

Minutes of the University Council on Teaching
Friday, May 11, 2007
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 PM, Bourneuf House

Present: Chris Hepburn (Chair), Sue Barrett, Mary Joe Hughes, Bill Petri, Fred Yen, Jackie Lerner

Guests: Bert Garza, Provost and Dean of Faculties; Pat De Leeuw, Vice Provost for Faculties

The minutes of April 20th, 2007 were approved by all with minor corrections.

Course Evaluations Update: 60% of online course evaluations were already completed before the start of the exam period.

There was a discussion about what would go public if the online evaluations were published. Here are the general issues that were raised:

- Should only some evaluation information be made public
- Bert remarked that the students will take down the PEPs if BC makes the evaluations available
- The Council of Dean's prefer to go to a system next fall where they see all the information in the evaluations, including the written evaluations- they will give faculty a warning before this happens
- There needs to be a monitoring of student negativity toward profs- making all comments public has the same effect as the PEPs

Fred suggested that different information be given to different audiences and administrators could see all information they need for tenure and promotion decisions

Issues that have to do with our proposed new course questionnaire

- Why a YES/NO response- should we have more options such as a 5 choice format?
- With more choices we may get more accurate responses and can average over more responses
- It was decided to forward the questionnaire as approved by the UCT to the Provost for his action and potential forwarding to the Council of Deans. Any feedback they have will be returned to the UCT.

The UCT recommends that our proposed questions for part A be used and form the basis of the data that may potentially be made available to students.

Issues raised that have to do with the release of the information:

- Discussion during the meeting of questions about the potential bias in the evaluations toward the rating for women and minorities - should we take this

year's data and see if that is true? Is there any group at BC that is rated lower than others? If so, this can be found out and assistance to them can be offered.

- The literature should be reviewed on this issue.
- An internal task force or panel of experts could be set up to review the literature and provide students with the information about rating various groups before the information goes public.
- Students could be invited to a forum where an expert panel goes over the findings and major issues in course evaluations and the potential biases towards certain groups. In addition, an editorial or an article should also be put in the HEIGHTS before the evaluation information goes public so that students can be educated consumers of the information.
- During what point in career development is it most useful to have the information- should we withhold it from the public for the first year a person is on the faculty?
- Students should have access to the information because they are the consumers of the courses, and they can use it as they make decisions on courses.

There would need to be something added to the Faculty Handbook about the release of the course evaluations.

UCT administrative issues:

In the future, UCT committee members will have 3 year appointments made by the Provost's Office after receiving recommendations from Deans.

Other items:

- Bill raised the point about the length of the drop period with respect to space in closed classes. No action was taken.
- The issue of giving credit for Lab courses and sections was raised. This will be an agenda item for next year.

The Chair thanked the UCT members for all of their work and contributions during the past year.