

COMMITTEE ON TEACHING

Annual Report 2008-2009

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division,

The Committee on Teaching (COT) met regularly every other week throughout the academic year to deal with the extensive agenda related to the charge to foster and promote good teaching, to recommend and evaluate methods of assessing teaching performance, to oversee instructional support services on campus, and to advise the Academic Senate as requested.

Center for Teaching Excellence

One of the mandates of the Committee is to provide direction to the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) in matters regarding COT business, and when required, in any matters concerning instructional support. Ruth Harris-Barnett, Director of the CTE, resigned at the end of the 2007-08 academic year and two COT members served on the search committee for a new director in the summer of 2008. In the absence of a director, COT invited Jessica Fiske Bailey, Assistant Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education, to sit with the Committee in the CTE director's stead. Throughout the year, COT advised Bill Ladusaw, Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education (VPDUE), while decisions were being considered and made concerning possible restructuring of the Center. The VPDUE visited COT on three occasions to address the purpose of the CTE and its relationship to COT. Committee members conducted research on other teaching and learning centers in comparable universities throughout the country and presented, through Jessica Fiske Bailey, this research to the VPDUE. COT approved a new name for CTE (The Center for Teaching and Learning) and encouraged the VPDUE to appoint a faculty member with the title Faculty Assistant to the Dean of Undergraduate Education to bridge the gap in the directorship.

Instructional Improvement Program Grants

The Instructional Improvement Program (IIP) provides seed money in the form of grants to encourage experimentation with new ideas in teaching and learning at the undergraduate level. One of the regular charges of COT is to adjudicate applications for Instructional Improvement Program (IIP) grants. Adjudication of IIP grant proposals is a responsibility that COT takes very seriously and on which it spends a great deal of its time throughout the year.

COT awarded a total of \$88,180.22 out of requests totaling \$145,472. Seventeen grants were funded out of 32 proposals. Awarded funding was approximately 60% of the total requested. IIP grants fell into the following categories:

- **Mini-grants** are available throughout the year when COT is in session. They support small-scale projects designed to improve undergraduate instruction. Mini-grants have a maximum budget of \$2,000. In the year-long competition for Mini-grants, there were 16 submissions requesting \$26,775.80. Of these, 5 were funded for a total \$9,500.
- **Course Development Fellowships** provide approximately \$7,000-\$8,500 (depending on division) to cover one course release for the fellowship recipient. Course Development Fellows use the course release to develop a new undergraduate course or program in their

departments or to make significant revisions in an older course. Thirteen applications for Course Development Fellowships were received, with a cumulative budget of \$93,452.22. Eleven were funded for a total of \$72,788.22.

- **Major grants** are for major projects aimed at improving undergraduate education. These involve incorporating instructional technology, creating new course materials, or designing interactive or collaborative learning activities. Of the 3 proposals received for a total of \$25,243 requested, COT funded 1 for a total of \$5,892.

Based on discussions during the 2007-08 year, the Committee modified the call to emphasize the evaluation and dissemination plans of the grants. Individual members of the Committee worked with faculty members to strengthen this aspect of individual grant proposals. Doris Ash, the COT Committee member from the Education Department, and Jessica Fiske Bailey, were the primary resources for this project. The Committee also began research on the effectiveness of past awards as part of a revision of IIG guidelines and criteria for the coming year.

In order to make the administration of these grants more manageable, COT agreed to institute two deadlines for the Mini-grants, one at the end of Fall Quarter and one at the end of Winter Quarter. Grants to deal with emergency situations will be accepted at any time.

Excellence in Teaching Awards

From a pool of 26 eligible nominees, one of the largest in COT history, COT selected four faculty to receive the Excellence in Teaching Award for 2008-09, and one faculty member to receive the Ron Ruby Award for Teaching Excellence in the Division of Physical and Biological Sciences. In addition, three nominees were recognized with Honorable Mentions. The Excellence in Teaching Awards ceremony was combined with the Student Achievement Awards ceremony on June 5 and the awards were presented by Chancellor Blumenthal. The recipients were as follows:

Teaching Awards:

- Bettina Aptheker, Feminist Studies
- Alice Yang, History
- Robin King, the Writing Program
- Herbert Lee, Applied Math and Statistics

Ron Ruby award:

- Peter Raimondi, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

Letters of honorable mention:

- Daniel Wirls, Politics
- Richard Mitchell, Physical and Biological Sciences
- Wendy Hibbert-Jones, Art

A letter of commendation for being selected by students to receive an award for their teaching was sent to remaining faculty who were nominated.

