

COMMITTEE ON TEACHING
Annual Report, 2006-07

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

Dear Colleagues,

This annual report of the Committee on Teaching (COT) for the academic year 2006-07 begins with the news that we did not succeed in our tasks: We set ourselves the goal of raising the profile of teaching at UCSC and failed. Not that we didn't try: we did manage to call teaching to the attention of colleagues and administrators during the course of our work, but we did not succeed in helping to reframe the current academic teaching culture at UCSC.

Our work this year helped us to understand some of the changes UCSC is going through: undergraduate classes are increasing in size to pay for our small graduate classes whose numbers are growing as new graduate programs come on line, and there is a greater emphasis on research and the funding that flows from research grants. Because the colleges no longer function as intellectual centers and can no longer facilitate the ongoing conversations about teaching they at times used to foster, discussions about teaching are not now central parts of regular ongoing campus conversations. Instead of talking about learning-centered processes, many of us have observed that when they do occur conversations about teaching have tended to focus on technical discussions about the delivery of information. While this is an important part of education, to focus solely on teaching as the delivery of information distorts and reduces the complexity and importance of teaching, at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

We believe that one way of strengthening teaching is for the University to commit to rewarding outstanding teaching on a par with outstanding research in the tenure and promotion process. Current practice apparently has poor teaching count against a faculty member in promotion decisions, yet we are concerned that not enough is made of the difference between adequate and excellent teaching. We also believe that, particularly in departments serving a large number of students, increased support for positions with a primary teaching purpose would serve both the research and teaching missions well. As a Committee we decided to take a step to reframe this current academic culture: thus we agreed to recommend making some teaching grants we administer along with the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) available as summer stipends. We regard this as a small step towards a larger remedy that awaits administrative action: to reward teaching at UCSC at a level comparable to research.

We base our views on the work we did during this academic year. COT met on a biweekly schedule, adding more meetings as needed from time to time. We made a point of meeting with colleagues and administrators to learn their views on the current state of teaching at UCSC and help us reflect on how to improve it. The minutes of our meetings list the range of our discussions. In May, COT voted to have our minutes posted on the web to encourage access and openness. Since they are not yet available our annual report recaps our activities, though it is not comprehensive. For complete information, we refer Senate members to our minutes.

COT Consultations

We note here that our meetings with Virginia Steel, University Librarian, William Ladusaw, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education, Lisa Sloan, Dean of Graduate Studies, Robin Ove, Manager of the Faculty Instructional Technology Center (FITC) and WebCT, Peggy Church and Karen Keen from the Disability Resource Center (DRC), and Jaye Padgett, Chair of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) were particularly enlightening.

Our discussions with University Librarian Virginia Steel defined a keynote for our work: the need for more complete and effective communication among units and faculty especially with regard to the interface of technology and pedagogy. She indicated that the Library is planning an Information Commons, which will encourage information literacy, further support for teaching, and coordination of the Library with other teaching functions and Information Technology Services (ITS). We look forward to these developments. Our meeting with Dean Lisa Sloan made us aware of the progress of the Graduate Division in TA training, and Robin Ove's visit brought information about the campus's commitment to enhancing teaching through technological innovation.

Our discussions with VPDUE William Ladusaw covered a wide range of topics. Of particular note were the comments on on-line teaching evaluations, the value of an honors program in attracting and retaining the best undergraduate students, and the current spectrum of undergraduate requirements. COT members expressed strong support for an honors program and thought it appropriate to cooperate with VPDUE Ladusaw and relevant Senate committees in implementing an honors program for the campus. UCSC is the only UC campus currently without an honors program. We considered the possibility of having COT make regular reports at Senate Meetings regarding such things as the need to reward excellent teaching, and the current lack of funding for an honors program.

Chair Baumgarten and Member Hinck attended a meeting called by EVC Kliger to discuss issues associated with large lecture teaching. At that meeting VPDUE Ladusaw again pointed out the need to rethink our requirements, and to contextualize them in terms of clear mission statements by the departments of their educational goals.

Peggy Church and Karen Keen visited COT from DRC to request input regarding outreach to faculty. COT members commented on the challenges around special exam accommodations particularly for large classes. One member described a situation for a class of more than 200 students where on the order of 20 students have special needs, on average. If more than one needs a separate test area, that leaves the instructor needing to walk to multiple locations at distances of up to ½ mile apart (based on a recent occurrence). Members listed challenges around lack of available rooms, costs to hire proctors, time requirements for departmental staff at an already busy time, and limitations on faculty to do anything about space needs. Some members related giving up their office for special test space or using space of fellow faculty members. All agree that there is a significant campuswide space issue for accommodation of special tests. We note that the School of Engineering has an effective plan for these situations.

