

University Council on Teaching

Meeting of Monday, January 27, 2020

12:45-2:0, CTE Seminar Room

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Billy Soo, Jeff Cohen, Julia Whitcavitch Devoy, Kathleen Bailey, Kristin Heyer, Patricia Tabloski, Sarah Castricum, Shaylonda Barton, Stacy Grooters, Kim Humphrey

The meeting opened with a discussion of online academic integrity resources from the CTE website. Printed copies of the online resource were distributed at the beginning of the meeting as a reference.

The goal of the academic integrity resources is to provide faculty with resources and frame the problem of academic dishonesty pedagogically instead of as a problem with student deviance. The online reference provides information about planning courses in such a way that they might incite less academic dishonesty.

Committee members expressed support for the resources on the CTE website and the psychological content it entailed.

A question was raised regarding the fact that different Boston College schools have different penalties for academic dishonesty. At the present time, different schools at BC do have different rules, but the undergraduate deans are currently in the process of standardization. The graduate deans of particular programs feel more strongly about their particular integrity processes. Given that different graduate/professional schools (e.g. STM versus the law school) have different beliefs about how to deal with academic dishonesty, it may not be possible to fully standardize academic integrity violations in the graduate realm. It was noted that graduate students mix less with students from other schools in their classwork than undergraduates do, which would reduce the probability of two students receiving different penalties for the same infraction. The process will also be moved to the provost's office in order to prevent students from switching schools to artificially achieve a "clean slate." Another complicating factor is confidentiality: for example, some faculty do not want students who have been academically dishonest to fill out course evaluations, but given that some schools want to keep a student's first violation confidential, this may not be possible in all cases. This would also be an obstacle to the centralization through the provost's office.

It was pointed out that faculty may be deterred from reporting academic integrity violations because students could take it out on the faculty member in the course evaluation. In addition, given that many integrity violations happen at the end of the semester, it may not be possible to close a given student's academic dishonesty 'case' before course evaluations occur. The process

of investigating plagiarism is long, but students are notified immediately that they have been reported. As a result, a student could fill out an evaluation while knowing they have been reported but before being ‘convicted,’ and so have means and motive to slander the professor. One suggested solution, to which many committee members responded affirmatively, was that if a student was ‘convicted’ of an academic integrity violation, their course evaluation would be deleted. This would not fully solve the problem, as faculty would still be vulnerable to negative reviews if they mistakenly thought a student had plagiarized.

The meeting next turned to the question of how to spend the \$28,000 left over in the UCT’s budget. First-Year Experience cohorts did not have any ideas to spend the money given the short time frame. One committee member asked about spending the money on an ETD keynote. The ETD keynote is still within budget and would certainly not need the \$28,000 in full, which would allow the group to spend some of the money elsewhere. The conversation then turned to another option: grants to faculty for student-facing projects. The two options were Inclusive Excellence grants and Student Well-being grants. Inclusive Excellence grants were successful last year and Student Well-being grants are a new idea, but a project the UCT has been working on for several months. Inclusive Excellence grants could have an open call this semester, though the time limit is an obstacle given that faculty members would need to spend the money by the end of this fiscal year (by May 15, 2020). Student well-being grants are similar to the inclusive excellence grants and there exists a precedent on how to administer them. Faculty who applied to Inclusive Excellence grants could likely similarly apply to student well-being grants. The final existing option for how to spend the money is support for travel to teaching conferences and workshops, which was rejected..

A new suggestion was then raised: spend the money to provide more support to part-time faculty. This money would add to an existing program, and go to professional development related to their BC teaching, for example purchasing books for classes or attending conferences. Last year, starting in January, this program spent approximate \$8000 in one semester. This year they have already spent \$16,000. Each professor who applies receives up to \$750, so this project would need no more than \$7500-\$10000 additionally for this year. Committee members expressed support for this idea, as these are individuals who do a lot of teaching at BC and find themselves in precarious positions. \$8,000 was approved to fund grants for part-time faculty, and will be administered by the Provost’s Office.

One committee member expressed support for the inclusive excellence grants or student well-being grants, as they align well with BC’s mission. One suggestion was to stagger the deadlines for part-time faculty grants and inclusive excellence/student well-being grants to allocate money for the part-time faculty first and then, if any funds are left over, transfer them to the other grant pool. A subcommittee will be needed to read the grant proposals, and decide on awards.

One committee member asked for an example of something a student well-being grant would fund. Examples were conference funding, dinner with students, or seminars about stress and self-care.

One committee member suggested revising the grant to be called student well-being and student formation. There is an existing grant for research into formative development, but student

formation is broader, and possibly could be more interactive (e.g. dinner). One committee member expressed concerns about faculty only spending money on food or on hiring students. Last year one rule was that the grant could not fund a faculty member's time.

It was decided that \$20,000 would go to grant funding for the student well-being grants, which seems to be the broadest category. The group decided against capping the level of funding given to any one grant. The vice-provost will send out a notice to faculty about this new grant, and it will appear in the CTE newsletter.

Any remaining unspent money could go to ETD, if the full amount is not spent.

Remaining agenda items were postponed to the next meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Mary Jane Porzenheim