

**MINUTES**  
**COMMITTEE ON TEACHING**  
**May 18, 2010**  
**Tuesday, 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Kerr Hall Rm 129**

Present: Hongyun Wang (Chair), Kate Edmunds, Dan Scripture, Dan Selden, Stephanie Casher (ASO)

Guests: Jim Phillips

Absent: Graeme Smith, Gordon Wells

**Presentation from Jim Phillips**

Jim Phillips, Director of Learning Technologies, began his presentation with an overview of the cutbacks to the Faculty Instructional Technology Center (FITC). He then did a brief demo on eCommons, showing the committee various ways eCommons could be utilized for COT, the faculty, and the campus at large. For example, eCommons has the capability to do online instructor evaluations—when does COT want to take this issue up again?

Director Phillips then introduced the committee to the website Course Rank (<http://www.courserank.com>) that some universities are using to capture student evaluations of courses and professors. It is possible to formally integrate Course Rank into the student portal in eCommons, and Director Phillips was curious to hear COT's thoughts on this idea.

The primary concern of COT regarding websites like Course Rank, Rate My Professor, and online instructor evaluations in general is that students need to be trained on what constitutes a helpful/constructive evaluation. Websites like this tend to capture student feedback on the extreme ends of the spectrum—students who either really loved their professor, or really hated their professor. Is this necessarily a representative sample, and hence, a useful tool? Any online instructor evaluation tool should contain very specific criteria for students to evaluate learning objectives.

eCommons Update: Learning Technologies will be focusing on migrating the web CT folks over to eCommons first, and anticipate that eCommons will soon be available for building fall courses. Director Phillips is going to look into organizing an eCommons workshop for COT members and Instructional Improvement Grant (IIG) recipients.

iTunes U: Director Phillips did a demo of iTunes U, an interface within iTunes where professors can upload podcasts of lectures to be available for download through iTunes. Many COT members had never heard of iTunes U, so this was a particularly interesting demonstration. iTunes U will be incorporated into eCommons, and faculty should be encouraged to think about utilizing this feature for course content.

Dan Selden volunteered to serve on the Learning Technology Committee next Fall.

## **Excellence in Teaching Awards – Improving Award Criteria and Procedures**

COT's discussion of how to improve the Excellence in Teaching Awards (ETA) criteria and procedures centered around two core questions:

1. How do we increase student participation?
2. How do we solicit higher quality nomination letters?

To increase student participation, some ideas discussed included:

- Greater utilization of the student portal and facebook to publicize nomination process.
- Greater utilization of department staff and TAs to promote ETA awards.
- Granting funds to the SUA specifically for the purpose of promoting the ETA awards and proactively soliciting nominations, possibly through class tours and pitches.
- Including a flyer with in-class evaluation forms encouraging students to consider nominating their professor for an award.
- If we begin to utilize online instructor evaluations, adding a link at the end of the evaluation that says "Nominate this Professor for a Teaching Award!"

To increase the quality of nomination letters:

- Require that TWO nomination letters are needed for a Professor to be considered.
- Specify how long the nomination letter should be (e.g. between 1-3 pages).
- Spell out the criteria COT will be evaluating, and request that students speak to the specific criteria in their letters.
- Have the nomination form online, and available year-round.

COT also suggested that the ETA flyer be re-designed to be more professional and high-design, to communicate that these are indeed awards of distinction, and that the nomination process should be taken seriously. They also felt that an additional eligibility criteria should be added, stating that nominees need to have taught at UCSC for at least four quarters.

COT also discussed the creation of a "Lifetime Achievement Award" for teaching. Emeriti faculty would be eligible for this award, and ideally nominations would come from either COT or the department. The nominees would then be sent out to the alumni for voting. COT members were in strong support of creating an award to recognize longstanding excellence in teaching.

The meeting adjourned at 11:15am.

So attests,

Hongyun Wang, Chair  
Committee on Teaching