

Committee on Teaching (COT)
MINUTES
January 24, 2012
Tuesday, 10:00am – 11:30am, Kerr Hall 129

Present: Daniel Selden (Chair), Pascal Garaud, Maria Schonbek, Graeme Smith, Mary Flannery (NSTF), Nicol Gaffney (SUA), Michael Tassio (ASO staff)

Absent: Dee Hibbert-Jones (with notice), Peter Rovegno (GSA), Jessica Fiske-Bailey, Jim Phillips (with notice)

Approval of the January 10 minutes was deferred until the February 7 meeting to give members more time to review them.

Chair's Announcements

Chair Selden apologized for being absent at the last COT meeting and thanked members for carrying on a productive meeting in his absence.

Online Course Evaluations

Chair Selden asked members for concluding comments on the topic of online course evaluations.

One member presented an email from VPDUE Hughey reporting on the success of the launch of Online Instructor Evaluations (OIE). The email was not sent to all UCSC faculty and only two COT members had seen it. The reported success of OIEs was based on feedback from students and departmental staff whose responses ranged from "satisfaction" to "jubilation"; feedback from faculty was not included in the report.

One COT member has begun collecting data and creating a general metrics to analyze OIE response rates, and the level of satisfaction with teaching effectiveness. Data from OIEs will be compared to data collected from past years Instructor Evaluations. There are many complicated matters associated with this study including the fact that many instructors naturally improve their teaching ability over time (especially when they teach the same course), but the results are necessary for fairly evaluating the success OIEs.

The fall response rate for OIEs was roughly 70%. Chair Selden asked COT if they would be interested in putting together a proposal to increase the response rate by linking grade-giving to student submission of OIES. Several members expressed concern with this idea, stating that an increase in response rates might not actually give a more accurate picture of an instructor's teaching ability; some instructors might not want students who have not attended their lectures, for instance, to then comment on their ability to lecture. One member noted that when all students respond, more data is collected (including extremes of high and low satisfaction), and you are able to garner more meaningful results.

COT is interested in studying the types of responses students are giving on OIEs. Are they, for instance, just checking numbers, or are they making substantive comments? This data is necessary for evaluating the success of OIEs, and for being able to comment on them. COT expects to have a small sample of this sort of data in the near future and will return to this discussion. At that time, they will draft a proposal to Senior Administration regarding the future of OIEs.

Review of Cross-Divisional Course Ideas

Chair Selden along with his colleagues in the Humanities and Arts has been perturbed by the near impossibility of teaching courses with professors across divisions. These courses would be very large and have broad interest across campus. Chair Selden recently met with a Divisional Dean to discuss this issue and reported that the Deans would be willing to review a proposal from COT.

There was some confusion amongst committee members as to what these sorts of courses would cover. Chair Selden shared a couple ideas including a course on the origins of the world pulling faculty from Astronomy and Astrophysics, Anthropology, and Literature.

One member questioned why Deans who are facing dwindling funding sources would be interested in funding these courses. Further, in some departments, faculty are required to teach core curriculum courses and would not have the luxury of teaching these courses. Chair Selden stated that these courses would accommodate a very large number of students, and that some departments have more flexibility in the courses they allow their faculty to teach.

Part of the problem in teaching cross-divisional courses is getting through the bureaucracy. Perhaps COT can make a general statement to the campus directing interested faculty to the course approval paperwork. Further, COT might be able to streamline the process by improving the paperwork. Alternatively, perhaps COT can be a place for faculty interested in proposing cross-divisional courses to turn for support with identifying other interested faculty members.

Nevertheless, there are still concerns that many faculty members will have to focus on the courses necessary for their department. For instance, each year 3,000 UCSC students need to take a course in statistical reasoning and currently campus is failing to provide seats in courses for about 1,000 of those students.

Member Items

Chair Selden returned to a previous topic stating that COT needs to comment on the role of college core courses. This item will be added to the February 7 agenda.

COT should consider studying consequences from the new General Education Requirements and issue a statement registering its concerns. In particular, it is concerned about the campus ability to offer enough seats in courses with the Statistical Reasoning requirement. Further, COT might

be able to offer assistance to departments in assessing the appropriate General Education Requirements for their courses.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Selden, Chair

Committee on Teaching