

COMMITTEE ON TEACHING 2012-13 Annual Report

To: Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division

Introduction

The Committee on Teaching (COT) met regularly every other week throughout the academic year to conduct business regarding an agenda related to their 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. Much of the year was dedicated to generating a broad campus conversation about online education and educational technologies that have the potential to improve pedagogy. The committee did this by co-sponsoring, with the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), three campuswide events for faculty, students, and staff. These events were well attended and accomplished the goal of initiating a campus conversation. Further, committee conversations about online education were kindled by the administration's decision in February to sign a contract with the for-profit online education provider, Coursera. This decision process, which did not include meaningful consultation with COT or the Senate, heightened concerns about online education already held by committee members and faculty across campus. Finally, a high point of the committee's work was selecting recipients for Excellence in Teaching Awards. Each year the committee is impressed by the many nominations for our esteemed teachers, and yet is tasked with selecting far fewer recipients than are deserving. A brief overview of the committee's notable work in 2012-13 is provided below.

Events on Online Education and Educational Technologies

Following a long tradition of co-sponsoring events on teaching and learning, COT collaborated with CEP to sponsor three quarterly events. The events addressed, among others, issues of student assessment, quality, access, and the cost of online education, as well as innovative educational technologies currently being used by UCSC faculty. All of the events were well attended, and each garnered a diverse audience of faculty, staff, and students. COT is indebted to the many faculty, invited guests, staff, and students that participated in these events. Further, COT is grateful for the generous support it received from the Academic Senate Office, and from Executive Vice Chancellor Galloway. Their support greatly increased the impact of these events. All of the events were recorded and are available on the Academic Senate's website.

Fall Quarter: Moving Online: Stakes and Assumptions

On November 28, 2012, faculty, staff and students gathered to discuss stakes and assumptions about online education. Participants raised questions about how online education could cause a shift in UCSC's educational model, about whether students should receive credit for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), about the fundamental questions faculty need to be asking, and about CEP's role in approving and regulating the use of online courses on campus. Audience members at this event heard from a panel of UCSC faculty comprised of Diane Gifford-Gonzalez (Anthropology), Brent Haddad (Environmental Studies), Ira Pohl (Computer Science), Kip Tellez (Education), and Anthony Tromba (Mathematics), with opening remarks from CEP Chair Tracy Larrabee and COT Chair Charlie McDowell.

Winter Quarter: *Educational Technology Tradeshow*

Held on January 30, the “UCSC Educational Technology Trade Show” gave faculty, staff, and students the opportunity to view hands-on innovative pedagogical technologies in action. Experts in a variety of disciplines demonstrated educational technologies such as tablet augmented teaching, interaction with remote students via Adobe Connect, completely online courses, and resources for educational filming, as well as ways that University Extension Silicon Valley can help with the design and implementation of online courses. Presenters included Frank Bauerle (Mathematics), Michael Chemers (Theater Arts), Alan Christy (History), Gabriel Elkaim (Computer Engineering), Brent Haddad (Environmental Studies), Tracy Larrabee (Computer Engineering, Chair of CEP), Charlie McDowell (Computer Science, Chair of COT), Director of Learning Technologies Jim Phillips, and University Extension Dean Lynda Rogers.

Spring Quarter: *Panel Discussion on Online Education*

A large audience of faculty, staff, and students gathered on April 26, 2013, for the year’s final event: a spirited panel discussion on the big questions surrounding online education such as how it might change the role of the professor, the risks to faculty intellectual property, how the success of courses might be assessed, and who will determine those measures. Much of the discussion took place within the context of UCSC’s recent contract with Coursera. Panelists included: Campus Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Alison Galloway, Coursera Co-founder Daphne Koller, UCSC Professors Robert Meister (History of Consciousness), Rodney Ogawa (Education), and UCSC student Matthew Hong from the organization “New School.” Deputy Editor for the San Francisco *Chronicle* Lois Kazakoff moderated the discussion.

Re-Envisioning the Center for Teaching and Learning

Excellent teaching is necessary for ensuring that our students leave UCSC prepared for lives rich in intellectual pursuit, and well placed to compete in the job market. Members re-envisioned the now defunct Center for Teaching and Learning, developing a plan to reboot the Center in a way that can produce measurable results at improving teaching and learning, and doing so within a budgetary framework that reflects ongoing uncertainties. The new vision for a Center, renamed the Center for Transformative Learning, would build upon UCSC’s strengths by focusing on the transformative learning experience. The Center would provide training for faculty and graduate students, research new pedagogical and technological tools, and disseminate best teaching practices. In doing so, the committee’s expectation is that the Center would quickly emerge as the body for fostering leadership and support for teaching excellence on campus, improving upon the successes in teaching for which UCSC is known.

