

## **Committee on Teaching Annual Report 2015-16**

To: Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division

The Committee on Teaching (COT) met every other week throughout the academic year to conduct business regarding 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. It was a busy and highly productive year for the COT. We initiated new policies, helped form a new Center for Innovations in Teaching & Learning (CITL), addressed campus-wide technological changes involving online student evaluations as well as a new Learning Management System (Canvas), developed the COT website as a repository for professional development resources regarding teaching, held a panel discussion on integrating technology into courses, and adjudicated the selection process for recipients of the Excellence in Teaching Awards. A brief overview of the committee's notable work in 2015-16 is provided below.

### **Creating a New Faculty Service Center: The Center for Innovations in Teaching & Learning**

The Committee on Teaching is proud of the part we played in establishing a new professional development center for teaching and learning for the campus, currently known as the Center for Innovations in Teaching & Learning (CITL). Working closely together with the VPDUE and the EVC, the re-establishment of a center focused on innovative teaching and effective learning has been a main focus of COT over the past two academic years. The announcement of firm funding for the new center represents the culmination of these efforts, and also marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter in UCSC's "uncommon commitment" to teaching. CITL's mission is to provide practice-based and empirically sound mentoring and support to faculty, instructors, and graduate students to improve teaching and learning. Teaching support for instructors will be confidential and is not a part of decisions related to continuation of appointment, promotion, or tenure.

At the November 2015 Senate meeting EVC Galloway announced that the Center (based on a joint COT and VPAA proposal submitted in July, 2015) would be funded for three years at approximately \$300,000 per year. Prior negotiations indicated that a base funding level of approximately \$160,000 would likely be sustained indefinitely, and that the additional funds used to "kick-start" the center would fade after three years, creating the need to secure grants and other forms of external funding to sustain the same level of programming.

Sitting at the helm of the Center will be the newly appointed Faculty Director, Professor Jody Greene, who has agreed to serve a three-year term. The COT helped draft the job description, served on the search committee (COT Chair and a member), reviewed the interview questions, and attended the candidate presentation. We are delighted with this appointment and look forward to facilitating the work of CITL as it gets off the ground. Professor Greene, who will report directly to the VPAA, will *sit with* COT in meetings in the coming year.

COT consulted with Keith Brant, the Vice Chancellor for University Relations, in November to identify prospects for grants and fundraising to augment and expand CITL's operations in the future. The VCUR provided various suggestions and has generously offered his staff to assist in CITL fundraising efforts. The Committee discussed the possibility of using the Excellence in Teaching Awards to showcase and publicize teaching among the alumni community as well as with the broader Santa Cruz community. We anticipate that CITL will work closely with COT, the VPAA and the University Relations development staff for guidance and advice on naming the Center, formulating a fundraising plan to appeal to potential donors, and applying for grants and other outside sources of funding.

We were fortunate to have a 2015-16 Chancellor's Graduate Intern, Mecaila Smith, who provided substantial support for developing the CITL by exploring how other centers are organized and what other centers offered, attending conferences to learn about best practices, creating an annotated bibliography of related research, synthesizing the research into "Research Spotlights" and compiling resources for the website [teaching.sites.ucsc.edu]. Her report is attached as an appendix. She was assisted in her efforts to improve the website by the Chancellor's Undergraduate Intern, Leanna Parsons. Leanna also created a brief independent report based on interviews with instructors regarding classroom climate, use of trigger warnings and micro-aggressions in classrooms.

### **Course Evaluation Policy**

In response to a request by the VPAA, the COT, in conjunction with the Academic Senate, has accepted a new policy role that mirrors the role CAFA plays in the admission process; the Committee on Teaching will lead the effort to create policy on course evaluation for instruction in consultation with the VPAA and the following Senate committees: Academic Personnel, Affirmative Action and Diversity, Educational Policy, Graduate Council and the Senate Executive. We have been reading research on this issue and collecting information about different types of course evaluations that go beyond student evaluations of instruction. Developing the policy will take time, and will continue into next year. Preliminary conversations involved recommendations on the following topics: student eligibility to submit an evaluation, timing to pull rosters for evaluation, incentives to improve response rate, and a "statement of principle" to frame and guide the policy.

