

**Provost's Advisory Council
Summary of April 29, 2010 meeting**

Bert Garza	Ana Martinez Aleman	Dick Clifford, S.J.
Pat Byrne	Rosanna DeMarco	Callista Roy
Pat DeLeeuw	Don Hafner	Ce Shen
Elyce Purcell	Hassan Tehranian	Amy Hutton
Lillie Albert	Tom Wall	Paul Lewis
Brian Jacek	Francine Cardman	Mike Moore (for Jim Russell)
Anna Rhodes	John Spinard	Anita Tien
Katie O'Dair	Anthony Annunciato	
Gilda Morelli	Marilyn Matelski	

1. The summary for the meeting of March 25, 2010 was approved and will be sent to the President's Office. All summaries are posted on the Provost's Office website; members are encouraged to share the summary with colleagues.
2. Chris Hepburn, Chair of the University Committee on Teaching, joined Council for a discussion about evaluating teaching across the University.

The UCT has been considering how departments and schools conduct peer review of teaching with the hope of developing some general guidelines that might be established across the University. Topics explored have included annual review of pre-tenure faculty; review of syllabi and teaching materials; submission of the peer review to the department chair; and continuation of peer evaluation for tenured faculty, at an interval to be determined.

- It was observed that peer review includes mentoring of faculty well as evaluation of teaching.
- It was noted that the extent to which individual departments focus on peer evaluation may be influenced by the size of the department.
- Several mentioned that the hiring process is a critical point where departments can emphasize the importance of teaching and assess the teaching ability of candidates. In some departments but not all, candidates are asked to make a research presentation or conduct a seminar for graduate students, and to teach an undergraduate class; students are then asked to provide feedback. As well, some departments require that teaching evaluations be part of the candidates' dossiers.
- In some departments, new faculty are provided with one or more mentors who meet regularly in the early years, but formal evaluation (by non-mentoring colleagues) does not begin until faculty are in their third year.
- It was noted that the tenure process frequently lacks data on teaching apart from student course evaluations, and that the absence of such measures may suggest that the University does not take teaching into consideration in tenure decisions even if this is not the case.
- It was noted that not all teaching takes place in a classroom, and that peer review should include consideration of clinical teaching as well as other models of teaching.

- It was observed that post-tenure review of teaching by tenured faculty is less emphasized by many departments and that there are fewer structures supporting continuing review of teaching.
- It was noted that an important step in assessing teaching effectiveness is clarity about what a department means by “good teaching”; this may vary from discipline to discipline, but the criteria need to be articulated.
- Some cautioned against an overreliance on quantitative data in evaluating teaching. The importance of qualitative information (e.g., comments from students on the course evaluations) was noted.
- It was pointed out that students' expectations are critical elements determining how successful a course or an instructor may be.

3. Provost's Report

- Members of the Council--particularly Pat Byrne as chair of Council--were thanked for their service this past year.
- Latest changes to the draft Sabbatical Leave policy were distributed. Members were asked to review the distributed version (and an electronic version will be provided so that Council members can share it with colleagues) and provide feedback directly to Pat DeLeeuw.
- The building of Stokes Hall and the renovation/refurbishment of Gasson Hall are on target. There will be significant disruptions to the campus during the next eighteen months.
- Admissions reports that students are accepting admission and submitting deposits for incoming class of 2014 at a faster rate than last year. The incoming class continues the trend seen in past years of greater diversity (particularly geographic diversity) and academic ability.
- The University’s accrediting body, NEASC, has made clear that assessment of student learning outcomes will be a continuing expectation. The Provost’s preferred approach is to keep the assessment tasks in the hands of departments and schools, rather than to create a new and potentially cumbersome structure.
- It was reported that this Fall's Opening Days for freshman will include an enhanced academic component programmed by the college and schools.
- Members of Council were asked to urge colleagues to attend Commencement. Faculty are also urged to attend the Baccalaureate Mass on the Sunday prior to Commencement.

The Chair noted that this past year's topics for the Council’s review have included emergency plans for H1N1 and academic continuity; the use of summaries vs. minutes in documenting meetings of the Provost's Advisory Council; the Long Range Financial Plan; teaching awards and teaching assessment; undergraduate pre-major and major academic advising; initiatives adopted by the University Libraries; and financial aid and need-blind admissions.