

MINUTES
COMMITTEE ON TEACHING
January 12, 2010
Tuesday, 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Kerr Hall Rm 129

Present: M. Victoria Gonzalez-Pagani (Chair), Kate Edmunds, Dan Scripture, Hongyun Wang, Gordon Wells, Stephanie Casher (ASO)

Absent: Clare Max

Guests: Jessica Fiske-Bailey, Jim Phillips

The minutes of December 8, 2009 were approved.

Announcements

- Director of Learning Technologies, Jim Phillips, updated COT on the cuts at Learning Technologies due to the budget crisis. He would like to solicit COT assistance in collecting faculty feedback on what instructional tools they feel are the most important to their teaching efforts. This feedback would be very useful as his unit brainstorms how to deal with the next round of cuts.

Report on Remote and Online Instruction and Residency

The committee discussed the Report on Remote and Online Instruction and Residency. The points touched on are as follows:

- What is the underlying motivation for moving towards online instruction? It appears that proponents are moving towards online instruction because of perceived cost savings, when in reality, it costs more money (initially) to mount/conduct an online course than a regular course. The committee also wondered if the budget model takes into account costs for training faculty to utilize online and remote tools, which may be outside of their skill set. On the flipside, the committee acknowledges that remote and online instruction could help address problems that campuses are having managing their enrollments, space issues, and being able to offer their students needed courses.
- While the current generation of students seem to be more comfortable with technology and the web overall, and may be very receptive to the convenience of online instruction, we cannot assume 1) that all students have access to computers and 2) that a tech-savvy generation would *prefer* remote and online instruction. Online instruction might also make more sense for certain subjects (ex. Languages and Math), than for others. It would be interesting to see data on what kinds of students gravitate towards online learning, and similarly, the problems that others have with it.
- Re: Recommendation 1 that the Senate support faculty and depts. interested in online instruction, the committee feels that it should not just support faculty, but make sure that appropriate credit is given in terms of merit reviews, etc. for faculty investing significant effort in developing online courses. However, faculty who do not develop online courses should not be penalized.
- Re: Recommendation 2 that the Senate should apply identical standards of quality to the delivery of instruction, the committee felt that “identical standards of quality” would be

difficult to maintain due to the large class sizes online instruction would enable. However steps should be taken to explore mechanisms to ensure quality.

- Another committee member wanted to point out that “identical standards of quality” for two very different modes of instruction may not be the best way to go. Face to face instruction and online instruction are NOT equal, and should not be treated as such. An appropriate balance between the two should be maintained, perhaps by requiring that only a certain percentage of a department’s curriculum can be delivered remotely.
- The committee agrees with Recommendation 6 that a Senate/Administrative task force be convened, and that the implementation of online instruction be a slow and thoughtful process. The driving goal should not be how to replicate what other Universities are doing, but to experiment and discover ways to do it *better*. The task force should also take care to build on research already done in this area, instead of reinventing the wheel.
- Since graduate students are our next generation of teachers, they should be involved in designing and implementing online courses. One idea to get more students involved in the process is to designate TAships specifically for the purpose of designing online curriculum.
- The development of an online instruction module should be undertaken at the systemwide level, so that all UCs can benefit from the devised solutions, and consistency can be achieved across the board.

In closing, COT felt that the best solution may be a hybrid model, a traditional teaching scenario with online components (such as a discussion thread) to utilize the best of both worlds. Such a hybrid model should take into account the different learning styles present in any given classroom, and offer a variety of solutions so that students can have some choice in creating the most ideal learning environment for themselves.

COT also thought that at some point, and online instruction training/orientation for faculty could be provided through the Center for Teaching and Learning.

Excellence in Teaching Awards – 2009-2010 call

The committee began discussion on the 2009-10 call for nominations for the Excellence in Teaching Awards. While the committee did not feel that the call itself needs to be modified right now, they will discuss at a later meeting how to pare down the nominations that come in, and the proper levels of involvement of Divisional Deans, Department Chairs, and Academic Human Resources.

Analyst Casher and Jessica Fiske-Bailey will coordinate with SUA (the Student Union Assembly) on getting the call out and soliciting nominations. They will also do some research on the class sizes of past winners, to see if there is a meaningful correlation between teaching large courses and having a high number of nominations.

The meeting adjourned at 11:40am.

So attests,

M. Victoria Gonzalez-Pagani, Chair
Committee on Teaching