

**University Council on Teaching
Meeting of Tuesday, February 9, 2021
12:30-2:00, Zoom Meeting**

Meeting Minutes

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Robert Bloom, Sylvia Sellers-Garcia, Daniel Daly, Kathleen Bailey, Patricia Tabloski, Jeffery Cohen, Jessica Black, Stacy Grooters, Danielle Taghian, John Devoy, Kristin Heyer, Jacqueline Lerner, Peter Pinto

The meeting opened with a discussion centered around the 2021 Course Preparation retreat. Stacy Grooters emphasized that this was not an attempt to replicate the summer teaching retreat that has been held off campus. However, the spirit of the event was similar. Of the 26 people who registered 21 attended and there was a good representation of departments across the board. The retreat focused on providing faculty both structure and a community to help them increase productivity and comfort level with the current teaching circumstances. While a member noted that the virtual format allowed more people to join who wouldn't normally, the consensus was that participants would like to be able to personally get away together.

A committee member then questioned whether there could be two retreats: one over Zoom and one off campus? After brief discussion, the committee determined that two retreats is a good idea that will be pursued in the future.

Stacy then discussed updates to spring programs and the continuation of teaching roundtables. They are hoping that as the semester progresses, conversations will shift to the creation of new projects and events. The University will continue to offer mid-semester feedback services as was done last semester. However, they have not begun to plan the Excellence in Teaching Day (ETD) yet. Typically, this planning would be occurring currently, however, due to the demands of training sessions for the new modalities during Covid, the CTE has delayed ETD planning and will most likely scale back the event.

The meeting then moved to the topic of mid-semester feedback forms. A committee member raised the question of whether this practice should be continued this semester, upon which the majority of the committee affirmed. A question was then raised regarding whether to keep the questions the same. The questions were relatively simple last semester, however, there was an option for instructors to add their own customized question. The two primary questions were: (1) What is helping you learn in this course and (2) what changes in the instruction could help you learn better?

A committee member then suggested that the advantage of keeping the questions the same is that they can be used as a basis of comparisons for different semesters of instruction. The committee agreed and proposed to keep the questions the same as long as possible. The more they become automated and natural the more faculty/students will more comfortably fill them out.

The use rate of faculty for mid-semester feedback was 30%. Of the faculty who used them, 33% of the students responded. The committee agreed that 30% is a fairly good participation rate, especially since this is a new instrument. It can be safely assumed there is another 10-20% of faculty who do their own version of mid-semester feedback. The highest student response rate was from STM and CSON with 39% each.

The committee then moved to discuss dates by which the mid-semester feedback forms should be sent out. Although the week of March 22nd is the technical middle of this semester, it was decided to send them earlier so faculty have time to adjust their courses based on student responses. The committee decided to request that Student Services send the mid-semester feedback survey opt-in email to instructors in the last week of February with a deadline to opt-in of March 1. The survey will be open to students between March 8-18.

Lastly, the committee then moved to the final topic of discussion: Course evaluations. The committee viewed a logistical analysis of course evaluations, specifically emphasizing the results of Question 6 (how good is this course?) and Question 14 (how good is the instructor?).

According to the results, students tended to be more lenient as they understood the struggles of faculty during Covid adjusting to new modalities and technologies, and seemed to be very appreciative of the effort made by faculty over the past two semesters. By modality, in person classes were graded by the students as the most effective, online synchronous was second, followed by hybrid and online asynchronous. Graduate student opinion was in line with undergraduate. Nonetheless, instructor effectiveness ratings remained high: the mean for each school was in the range of 4.2-4.5. In addition, the results showed that the larger the class size, the lower the rating on both effectiveness and instructor.

A committee member indicated that her own classes reflected the data shared. She was originally worried because students had confessed that even in classes they liked, by the end of the semester they were having difficulty staying interested due to the learning mode or Zoom fatigue. It was suggested that the committee prepare a Covid impact statement.

Respectfully Submitted,
Peter Pinto