Our discussions with CEP Chair Professor Jaye Padgett led us to recommend to the 2007-08 COT that they consider cooperating in the future with CEP as they develop several initiatives directly connected to issues central to COT. In this regard, COT has received requests to support

various unfunded mandates on behalf of the Writing Program, pointing to the strong on-going need in this area. This year only one such request came. In preceding years we received other requests: 2004-05 (1 mini grant); 2003-04 (1 mini grant and 1 major grant). This is an issue CEP continues to engage.

CEP Chair Jaye Padgett, in his meeting with COT called our attention to the ways in which the number of large undergraduate courses has gone up overall, as graduate course numbers have also increased. Between 1999-00 and 2003-04, undergraduate enrollments clearly went up roughly by a third, and graduate enrollments went up more slowly. He also acknowledged that for obvious reasons, graduate courses tend to have very small enrollments. He commented that this kind of data is the reason for the shift many of us feel in undergraduate enrollments because of our decision to invest faculty resources in growing graduate programs.

In the face of the need to increase our graduate programs, COT is yet very concerned with what appears to be an increasing shift away from our long traditional focus on undergraduate teaching. More students are being taught (or should we say processed) in larger and larger classes so that resources are freed up to teach graduate courses. What is needed are additional resources to grow the graduate courses and not have the graduate courses grow at the expense of the quality of the undergraduate programs at UCSC. The weakening of the undergraduate courses has led to a call for honors programs so that we can attract and retain the best students. The two processes are apparently linked. The data produced by CEP and submitted to the Senate on May 15, 2007, confirms this analysis and should be a wake-up call to the campus. We also see the need to rethink the role of Teaching Assistants, and welcome the efforts of the Graduate Division and Dean Sloan in refocusing the training of TAs.

The COT Chair regularly attended the meetings of the Information Technology Committee (ITC), occasionally spelled in this role by other members of COT. The issues raised at ITC meetings were regularly reported on and discussed by COT. We noted with dismay that ITC put forward an end-of-year request that did not make additional funds for technological support of teaching one of their highest priorities. In April, COT member Kevin Karplus represented COT at a meeting of the Committee on Computing and Telecommunications (CCT), to discuss a proposal by CCT to require all students to purchase laptop computers. COT has not taken a stand on the matter yet, as we are still awaiting details of the proposal from CCT.

Excellence in Teaching Awards

Some of the pleasure of working for the Committee on Teaching came with the distinguished teaching awards by which we honored the fine work of many of our colleagues in the classroom. We were delighted to see the range of imaginative approaches to teaching that helped our students become active participants in the learning process rather than making them mere consumers and bystanders. We hope the example of these colleagues in investing in classroom learning and teaching will ignite the imagination and interest of us all: more information about the strategies developed by our colleagues is available on the website of CTE: <http://ic.ucsc.edu/CTE/awards.html>. The website also lists the recipients of this year's awards for teaching excellence along with the evidence for their distinguished work. We congratulate this year's recipients. They are:

- George Brown, Physics, Ron Ruby Teaching Award in Science
- David Draper, Applied Mathematics and Statistics
- Bruce Lyon, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
- Mara Mather, Psychology
- Brad Olsen, Education
- Adriane Steinacker, Astronomy and Astrophysics
- Andrew Szasz, Sociology

COT confirmed its support for allowing students to submit award nomination letters on-line for the faculty teaching awards. These and other possible measures to increase awareness of these awards were discussed.

U.S. Professor of the Year Nomination

COT nominated Gary Griggs, Professor of Earth and Planetary Sciences, for the U.S. Professor of the Year program.

Instructional Improvement Program Grants

Part of our work also included collaborating with CTE in awarding Instructional Improvement Course Development Grants. This year COT awarded a total of \$95,735.94 out of requests totaling \$173,047.88. Twenty eight grants were funded out of 44 proposals. Funded projects included 19 Mini-grants, 4 Major Grants, and 5 Course Development Fellowships. COT rejected several Instructional Improvement Grant requests this year. There were two main reasons for rejecting requests: the proposal appeared to benefit the individual faculty member more than it benefited students, or the proposal was for a routine expense that should have been covered by a departmental budget. Several grant requests were sent back for further information or for commitments from the department to continue funding if the pilot programs of the grant proposal proved to be successful. In future, it would be wise for proposals to include departmental commitments in the initial requests. We understand the value of course relief for encouraging faculty to consider new approaches when they develop courses. Optional summer stipends would give us one more tool, perhaps more attractive for faculty who do not wish to reduce their teaching load. It also provides another way of using our resources to keep our best teachers in the classroom. For this reason we decided to add the option of summer stipends as a means of supporting course development in the next round of proposals, and we recommend that next year's COT favor summer-stipend requests over course-relief requests for proposals of otherwise similar merit.

