of Instructional Improvement Program grants and the Center for Teaching and Learning, no longer exist. A discussion ensued on whether or not to present the Senate with a revised charge, or to use the current charge as a catalyst to re-envision these items. Members agreed to the latter.

Chair McDowell proposed switching COT meeting dates in Winter to begin one week earlier than previously planned. Members agreed to the proposal. The new COT Winter dates are as follows: January 8, January 22, February 5, February 19, and March 5.

**Discussion of Committee Items for 2012-13**

*Advising Campus on the Status of Teaching at UCSC*

A member raised the following question: How can COT advise the campus on teaching if we do not have good data demonstrating the impacts budgetary cuts have had on the quality of teaching at UCSC? A member responded noting that there is a clear picture emerging of how departments have been impacted by offering reduced curriculums and increasing class sizes. Members agreed that COT needs to gather data on how cuts have impacted teaching so recommendations can be made; further, these recommendations will need to be made widely available. Relatedly, a member raised the following questions: What does *instructional support* mean? Does it merely mean grants, more Teaching Assistants, or is it a broader support system composed of faculty and staff dedicated to improving teaching on campus? Chair McDowell concluded that developing a set of questions to gather data would be essential in making impactful recommendations.

*Review of the 2011-12 Annual Report and the Future of COT*

Members expressed a variety of perspectives on the 2011-12 annual report ranging from the report being highly critical of support for teaching to not critical enough. Members agreed that this membership of COT will be markedly more forward thinking about what is necessary right now to improve teaching at UCSC.

Chair McDowell articulated two items of concern for this year's COT:

1. The Status of Centers for Teaching Learning at other UC's  
What is the status of Centers for Teaching and Learning, or the like, at other UC's? What sorts of programs are they currently offering? How are they funded? Can COT work with UCSC University Relations to search for an endowment for the CTL at UCSC?
2. Instructional Improvement Program Grants  
Does COT want to pursue consulting with the administration about funding for Instructional Improvement Program (IIP) grants? The effectiveness of IIP grants has not been studied in recent years and it is unclear whether or not grants have had successful long-term effects.

Regarding the second item, at least two members of COT who have been recipients of IIP grants described their positive impacts in enhancing course curriculum and improving teaching and learning. Members raised the question of what impact IIP grants can serve in the new teaching environments many faculty are experiencing. Jim Phillips gave examples of how IIP grants have been targeted in the past around campus initiatives such as the implementation of eCommons.

#### *Student Retention and the Colleges*

Members questioned where UCSC is lacking in retaining students, and what the stumbling blocks to student success are. Are there, for instance, courses that simply are not offered frequently enough, or that need additional instructional support? Is the campus simply unable to mount needed curriculum due to a lack of faculty FTE? Members briefly reviewed recent data on retention and graduation rates that identified areas where UCSC needs improvement, but that also begged questions regarding why UCSC is struggling in those areas.

One member questioned whether or not College curriculum is doing more harm than good. Some students end up taking 19 units in their first quarter due some required 5+2 unit "Core Courses" in their colleges plus other frosh courses with 2 unit labs. Further, ladder rank faculty rarely teach these courses and it is unclear whether or not there are opportunities for them to do so. Chair McDowell informed members that the Senate has reviewed the colleges in the recent past (not sure what that remark was), but that COT, if they wish, can do a study of the college curriculum and a make a list of recommendations to CEP or the Senate.

#### *Teaching and Learning Symposium*

Members agreed that Teaching and Learning Symposiums can be successful without support from the Center for Teaching and Learning, but did not yet agree to topics or dates. A suggestion was made that division specific events focused on teaching within disciplines might be more useful for faculty.

### *Excellence in Teaching Awards*

Members agreed that the nomination and selection process for the Excellence in Teaching Awards process needs to be reviewed by COT.

### *Learning Technology Committee*

The non-Senate Learning Technology Committee, chaired by Learning Technologies Director Jim Philips, which meets quarterly to investigate how IT can support learning and teaching, regularly includes one member from COT. Martin Weissman agreed to attend the meetings in Winter and Spring. Chair McDowell will ask for a volunteer for the Fall meeting once the date has been set.

### *Consultations*

Chair McDowell recommended that COT consider having a consultation with Professor Ira Pohl regarding his recent research into MOOCs (Massing Open Online Courses). Members of COT raised the possibility of having a forum on online education that would at least include one participant offering an opposing position.

### **Invited Guests**

The committee excused guest Jim Philips and then deliberated about standing committee guests for this academic year. The committee unanimously decided to invite the Director of Learning Technologies to sit with the committee. Given the defunct status of the Center for Teaching and Learning and its programs, the committee will not invite the CTL's Administrative Manager to be a regular committee guest.

### **Rebenching Report**

Due to time constraints members were unable to discuss this item and will return to it at their next meeting on October 16.

Meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.