

Minutes of University Council on Teaching
Monday, February 16, 2009

Present: Sue Barrett, Chris Hepburn (chair) Rita Olivieri, Virginia Reinburg, Akua Sarr, Lad Tobin, Pete Wilson, Pat DeLeeuw, Don Hafner

Minutes taken by Rita Olivieri

Minutes from 12/ 15 approved.

The topic of the meeting was grade inflation. Draft 2 of UCT Preliminary report on grade inflation was discussed.

1. Murphy Report discussion.

Don Hafner discussed Graph, page 5, and noted two problems. GPA's rising with static SAT. Rise in GPA is higher than rising SAT.

Discussion ensued about how to communicate this to faculty and students. Can presentation of grade information be given to faculty without labels that identified course/ faculty names? The data demonstrates that students in some majors/ schools receive a higher percentage of A's and A-'s than other majors/ schools. This can be considered a fairness issue when student in departments that generally give fewer A's have less chance of honors or other benefits.

2. Specific suggestions for report:

Discussion of incentive issues for faculty. Recommendation was made to include the paragraph on faculty incentives in the introduction section.

Suggestion was made to include one sentence in introduction that suggests that each school/ department talk about grades in context of goals.

Questions would include:

What is your objective in giving that grade? (under bullets)

In the argument against grade compression suggestion would be to add– “it is difficult to distinguish between students if Average grade is B+. “

Could data be presented that would distinguish undergraduate and graduate grades? Point was made that some undergrads and grads can take the same course thus this data difficult to prepare.

Benchmarks for grades would be included. Printout could be organized by class, and then each department would find own data.

Annual report for faculty will eventually be web- based. The information can therefore be tracked more easily and faculty and chairs/ deans can have a conversation about grades.

3. Discussion of ACC funds led by Sue Barrett.

The ACC has allocated funds (\$40,000) to be dedicated to programs that will enhance teaching and learning. The programs should involve faculty and undergraduate students.

Sue Barrett asked for suggestions on program development.

Ideas of the group included asking students what they think good teaching is and the development of video highlighting student ideas.

Another idea was doing a presentation that would demonstrate the many ways to be an excellent teacher. This could be done by recruiting faculty that are gifted teachers to present a lecture.

Discussion ensued of various methods of program implementation such as web-based presentation or moving the presentation to various campuses.

4. Discussion of Advanced Placement credits.

It is not clear to faculty who actually makes these decisions. It seems to be the administration, but at what level?

It seems to be different for each department and not clear how decisions are made. For example, AP is not equivalent to first science core. Students may AP out of calculus. In relation to Core, what do we mean by core if we accept the AP as core? Is there a disconnect?

In language and writing courses student should demonstrate work at an increasing level. If students AP out of a core in Science do they then have to take another science course.

Discussion about self motivated students and how AP placements allow them to take higher level courses or double majors.

Can department determine what they accept for major (in regards to core).

Mary French, from Admissions, will be coming to next meeting.

5. Teaching Award

General discussion related to teaching award. The idea of a Teaching Award being given at Commencement was presented by Pat Deleeuw and discussed by the group.