In the meantime, the campus will be moving to a new online course evaluation system, as the old system was unreliable and the new LMS does not offer this option. The Committee on Teaching has been very involved in this process and several committee members attended the four system demonstrations, participated in discussions and evaluations of systems, and have worked with the campus administration, other committees, and the search committee to find a viable system. Our hope is that such a system will go beyond summative evaluation for personnel actions to facilitate instructor pedagogy. We feel that a new online course evaluation system should be capable of providing instructors with mid-quarter data so that an instructor can make changes within the quarter to facilitate student learning, and allow instructors to learn from whatever data is collected. However, the system with the most flexibility regarding these features was not selected as a finalist. Final selection will be made soon, and will hopefully involve COT.

### **Adoption of a New Learning Management System**

The Committee was asked to provide feedback to the Committee on Information Technology (CIT) request to adopt another learning management system, Canvas. Committee members reviewed CIT's 2014-15 Canvas Research Project Report and the fall 2015 Pilot survey for faculty and students and, after lengthy discussion, had reservations about endorsing a switch from eCommons to Canvas. Nonetheless, after further consultation with the Senate Executive Committee and CIT, the Committee agreed that it was best to move toward acquiring a new system given eCommons' deteriorating support environment. COT and CIT have made the following recommendations to the CPEVC to ensure the transition from eCommons to Canvas will be as smooth as possible:

- 1) at least a one-year period in which faculty and instructors have access to both eCommons and Canvas to migrate content from one platform to the other
- 2) provision of the highest level of technical support available from Canvas, with online support for faculty and staff
- 3) employment of student workers to assist with troubleshooting during the changeover
- 4) easy and convenient opportunities for faculty to be introduced to the new system
- 5) possible incentives for early adoption

These recommendations were made in a letter to the EVC and at the May Senate meeting.

### **Forum on Teaching Innovation**

On January 13, 2016, The Committee on Teaching hosted a panel discussion and presentation focusing on the use of technology in the classroom, *Innovations in Teaching with Technology*. Nadini Bhattacharya (Mathematics) demonstrated her approach to active learning in teaching a large introductory mathematics class (~400 undergraduate students), Jenny Lynn (Classical Studies) discussed using online quizzes to guide student reading and test student comprehension and Aaron Zachmeier, Academic Affairs Instructional Designer and Leslie Kern, FITC Operations Manager provided an overview of the services and technology available to support faculty in developing online and hybrid instruction. This event was sparsely attended, although the video<sup>1</sup> of the session is available. For future events, the COT would recommend greater publicity in multiple venues [e.g., newsletter, blog, email announcements to department managers, posters, etc.], better timing for the event, developing "buzz" surrounding the event with a controversial topic or a more interesting title, and a larger outreach effort, especially to new faculty and graduate students.

In the future, COT anticipates that forums on teaching innovation will be joint ventures with CITL. We have asked the ETA winners to join us in presentations, and have volunteer professors [e.g., Professor Brad Olsen] who are willing to share their expertise with the UCSC community.

### **Excellence in Teaching Awards**

As a result of agreements reached last year, COT and the Academic Senate now have administrative oversight of the Excellence in Teaching Awards (ETA). In adjudicating these awards, we look for evidence that the nominee has thought deeply about teaching and learning, and effectively applies that thinking in the classroom. Beginning this year, new policies have

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<sup>1</sup> The video may be viewed at - <http://senate.ucsc.edu/senate-meetings/senate-forums/2016-January-13-forum-on-teaching-with-tech.html>

been implemented regarding the timing of student nominations, and the type of awards given. In the past, student nominations were collected once a year. Beginning with the 2015-16 Excellence in Teaching Awards, the committee solicited nominations at the end of each quarter so that the nominations would not unfairly favor faculty and instructors who teach at the time of the nomination.

This practice resulted in a record number of nominations - 619 nominations for 350 different instructors - almost three times as many nominations as we've seen in previous years. We see this as evidence of the strong commitment by UCSC faculty and instructors to their students and their teaching.

