

Minutes of the University Council on Teaching
Wednesday, December 9, 2009
Waul House

Present: Sue Barrett, Chris Hepburn (Chair), Jackie Lerner, Paula Mathieu, Akua Sarr, Pete Wilson, and Ginny Reinburg

Guests: Vice Provost Don Hafner and Vice Provost Pat DeLeeuw

Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 27, from noon to 1:30.

Recorder: Jackie Lerner

Overview

Except for a few minor topics, the meeting centered on a discussion of interdisciplinary teaching. The minutes of the meeting of November were accepted.

New Business

A proposal to allow Lynch School Students to waive out of core requirements so that they could take courses related to their major was presented to Chris Hepburn by Pat McQuillen and David Scanlon. After a brief discussion it was concluded that the UCT was not the appropriate committee to discuss the proposal and that it was not likely that such a proposal would be adopted by the Core Development Committee. Jackie Lerner was to give this feedback to Pat and David (which I did).

Interdisciplinary Teaching

As was discussed in the last meeting of the UCT, 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.

Here are the additional points that were covered:

- Are there impediments? Some that were mentioned were: Assigning teaching load and credits, organization, class evaluations, how TA's are assigned in core courses.
- Incorporating it into to core courses may be the best route to interdisciplinary teaching.

- Faculty would need release time to engage in a planning phase for the course, and there would need to be a director of interdisciplinary teaching to be the administrator.
- Should we use the TAM grants as a way to get faculty to think about interdisciplinary teaching? We could send an announcement when we send out the TAM grant application to encourage faculty who may have been thinking about this to apply for a planning grant.
- We should talk to those who are already doing it-- such as those who teach in the interdisciplinary minors-- so they can tell us how they make it work and what they are doing..
- We can think of a list of topics and then form a panel of experts on the faculty to come and talk about the topic and how it could be taught in this way. The panel would be sponsored by the Provost's Office and Sue Barrett's Center. Some topics listed were: poverty, the financial crisis, the human genome and implications, global warming.
- We could have a Dover weekend dedicated to interdisciplinary teaching that brings together interested faculty.

We decided that for the January meeting, people who are already doing this kind of teaching will be invited to present on the structure, advantages and impediments to interdisciplinary teaching. That meeting is set for Wednesday, January 27th from 12:00- 1:30.

Evaluation of Faculty Advisors

Don Hafner noted that there was a proposal from the UGBC for regular student evaluations of their faculty academic advisers, through a short questionnaire that students would fill out annually, in a manner similar to the regular course evaluations. He noted that the UGBC representatives would like to work with the UCT on an advisers questionnaire, in a manner similar to their involvement when the UCT crafted a revised course evaluation questionnaire in 2008.