

**University Council on Teaching
Meeting of Tuesday, December 8, 2020
12:30-2:00, Zoom Meeting
Meeting Minutes**

Attendees: Billy Soo, Jeff Cohen, Julia Devoy, Kathleen Bailey, Kristin Heyer, Patricia Tabloski, Sara Castricum, Shaylonda Barton, Stacy Grooters, Kim Humphrey, Robert Bloom, Jessica Black, Dan Daly, Sylvia Sellers-Garcia

The meeting opened with a discussion of the launch of the CTE's virtual Course Preparation Retreat to be held January 11-14, 2021. The retreat will provide structure for faculty and teaching fellows to work on course preparation for spring semester in conversation with colleagues. Given the high level of interest, the CTE has increased the number of spots and a waiting list is being generated. UCT members agreed to spread the word about the retreat to their departments and schools.

The committee then moved to discuss TAM grants and assessment related proposals. The committee had previously agreed to allow assessment proposals to qualify for TAM awards and added language to that effect to the website. The question was debated whether to add examples of assessment projects for clarification. It was decided that two examples would be added to the TAM website. It should be clearly explained that these examples are not meant to be an exhaustive list of grant proposals, so as to not disincentive faculty from suggesting other projects.

Stacy Grooters offered to hold "office hours" at the CTE for faculty to get feedback on their TAM grant proposals before submitting them. Committee members were enthusiastic about this idea, and set a deadline of February 1st for submission to give time for a detailed review. The announcement will be made in the next CTE newsletter.

The committee also agreed to extend the deadline for TAM proposals to March 1st due to the altered academic calendar. The deadline for chairs and division director evaluation will be extended to March 8th, and deans evaluations will be due by March 15. The TAM subcommittee will announce approved projects by April 1st.

The meeting then moved to the UCT's focus over the past several months: teaching modalities. A survey was sent to faculty in mid-November and six focus groups met in the weeks thereafter.

Much of the discussion from the focus groups was centered around the difficulty of establishing community during Covid and its importance in the life of both faculty and students. Faculty agreed that community is what makes BC unique and modalities achieve this community very differently. Most instructors felt that fully remote or fully in person modalities were better than hybrid classes in building a sense of community.

Another faculty focus group found that the more efforts the instructors made to build sense of belonging in particular units or classes, the better the outcome seemed to be. The academic performance of students seemed to improve when there was an emphasis on building

collaborative experiences. Most faculty felt that they had learned more technical skills throughout the semester and that next semester may be much better as far as technology is concerned. Faculty also experienced significant stress regarding whether students are engaged enough and what can be done to increase engagement. Switching modalities was very challenging among both faculty and students.

Another committee member shared that the focus group she facilitated discussed ways in which the current academic situation has forced them to come up with more creative teaching methods and these non-traditional forms have been successful. Several instructors commented that they would continue some of these non-traditional methods even after Covid. Many instructors expressed a need for more opportunities to talk about similar challenges and stressors and share ideas about what works. Many committee members agreed that faculty who attended focus groups were grateful that such sessions were convened. More discussion groups of this sort could be created for instructors to share ideas on teaching in Covid, compare notes on best practices, or simply support one another.

A question was raised regarding whether the volunteers for the focus groups were too heavily populated by especially-active teachers, thus not reflective of the wider faculty body. It was confirmed that 211 faculty responded to the survey out of a thousand faculty. In addition, it was confirmed that the respondents were proportionate to the distribution of faculty among school.

One common concern expressed by many focus group participants was the difficulty of using technology especially in hybrid/hopscotch courses. In response, a committee member suggested that more technological support for faculty teaching in this modality should be offered. This might involve someone from IT or Classroom Support coming to classes to assist in setting up Zoom, projectors, power point and so on. Another difficulty faced by those teaching hybrid courses is the lack of engagement of the students on Zoom. One focus group participant noticed that quiz scores for those on Zoom were consistently lower than students in person.

A question was raised regarding how groups would be divided. A committee member suggested that it be organized based on time available, whether members were looking for something similar or different, faculty strengths and weaknesses, and areas of challenge. In addition, cohorts should decide how they want to spend their group stipend. This would allow greater freedom and independence for the groups and the optimization of the given stipend.

In regards to the creation of faculty cohorts to discuss teaching during Covid, the committee agreed that select members would draft a plan for how the groups would be organized, how selection would take place, and whether there might be a stipend for participation. This would be submitted to the UCT to be reviewed.

It was agreed by the committee that these support groups would be ready by the first week in January. This date would be optimal since course evaluations would be back for professors since this could determine what they are more interested in.

Respectfully Submitted,
Peter Pinto