The criteria for the selection of the ETA winners is student nominations, augmented by statements of teaching philosophy from the finalists, and letters of support from department chairs. All members of the COT were allowed to weigh in on the selection of the candidates. After much deliberation, the Committee selected nine instructors to receive teaching awards, including the Ron Ruby Award, awarded to a faculty member in the Physical and Biological Sciences Division. An additional four candidates were chosen to receive letters of Honorable Mention. We plan to continue to offer Honorable Mention letters to recognize excellence given the breadth of the field of candidates. Chancellor Blumenthal presented the awards to the ETA recipients at a luncheon hosted by the Chancellor's Office at the Arboretum.

The ETA recipients have been asked to participate in a forum on teaching, to be recorded for the website, and to help with publicity in the 2016-2017 year as part of the award. For more information about each recipient, please see the Tuesday Newsday story about the ETA.<sup>2</sup>

#### 2015-16 Excellence in Teaching Awards

- Caitlin Binder, Chemistry - Ron Ruby Award
- Dean Mathiowetz, Politics
- Douglas Bonett, Psychology
- Faye Crosby, Psychology
- Glenn Millhauser, Chemistry
- Matthew Lasar, History
- Melissa Sanders-Self, Literature
- Richard Mitchell, Mathematics
- Tracy Larrabee, Computer Engineering

#### Letters of Honorable Mention

- Aaron Meininger, Economics
- Michael Rexach, Molecular, Cell and Developmental Biology
- David Bernick, Biomolecular Engineering
- Patrick Tantalo, Computer Science

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<sup>2</sup> This story may be viewed at - [http://news.ucsc.edu/2016/06/teaching-awards.html?utm\\_source=06-07-2016&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=tuesday-newsday](http://news.ucsc.edu/2016/06/teaching-awards.html?utm_source=06-07-2016&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=tuesday-newsday)

Members of COT met with, and contributed to, the following university subcommittees:

- Classroom Committee
- Advisory Committee on IT
- Course Evaluation Committee
- Online Education Course Review Committee

In addition, we sent out a notice to the campus community regarding course integrity, material and intellectual property, provided a presentation at the new faculty orientation, and presented written feedback on various issues to the Academic Senate and other groups on campus, including:

- Vice Provost & Dean of Undergraduate Education Standard Time Slots Proposal
- Pilot of Seat-less Class Sections by Computer Engineering Department

### **Upcoming Agenda for 2016-17**

The amount of work done by the Committee was difficult to complete in 90 minutes every other week. Therefore, we have increased the time commitment for our meetings to 120 minutes in the upcoming year.

We recommend several priorities for next year. Foremost, we are eager to partner with the Center for Innovations in Teaching and Learning in facilitating the teaching agenda on campus. We anticipate significant involvement in helping to launch this new center, coordinating faculty development efforts with the Faculty Director and participating in the hiring of the Professional Development Coordinator. Secondly, we need to formulate the policy around course evaluations, working with the VPAA and other committees and ascertaining that the new system is compatible with our recommendations. Ensuring a smooth transition for faculty and instructors from eCommons to Canvas as a Learning Management System will also occupy the committee, as will the transition to a new student evaluation system. The committee will need to keep abreast of developments in both arenas.

An area of concern that we were not able to address this year involves the way in which decisions are made that impact pedagogy without sufficient consideration for the impact on instruction. An example is the configuration of large lecture halls, online delivery of courses that degrade the interpersonal teacher/student relationship, and increases in class size due to budget constraints. Decisions based on student overcrowding and a lack of resources do not adequately consider how people actually learn and important pedagogical issues. We have communicated these concerns to CEP and will hopefully meet with a representative from CEP in the coming year to discuss them further. We intend to present a white paper on pedagogical issues to the senate that discusses how people learn and crafts an argument for paying attention to pedagogy in decisions about class size and resource allocations.

In addition, we will continue to adjudicate the ETA and to provide input into issues regarding classroom climate and scheduling, as we see these as ongoing concerns.

Respectfully Submitted;  
COMMITTEE ON TEACHING

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