Recipients of last year's fellowships for Instructional Improvement Grants presented the results of their course planning in Bay Tree Conference Room D on April 23, 2007. The six faculty presentations, and their new or revised courses, included:

- Karen Barad (Feminist Studies), "Feminism and Science"
- Peter Limbrick (Film and Digital Media), "Middle Eastern and Arab Cinemas"
- L.S. Kim (Film and Digital Media), "Approaches to Writing On and In Film and Television"
- Jean E. Fox Tree (Psychology), "Weird Science"

Roberto Manduchi (Computer Engineering), “Assistive Technology and Universal Design”
Sheila Crane (History of Art and Visual Culture), “Mediterranean Cities”

Grant recipients discussed a wide range of experimental teaching and learning strategies that they had developed during their course relief, with an emphasis on innovation and the encouragement of critical thinking. Professor Limbrick, for example, posed the question “How do students bridge the cultural gap when learning about other national cinemas” and will have them work with a digital journal, while Professor Kim aimed to have students explore a broad variety of writing forms in order to enhance career possibilities. Professor Fox Tree, a cognitive psychologist, discussed the pervasive thinking that too often blurs the distinction between science and pseudo-science and Professor Manduchi explained the importance of integrating design principles and an awareness of human-centered disability resources. “Mediterranean Cities,” an art history course to be taught by Professor Crane, will utilize small group projects and workshops to help students explore interdisciplinary approaches to urban studies.

Despite the small audience, there was a sense of engagement during the presentations, with good questions and discussion after each presentation. We recommend that next year’s COT discuss strategies to improve attendance at this event since the sharing of new teaching strategies is central to our mission.

We also note that our request for an increase in the budget for Instructional Improvement Grants, which had been reduced, has yet again not been approved--despite the significant increase in the number of large lecture courses and the decline in small undergraduate courses.

3rd Annual Teaching and Learning Symposium

COT also worked with CTE in organizing the annual Teaching and Learning Symposium. The theme for this year’s Teaching and Learning Symposium was “Teaching and Research,” an examination of the many ways in which we bring our research directly into the classroom. The afternoon program was held at the University Center on February 15, 2007, with Acting Chancellor Blumenthal and Campus Provost/Executive Vice-Chancellor Klinger opening the symposium as keynote speakers. Chancellor Blumenthal began by highlighting UCSC’s excellent record in encouraging undergraduate research (noting, for example, that more of our Humanities students go on to enter Ph.D. programs than at any other UC). Vice-Chancellor Klinger, after observing that “research and teaching are partially linked and partially separate,” went on to discuss how teaching can also contribute to our research.

We were heartened by the participation of Acting Chancellor George Blumenthal and Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost David Klinger in our Teaching and Learning Symposium. They were joined by distinguished UCSC alumni Gary Novak and Ted Goldstein who made presentations on the role of teaching and learning in their respective industries. After a question-and-answer period, the symposium continued with two simultaneous sessions, as faculty explained the ways teaching and research intersected in their individual courses.

But the campus voted with its feet: few people came to the symposium, and it did not generate an ongoing conversation on teaching and learning. Rather it emphasized for us how teaching has been moved from the center of our concerns to the periphery. Some of the palliatives that have

been proposed involve more technology, more use of the internet, more webct—in themselves these are valuable but only in relation to the imaginative use that may be made of them by colleagues committed to teaching. We also followed up on last year's Committee suggestion for on-line evaluations. VPDUE Ladusaw told us that he would look into a pilot version and report back to us and related committees. He thought a rethinking of our current general education requirements would be part of a reframing of the teaching and learning mission of the University. Such a rethinking might help us understand exactly what the different disciplines define as their educational missions and purposes. We look forward to a proposed report that he indicated might be forthcoming and to the discussions that should result from it.

Strategic Academic Plan

During our discussions of the draft Strategic Academic Plan we noted how the discussions focused on FTE only in relation to research and funding projects. We also discovered that the mission statement of the campus and of the University as a whole has a decidedly lame discussion of teaching and its importance. You can access this less-than inspiring UC Mission statement: <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/aboutuc/mission.html>

In conclusion we underscore our concern about the place of teaching in the University is echoed by recent reports from Harvard and Columbia. What we can do to remedy the situation is up to all of us in part in the roles we play as members of the Academic Senate.

Acknowledgements

The Committee would like to thank Ruth Harris-Barnett, Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence, and Henry Burnett, Director of Media Services, for their invaluable contributions to the Committee. We also want to acknowledge the incisive help of Roxanne Monnet, who served as staff to COT, and also helped us with the coordination of our activities and those of other committees of the Senate.

Respectfully Submitted,

COMMITTEE ON TEACHING

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August 31, 2007