

**Committee on Teaching (COT)**  
**MINUTES**  
**October 16, 2012, 10:00-11:30 a.m., Kerr Hall 129**

Present: Charlie McDowell, *Chair*, Deborah Gould, Kirsten Silva Gruesz, Martin Weissman, Nandini Bhattacharya (NSTF), Noelle Lehnhard (GSA), Gabi Cruz (SUA), Jim Phillips, *sits with*, Director of Learning Technologies

Absences: None

**Consent Agenda**

The meeting minutes of October 2, 2012, were approved.

**Chair Announcements**

Chair McDowell updated members on the recent Senate Executive Committee (SEC) meeting. The effects of the Rebenching Report and, particularly, aspirational graduate growth are going to be major issues for the Senate in 2012-13. COT will consider engaging with Senate leadership on issues related to teaching and instructional support with regard to teaching doctoral students at UCSC.

A member raised concern about a possible disconnect between enrolling more doctoral students, and the reality that all recently graduated doctoral students face a challenging job market. Other members raised questions about the actual cost of teaching graduate students, and whether or not tuition funds can strategically be used to hire more postdoctoral scholars, shouldering the burden some professor will face in teaching and mentoring additional doctoral students.

Within the context of aspirational graduate growth, members raised concern about what appears to be diminished allocations for Teaching Assistantships (TA), specifically in the Humanities and Social Sciences Divisions (and possibly others). TA's play an integral role in teaching undergraduate students, and in many instances provide direct assistance in improving the writing quality of undergraduate students. COT is interested in getting data detailing funding for TA allocations, including how funds are used. Moreover, members are interested to learn how departments make decisions regarding TA use; within COT, members expressed very different approaches in their respective departments.

Chair McDowell announced that there will be a Joint Senate Administrative Task Force on Pedagogy that includes a representative from COT. The Task Force charge has been completed and membership will soon be filled.

Chair McDowell requested that a member of COT attend the Learning Technologies Committee meeting on October 24, but no members were available to attend. The COT analyst will attend the meeting.

**Member Items**

Learning Technologies Director Jim Phillips briefly informed members of new systems that UCSC is considering purchasing that, in part, are designed to increase student retention. One

system being considered, Starfish Solutions, can flag when students are at risk of failing a course and in need of support services, notifying the faculty member, teaching assistants, as well as academic advisors. Systems such as Starfish have been implemented by some universities, and have been credited with improving retention. Members voiced concern that these systems may intrude on the privacy of students, and that these issues need to be discussed.

Additionally, Director Phillips informed COT members that several major users of Sakai such as UC Berkeley have chosen not to adopt the next version. UCSC was planning on adopting it in 2014, but is considering other options such as Instructure Canvas. Chair McDowell asked that these discussions be continued at a future COT meeting.

### **Systemwide Review of the Rebenching Report**

Members reviewed the Rebenching Report and endorsed its primary goal of creating greater transparency and equity in the formula for distributing state funds across the UC campuses. COT recognized the outstanding work of the Rebenching Budget Committee, and urged President Yudoff to implement all of the committee's recommendations. COT would like to explicitly endorse the provision to penalize campuses that fail to enroll their target number of resident undergraduates. Revenues generated from non-resident enrollments can be used for instructional support, and COT is concerned that if campuses enroll a large cohort of non-resident students, and are not fairly penalized for doing so, issues of inequity in the quality of education delivered across the UC system will arise. It would be particularly troubling if campuses that choose to educate more non-resident students are able to do so with more resources, and the ability to deliver higher quality education than campuses that educate a higher percentage of California resident students.

### **Charting COT's Direction for 2012-13**

#### *Center for Teaching and Learning*

Chair McDowell requested that the Committee Analyst gather data, if possible, on the funding for Centers for Teaching--and the like--at other UC campuses. Of particular interest to the committee are staffing costs associated with Centers.

Chair McDowell spoke with Vice Chancellor for University Relations, Donna Murphy, about the need for an endowed Center for Teaching at UCSC. VC Murphy agreed, and requested a one to two page document detailing COT's vision for a Center. Chair McDowell stressed the need for COT to be forward-thinking in developing their vision; merely re-imagining the past is not likely to gain the support of donors. With a lot of imaginative thinking about what a Center can offer, COT can make a difference in the lives of UCSC's undergraduate students.

Members developed the following draft of possible services:

- Broad services for faculty to improve teaching
- Mid-quarter feedback
- Video capture of lectures
- A space or forum to easily share innovative teaching solutions and to encourage faculty collaborations
- Training of peer students at the undergraduate level

- Monitoring the status of teaching at UCSC and reporting on it (quarterly reports)
- Developing faculty mentoring services within divisions
- Having effective software in place to apply analytics that can aid in student learning and faculty development
- A regular organized gathering for faculty to share best teaching practices
- The assistance of a professionally trained faculty member who can provide guidance for developing concrete teaching strategies in a multitude of subjects
- Services to encourage faculty collaborations among faculty who teach the same or similar courses
- Faculty Grants for Instructional Improvement

### *Teaching Convocation*

Members reviewed past teaching convocations sponsored jointly by COT and the Center for Teaching Excellence. Several members expressed concern that the themes were too broad, and argued that targeted themes would be more impactful. Chair McDowell asked that members each bring one topic for a teaching symposium on pedagogy that they would be interested to attend, to the next meeting. This discussion will be continued at that point.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.