In the spring quarter, the committee made progress on developing a case statement for funding the Center for Transformative Learning that will be presented to University Relations and administrators in summer and fall. Ensuring that the campus provides meaningful support for teaching and learning will continue to be a top priority for COT in 2013-14.

On the topic of supporting teaching excellence, it was duly noted by the committee that Instructional Improvement Program (IIP) grants, suspended since 2011-12, are a critical component for faculty to improve their pedagogical practices. As is well documented, these grants have had a direct impact on the campus by providing support for major initiatives that are consistent with campus priorities: developing interdisciplinary courses, mentoring graduate

students in teaching pedagogy, implementing the use of eCommons in courses, and much more. While uncertainties regarding the budget remain, new technologies present faculty with opportunities to improve student learning, and the committee encourages administrators to further consider the importance of instructional improvement grants by lifting the suspension and strategically funding targeted grant proposals.

UCSC Contract with Coursera to offer Online Courses

In February 2013 the UCSC administration signed a contract with the for-profit company Coursera to offer free online courses to the public. The partnership has the potential to expand the reach and impact of UCSC faculty, as well as further democratize higher education. Unfortunately, the Senate was not provided with a meaningful opportunity to review and discuss the contract before it was signed, prompting committee members to argue that campus principles of shared governance were violated. While the committee reached a consensus on this point, individual member responses to the contract with Coursera varied from little concern about its implications for teaching and learning, to great concern that UCSC's movement into online education will fundamentally alter the university experience. Many of the committee's concerns about online education were articulated into questions that were raised during the events it held, but given the relative newness of online education, a lack of good data on its effectiveness, and the multitude of approaches to offering online or hybrid courses, many of the discussions provided more questions than answers.

Following the administration's announcement that three courses had been approved for the Coursera platform, the committee raised concerns about how faculty and courses were being selected and strongly recommended that the Senate, and COT, be involved in the process. The committee's role would be to ensure that the pedagogical merits of the courses are such that UCSC can be proud to broadly distribute them. The COT chair, along with other committee chairs, took similar concerns to the Senate Executive Committee and strongly argued for targeted Senate review of Coursera course proposals.

Excellence in Teaching Awards

Each year the Committee on Teaching selects faculty to receive Excellence in Teaching Awards. Given in spring, the awards honor UCSC faculty who have demonstrated exemplary and inspiring teaching. Nominations are first submitted by students and then narrowed down by COT for further consideration. COT revised the process this year such that each finalist was asked to submit a statement of teaching philosophy, and a letter of support was solicited from a Department Chair or Divisional Dean. The committee looks for evidence that the nominee has thought deeply about teaching and learning, and effectively applies that thinking in the classroom.

In 2012-13 COT received two hundred and ninety-nine (299) nominations for one hundred and fifty-two (152) faculty. The committee selected seven (7) faculty to receive teaching awards, including the Ron Ruby Award, awarded to a faculty in the Physical and Biological Sciences Division. The Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education hosted an awards ceremony for the recipients on June 11th, at which Chancellor Blumenthal presented the awards. Statements of teaching philosophy from this year's recipients are available on the Academic Senate's website. This year's winners are:

- Raoul Birnbaum, History of Art and Visual Culture;
- Vilashini Cooppan, Literature;
- Shelly Grabe, Psychology;
- Lindsay Knisely, Oakes College & Writing;
- Stefano Profumo, Physics;
- Enrico Ramirez-Ruiz, Astronomy and Astrophysics (Ron Ruby Award);
- Susan Strome, Molecular, Cell and Developmental Biology.

The committee congratulates the 2012-13 recipients!

Advising the Academic Senate

A major task for the Committee on Teaching, as for any Academic Senate Committee, is reading, discussing, and formally responding to documents presented to by the Academic Senate or the administration. In 2012-13, these included the following:

- Systemwide Review of the Rebenching Report (October 2012);
- Systemwide Open Access Policy (November 2012);
- Review of Plagiarism Detecting Software for Campuswide Use at UCSC (February 2013).

Work for Next Year's COT

The committee identified several items for continued consideration in 2013-14. These include the following:

- Consulting with University Relations and administrators about funding for the Center for Transformative Learning;
- Taking a leadership role in reviewing Learning Management Systems that might replace eCommons;
- Querying faculty to learn more about what support for teaching is being offered by departments and/or divisions;
- Review how funds are being allocated, if at all, to support teaching (e.g., for online course development) and make recommendations for how best to allocate funds;
- Study the impact that years of budgetary cuts have had on undergraduate pedagogy at UCSC.

Respectfully submitted;

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