

Committee on Teaching (COT)
MINUTES
November 1, 2011
Tuesday, 10:00am – 11:30am, Kerr Hall 129

Present: Daniel Selden (Chair), Brandin Baron-Nusbaum, Pascal Garaud, Maria Schonbek, Graeme Smith, Stephanie Casher (ASO), Michael Tassio (ASO)

Absent: Mary Flannery, Mary Thomas, Nicol Gaffney (with notice)

Guests: Jessica Fiske-Bailey, Jim Phillips

The minutes of October 18, 2011 were approved.

Update on Meeting with VPAA Lee re: Classroom Climate Question

Chair Selden met with VPAA Herbert Lee regarding COT's response to the classroom inclusion question. VPAA Lee agreed with COT's suggestion that the term "inclusion" was too vague, and agreed that the language "safe and respectful" was more appropriate.

One member asked about the VPAA's plans to inform faculty about this new requirement, and any training that may be available for them. It is important for faculty to have some resources available in case they need support or guidance with how to deal with classroom inclusiveness issues, and to know how to access those resources.

Another member pointed out that creating a "safe and respectful" classroom environment is not only relevant for students but also for instructors. There are sometimes situations in the classroom when faculty members feel unsafe. More dialogue about this issue is needed.

Discussion emerged about the various ways classroom environments can be considered "unsafe." It became clear that the use of the term "safe," opened up a variety of interpretations that strayed somewhat from the original point of "inclusiveness."

Chair Selden asked the committee to generate some bullet points on things/information that would be useful to assist/support faculty in their teaching.

A member again raised the point that using a 1-5 metric to respond to the question of "inclusiveness" was inadequate. Responses to this question should come in the form of written comments.

One member asked if Principles of Community or Statements of Academic Honesty were already included on instructor syllabi. Both are on the general UCSC website and are not required on syllabi. Perhaps faculty should be instructed or encouraged to formally incorporate

these principles into their syllabi. One member suggested reviewing the Chancellor's email on November 1, "Affirming UCSC's Principles of Community," for language that might be appropriate for syllabi.

The Committee's new formulation of the question re: Classroom Inclusiveness is as follows: "The instructor's ability to maintain a respectful environment for both students and faculty according to the UCSC Principles of Community?"

Chair Selden will draft another letter to VPAA Lee regarding COT's additional thoughts on classroom inclusiveness, and circulate it to the committee for feedback.

Update on Meeting with SEC re: Class Times Proposal

Chair Selden attended the SEC meeting where the Class Times Proposal was briefly discussed and reported that he had expected a more substantive discussion of the proposal to emerge.

COT re-registered their concern that the proposal is problematic, and thinks this is a serious threat to teaching and research efforts at UCSC.

One member suggested that to reduce the need for more class times, perhaps overflow students could be accommodated in Summer Session? AVP Bailey reported that Summer Session will be much smaller in coming years because Pell Grants have gone away, and that students are not likely to have other sources of funding to attend classes in summer.

Another member suggested that instructors might accommodate more students by allowing them to overflow into a second classroom that would simulcast the lecture. Learning Technologies Director Jim Philips confirmed that they have the ability to do this.

Chair Selden stated that since COT has not been asked to act formally on this proposal (beyond their initial response), and it is unclear if the proposal will be going anywhere, COT's work may be done.

To address some members' concerns, Chair Selden agreed to write to Chair Gillman and VPDUE Hughey volunteering to assist in further analysis, and asking that we be kept apprised on developments regarding the proposal.

Instruction Improvement Grant (IIG) Funding

Some people have expressed concern after learning that the funding for the Instructional Improvement Grant program was cut without COT knowledge or consultation.

AVP Bailey stated that in the past few years funding for this program was hard to justify because there was no accountability or reporting from faculty who were awarded grants. The VPDUE's office had to take a large budget cut, and this was one program they decided to cut.

Chair Selden wondered if there was a source of funds available for outstanding proposals focused on instructional improvement. COT would not be bound to fund any proposals, but would like the opportunity to honor extraordinary proposals.

AVP Bailey would like to see COT develop or advocate for a campus-wide program for faculty training in areas of need or interest, and reiterated that grants for individual faculty rarely have the impact on students that they are intended to have. The VPDUE would be most interested in funding programs that have a wider impact and AVP Bailey thought one-time funds could be invested if COT has compelling ideas.

One member commented on the dilemma of attending workshops on teaching. While they are sometimes very helpful, they often require considerable time commitments that interfere with research. Compelling faculty to attend workshops on teaching may be more successful if there was a reward that would be reflected in their personnel file (perhaps as a publication towards scholarship of teaching).

The committee members were asked to think more about how they can encourage and support faculty in their teaching and to bring ideas to the next meeting for further discussion.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

So Attests,

Daniel Selden, Chair

Committee on Teaching