

MINUTES*
COMMITTEE ON TEACHING
Meeting of November 15, 2006

Present: Murray Baumgarten (Chair), John Borrego, Henry Burnett (Director Media Services), Rachel Dewey (NSTF Rep), Ruth Harris-Barnett (Director CTE), Lindsay Hinck, Kevin Karplus, Jess McGuire (GSA Rep), Cynthia Polecritti.

Chair's announcements.

The December 13 meeting may be cancelled. The notice will be sent via email.

The November 1 minutes were accepted as amended. The Committee decided it prefers that future minutes specify who said what, with the exception of grants and awards discussions. [This no longer applies with the decision in May 7, 2007, to put COT minutes on the web].

Consultation with Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies (VPDGS) Lisa Sloan visited COT to discuss graduate student teaching at UCSC. She explained to the Committee her thinking regarding the importance of having graduate students teach. She shared with COT her concerns about quality of training that Teaching Assistants (TAs) are getting. VPDGS Sloan called COT's attention to a study completed last year on how TAs are being trained across campus. She and VPDUE Bill Ladusaw are thinking about the best way to use the information gathered. Chair Baumgarten suggested that COT would be an appropriate body to provide a response to the report and confirmed the Committee's willingness to provide one, if requested. VPDUE Sloan will make that formal request, and COT will be provided with the full report.

Other points of note from the discussion about TA training:

Is a "1 size fits all" approach to training appropriate? What TA training should be basic across departments? How to get faculty to support? What is the goal—job training vs. professional development? It was noted that funding is an issue and that mandatory training adds additional work hours with implication described in the union contract. Mandatory courses for all grad students are a possible solution; Berkeley now has such a system in place. Faculty need to communicate to graduate students that teaching is important. The comment was made that this affects TA attitudes. How important is teaching when graduate students go on the job market?

It was pointed out that graduate students teach in other ways than just TAs, such as mentoring of undergraduate students in the labs, and other places.

The systemwide Coordinating Council for Grad Affairs has circulated a document for comment on use of graduate students as independent instructors. VPDGS Sloan wanted to draw the document to the attention of COT who assured her that they plan to offer comments.

In summary, VPDUE Sloan (via Director Harris-Barnett) will send the full report on TA training and make a formal request for input. She will keep COT posted on progress regarding that issue, and looks forward to working with them. She also noted that she is gathering (through Planning & Budget) data on how TAs are allocated and deployed across campus, and will share that information with COT as it becomes available. She noted that graduate education is a topic on which the Administration and the Senate are working together this year. She would like to look at TA training as a part of the whole graduate educational process, and to keep in mind that teaching does not just mean TAing. Mentoring and other graduate student roles are also important to consider.

CTE Director announcements

None.

Response to Draft Strategic Academic Plan

COT discussed the draft response to the Draft Strategic Academic Plan. Members offered suggestions for additions to the letter. These suggestions were accepted by COT.

The Committee discussed whether particular programs should be named as needing support (languages and writing were mentioned).

Concern was expressed about the shift of emphasis over time from teaching to research, and the lack of an explicit mention in the draft plan as to the relative balance desired. COT discussed how the reward structure heavily favors research. Additionally, there was concern about the lack of attention in the draft plan to the University's three missions—teaching, research, and public service—and how the plan would address all of those areas. Obligation to the public to educate citizens is not mentioned.

Teaching and Learning Symposium

COT continued its planning for the annual Teaching and Learning Symposium. For keynote speakers COT selected Campus Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor David Kliger and Acting Chancellor George Blumenthal. The Committee agreed to have Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies Lisa Sloan and Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education Bill Ladusaw as a second option for keynote speakers.

For the Conference title, COT agreed on “Teaching and Research: the Best of Both Worlds.”

COT members made several suggestions about faculty to invite to give presentations. It was agreed that a session including a panel of illustrious alumni would be desirable. Names were identified and COT members will invite them after a schedule has been defined.

COT will try to invite the broadest population that can be handled in the venue, including graduate students, and possibly some undergraduates. If needed an overflow venue with broadcast capability may be able to be arranged..

Grad Student Roles in University Instruction

There was no further action or discussion on the topic of graduate student roles in University Instruction at this meeting.

Finally, COT agreed to reflect in the minutes that they congratulate CEP Chair Jaye Padgett on receiving the Dizikes Award for teaching in Humanities.

So attests,

Murray Baumgarten, Chair
Committee on Teaching

*These minutes were edited on August 15, 2007, for posting to the web.