COT is concerned and worked throughout the year to increase the selectivity and status of the Teaching Awards. After researching how teaching awards were selected in comparable universities, COT made the goal of getting a larger pool of candidates and involving the Deans

by asking for their comments for use in the evaluation process. COT worked with Matt Palm, Commissioner of Academic Affairs Student Union Assembly (SUA), to advertise the process among students in large classes and College governments and post flyers throughout campus. As a result of SUA's efforts and cooperation, COT received 42 nominations for 27 instructors. COT asked the divisional Deans to comment on the teaching record, student evaluations, and timeliness of narrative evaluations of each of the candidates in their division. Nominees who had already received an Excellence in Teaching Awards within the last five years were excluded from consideration. Only nominees who were up to date in submitting narrative performance evaluations, as reported by the Registrar, were considered for an award. In an effort to continue to refine the process, COT members will be rewriting the call for nominations during the Summer of 2009.

U.S. Professor of the Year Nomination

The Committee decided to ask the Deans to nominate a candidate for Professor the Year. No names were submitted.

Annual Teaching and Learning Symposium

No Teaching and Learning Symposium was held this year due to the limited staffing in the CTE where the work of organizing the symposium resides.

Learning Management System (LMS)

Throughout the year, COT was advised about the selection process for the new Learning Management System (LMS). In addition, several COT members participated on an individual basis in this process. The Learning Technology Group selected Sakai and the target date for its implementation will be Winter 2010.

Online Instructional Evaluations (OIE)

Following the work of the Committee on Teaching from previous years, this year's COT continued to pursue an online system for collecting, storing, and analyzing course/instructor evaluations. Ruth Harris-Barnett conducted the Alpha test in Spring of 2008 with the goal of replicating the Scantron form, now available through the CTE, in an on-line platform (WebCT). Four faculty took part in the test. A second more extensive pilot was run in Fall of 2008 and involved 9 faculty and 12 classes. The response rate was 71.8% (not much different than other systems currently being used on campus—but we should note that incentives were provided in the way of iPod Shuffles given to randomly selected participants). In spite of the challenges inherent in a pilot, students were generally pleased with the system. They noted the more confidential nature of the evaluations, their ability to think more carefully about their answers, and to provide more detailed feedback. The department staffs involved with the pilot were enthusiastic, noting that a move to on-line systems would provide a significant time-savings for departmental staff campus-wide. COT concluded that the pilot was a successful learning process and COT and ITS are eager to move forward. One strong recommendation, based on research and the results of our own pilots, is that the OIE needs to be part of the LMS and tied into AIS. The new LMS, Sakai, has a built-in OIE module. As soon as Sakai is launched, COT hopes that steps can quickly be taken to turn on and fine tune the OIE.

At present, CTE is processing Scantrons and will continue to do so until an online-system is in place. In the 2008-09 academic year, a total of 67,746 evaluations were scanned by hand representing 2,036 courses from 28 departments and/or colleges. This represented a 14% increase from the year before. An additional 3-4,000 Summer Session evaluations are not counted in these statistics. The single CTE staff person spends a minimum of 50% of her time processing the Scantrons. With the departure of Ruth Harris-Barnett and the failed search for a new director, CTE has been severely understaffed and the focus on CTE resources to the single service of Scantrons has significantly restricted what services can be provided and has even prevented it from being restructured. COT has encouraged the VPDUE's office to move Scantrons out of the CTE and to discontinue them as soon as possible.

GE Reforms

COT made an offer to CEP to play a role in GE reform discussions as it has a direct effect on the quality of teaching. Jaye Padgett, Chair of CEP, visited COT to ask for feedback on the proposed Disciplinary Communications and to give COT a preview of the proposed GE reform. Individual COT members also attended different CEP events and reported on them to COT.

Classroom Environment

SUA, through Matt Palm, expressed concern regarding the current classroom environment as pertains to creating a climate of inclusiveness. They requested that COT sponsor a survey of students concerning their experiences with diversity in the classroom with the goal of starting TA diversity training. COT encouraged SUA to work closely with the Graduate Division and the Office of Institutional Research. COT offered support but asked SUA to find out what information already exists on campus in the hopes of moving directly to TA training. SUA had already identified the 2007-08 student survey in which there were questions concerning diversity.

Acknowledgements

The Committee would like to thank Jessica Fiske Bailey, Assistant Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education, who is charged with overseeing the Center for Teaching Excellence in this time of transition, Henry Burnett, Director of Media Services, and Jim Phillips, Director of the Instructional Technology Group, for their invaluable contributions to the Committee. The Committee on Teaching thanks Tammi Blake for excellent service during this academic year.

Respectfully submitted,

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REPRESENTATIVES

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