

Minutes of the University Council on Teaching  
Thursday, November 5, 2009  
Waul House

Present: Sue Barrett, Colleen Griffith, Chris Hepburn (Chair), Jackie Learner, Paula Mathieu, Bob Murphy, Akua Sarr, and Pete Wilson

Guests: Vice Provost Don Hafner and Vice Provost Pat DeLeeuw

Next Meeting: Wednesday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, from noon to 1:30.

Recorder: Pete Wilson

## **Overview**

The meeting centered on four topics: (1) an update of last year's activities, (2) discussing potential topics we might explore this year, (3) a preliminary discussion about whether there should be more interdisciplinary teaching at Boston College and if so, what will need to be done to ensure its success and (4) a unanimous vote of support for a university-wide teaching award proposed by Pat DeLeeuw on behalf of the Provost's office.

## **Update on Last Year's Activities**

- Last year the Committee completed a report on grade inflation and compression at BC that was well received by the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees.
- The Committee also completed a report on the increasing pervasiveness and potential consequences of students using Advanced Placement credits to place out of Core courses. This report was shared with the Council of Deans, which was supportive and offered several suggestions.
- The Committee selected recipients for TAM and TAME grants.
- Don Hafner updated the Committee on a course evaluations initiative discussed last year: Beginning with the Fall 2009 registration period, students and faculty in the Boston College community will have access to the computerized summary information of students' responses to course evaluations, for individual faculty members and courses.

## **Potential Topics for This Year**

The following issues were suggested by Committee members as potential topics to examine this year:

- Ways to encourage Interdisciplinary teaching
- Student evaluations of faculty advising
- Additional guidance on specifying graduation criteria in terms of credit hours rather than courses
- Role(s) of adjunct faculty in teaching at Boston College
- Digital intellectual property policy, especially as it pertains to media that capture classroom activities
- Possible revival of the Andover weekends
- Certification for graduate students who successfully complete a voluntary program on teaching skills
- Writing fellows program for writing across the curriculum

### **Interdisciplinary Teaching**

This is a topic the Committee will definitely be examining this year, at the request of the Provost. At issue is whether there is interest in pursuing more interdisciplinary teaching and if so, what must be done to promote and support these courses. The Committee briefly discussed the issue during this meeting to gauge our interest and identify ways to proceed.

Some Committee members shared positive experiences they have had with interdisciplinary teaching at other universities. Generally, the Committee agreed there may be widespread interest among our colleagues in pursuing interdisciplinary teaching, but only if there is adequate support. In particular, the start-up costs for this type of teaching are likely considerably higher than for normal courses, given the need to coordinate across departments and learn diverse paradigms and perspectives.