

COMMITTEE ON TEACHING
Report on the Center for the Advancement of Teaching

To: Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division

At the Senate meeting on November 7, 2014, the Committee on Teaching (COT) presented the report, 'Reinvesting in Teaching at UCSC¹.' This report highlighted the parlous state of support for pedagogy here at UCSC: the Center for Teaching and Learning has been lost to budget cuts, the Instructional Improvement Grant program has been eliminated, and the Excellence in Teaching Awards were scheduled to be defunded. Over the last several years, the central administration has eliminated almost all funding to support the central mission of instruction on the UCSC campus. Current support for teaching is either siloed in departments and divisions (e.g., some departments or divisions provide T.A. training while others do not), or is earmarked for particular kinds of instructional support (e.g., the Faculty Instructional Technology Center supports the use of technology in the classroom but is not integrated with any other unit that offers more general pedagogical support).

After delivering this report, COT heard widespread support from Senators, Deans, Provosts, Graduate Students and others for the re-establishment of a service center focused on teaching. Many Senators were dismayed by the lack of support for teaching on campus and thought that such a center is a necessary component for any institution that sees itself as bearing an "uncommon commitment to undergraduate education"; others thought that such a center was needed in the light of challenges posed by changing student demographics and lack of preparation for incoming students in high schools; others thought that a teaching center was needed given the campus' commitment to graduate growth, with the attendant needs on training graduate students to teach. COT thus set itself to the task of re-establishing a Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT) at UCSC.

We began by meeting with several campus units (e.g., the Writing Program, the Library, and the Faculty Instructional Technology Center) and developing a new website teaching.sites.ucsc.edu, where instructors can access information about, and resources for, supporting excellence in teaching. These units, especially the Writing Program, graciously shared many resources that they had already developed that we've posted on the website. We've also posted both long and short versions of videotaped interviews with recent winners of Excellence in Teaching Awards, along with their syllabi and statements about teaching. The website models the type of peer-to-peer teaching support that we hope will flourish within a new center dedicated to pedagogical support at UCSC. Most of the work developing the website has been undertaken by Nadia Mufti, a Chancellor's Undergraduate Intern, under the direction of the Committee and its staff. With a new Chancellor's Undergraduate Intern next year, this work will continue.

The COT realizes that a website is useful, but not sufficient, to meet the needs of the campus regarding instructional support. Therefore, the COT has drafted a proposal to establish a Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT) with a three-year development plan so that it will be fully funded and operational by 2018. This proposal was created in consultation with a wide

¹ This report can be viewed at - <http://senate.ucsc.edu/senate-meetings/agendas-minutes/2014-2015/2014-november-7-senate-meeting/1773%20-%20COT%20Reinvesting%20in%20Teaching%20at%20UCSC.pdf>

range of stakeholders on campus, including the Faculty Instructional Technology Center (FITC), the Library, the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (VPAA), the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies (VPDGS), College Provosts, Deans, Department and Program Chairs, committees within the Academic Senate and the Senate Executive Committee. This proposal is not meant to re-create the old Center for Teaching and Learning, but rather to address the current pedagogical needs of the campus in a creative and robust fashion.

The purpose of the proposal is to establish the infrastructure for CAT that will improve teaching and bolster the student learning experience through (1) developing and maintaining readily accessible resources dedicated to best practices and excellence in teaching, (2) providing assistance and resources to faculty and graduate students for developing or restructuring courses and syllabi, (3) aiding faculty and TAs at UCSC by providing resources, networking opportunities, mentoring, and general teaching assistance and consultation, (4) creating opportunities to develop communities of practice dedicated to excellence in teaching through peer-to-peer interactions, organizing workshops and other events, and (5) facilitating inquiry into teaching excellence.

The committee determined that the “human” aspect of this proposal is essential. At the center of CAT will be a full-time Professional Development Coordinator who will create a safe environment in which faculty, instructors and graduate students can focus on teaching improvement. We envision that this person will facilitate mentoring and networking opportunities, help instructors develop inclusive classroom climates, assist in the use of technology for teaching, provide advice in course design, and answer specific questions that arise regarding teaching. This kind of confidential teaching support, outside the scope of promotion or tenure, was consistently identified as the most important aspect of this proposal.

In addition to the Professional Development Coordinator, a fully-staffed center would include a member of the Academic Senate who will serve as Faculty Director to facilitate the overall vision for the Center and spearhead development efforts, a Graduate Student Fellow to mentor TAs and GSIs, and a Graduate Student Researcher to engage in research regarding innovations in teaching and assessment, both on campus and in the pedagogical literature. The CAT will also host events, institute mentoring programs, and award grants for instructors to develop and explore innovations in teaching.

The committee met with CP/EVC Galloway in April to discuss a draft of this proposal and is continuing to work with her office and other campus stakeholders to develop this center. Support from faculty seems clear. In a survey of Departmental and Program Chairs (38% return rate), 79% indicated that reestablishing a center for teaching on campus was either important or very important. While the committee is optimistic about the reception its proposal has received in general, we understand that it is competing for scarce campus resources. The proposal, as it is currently written, costs approximately the same amount as the previous center. However, we are waiting for a cost estimate from the Office of Planning and Budget. We hope that the administration will reinvest in teaching at UCSC, but we have not yet received a firm commitment of resources.

At the November 7 meeting, the COT was pleased to hear the administration announce that the Excellence in Teaching Awards would receive continued funding. COT is now adjudicating

these awards for 2014-15 but notes that the full funding for these awards has not yet been transferred to the Senate's account.

Finally, COT would like to note that it did not intend to suggest, in its previous report, that the FITC cannot offer any pedagogical support to faculty. The committee would like to submit for the record the following letter, written by the staff of the Faculty Instructional Technology Center and given to COT:

“On October 24, 2014 the COT issued a report on Reinvesting In Teaching at UCSC. This report summarizes the committee's concerns about the lack of support for the teaching mission at UCSC and includes a variety of examples to illustrate this concern, making the case for renewed focus on instructional development and excellence.

In the course of arguing this point, the report makes reference to FITC support for the integration of technology into teaching, which correctly reflects the FITC's core mission. However, the report goes on to cite an absence of pedagogical knowledge within the FITC and an inability for the staff to provide pedagogical support to instructors and graduate students, which may leave readers of the report with an incorrect impression regarding FITC staff and resources.

While providing pedagogical support and direction is not the primary function of the FITC, the FITC staff has skills in instructional design and education and is committed to ensuring that effective teaching is achieved in all cases. The FITC focuses on pedagogical intent first, providing assistance in developing and refining those objectives and the strategies for achieving them if needed, and then recommending appropriate enabling technology. While pedagogical development or refinement is not a core service of the FITC, the staff has in the past and will in the future provide support to ensure that teaching and measuring its efficacy are primary considerations.

The FITC agrees with the COT's concerns regarding the gaps in instructional support across the university, and supports the recommendations of the report. We appreciate the acknowledgement by the COT that the choice of words regarding FITC staff was unfortunate, and welcome the opportunity to clarify. We look forward to partnering with COT and others in a renewed emphasis on teaching excellence.”

Respectfully submitted;
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