**University Council on Teaching**

**27 February 2013 Meeting**

**Waul House Presentation Room**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Sarah Beckjord (chair), Michael Martin, Julian Bourg, Jeff Cohen, Sue Barrett, Martin Summers, Dorothy Jones

**Guests:** Don Hafner, Pat DeLeeuw

Meeting began at 9:12

Minutes were changed to reflect that they were prepared by Vidya Madhavan and approved.

Don Hafner began by making a presentation on the university’s Alcohol Task Force Report, which found high rates of binge drinking among Boston College students. He acknowledged that there was possible distortion of the data but pointed out that the report’s recommendations on the role of the faculty in reducing a culture of drinking were valid on larger pedagogical grounds. Grade inflation doesn’t allow students to recognize what they are good at; nor does it incentivize faculty to read student work carefully. He pointed to the vast discrepancy between departments in the awarding of A’s and A-minuses and also acknowledged that there has been some improvement between 2008 and 2012. Nonetheless, grade inflation is still a problem at BC. The task force report was put before the Council of Deans, which will ask department heads to rank recommendations. Don posed the larger question: How can the UCT shape recommendations from the classroom perspective?

There was general discussion of the data on grade inflation and whether or not grading data should be released to the general faculty. The committee considered the question of whether it would be helpful if the UCT produced an overall statement with recommendations aimed at reducing the awarding of A’s by a certain percentage. The consensus of the committee was that there is not a one-size fits all model. Departments need to handle it themselves in ways that take into account the mix of part-time faculty, junior and senior faculty, and graduate instructors. However, the UCT can develop a set of guidelines and goals to guide departmental conversations.

There was further discussion about what faculty/departments can do to address grade inflation as well as culture of binge drinking on campus. Important points that were made include:

1) A firm statement should be made by the Deans and Provost that the university is behind more rigorous grading. Departments should not be punished for losing students as a result of lower grading.

2) We need to take into account courses that include practicum or performance. A “C”, for instance, would not be a good mean for courses that have a practicum component.

3) Faculty should be aware of specific days that are associated with heavy drinking and tailor their syllabi and course assignments to disrupt the rhythms of student drinking.

4) Students have gotten better over the past several years but faculty expectations have remained flat. Faculty expectations need to be changed.

5) Smaller classes might encourage more rigorous grading. The university should also intervene earlier in order to prevent the formation of bad habits, such as drinking during football games.

6) The committee should encourage deans to back up attendance policies in classes.

Sarah Beckjord proposed to draft a set of recommendations addressing grade inflation in light of the Alcohol Task Force Report. It was impressed upon Sarah the need to foreground the issue of academic freedom in the recommendations (i.e. “We are not telling you how to teach your class, but . . .”). The importance of including language about accountability was also mentioned. She will circulate these recommendations among the committee.

Moving on to other business, two subcommittees for TAM and technology grants were formed. The TAM subcommittee is Sarah Beckjord, Dorothy Jones, Jeff Cohen and Martin Summers. The Innovative Technology subcommittee is Julian Bourg, Sue Barrett, Pat DeLeeuw, and Sarah Beckjord.

Sarah proposed a new agenda item. Although the university does have a sexual harassment policy, it does not currently have a policy that sets guidelines for the appropriate relationship between faculty members and students (both graduate and undergraduate). Sarah proposed that the committee study these kinds of policies that exist at other universities, select a few and send them on to the Provost. The committee agreed.

There will be two more general meetings of the committee. There will be a meeting on March 20 from 9-10:30. A lunch meeting was tentatively scheduled for May 7th.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:40

Minutes prepared by Martin Summers