

Minutes of the University Council on Teaching
Friday, April 24, 2009
Waul House

Present: Sue Barrett, Chris Hepburn (Chair), Rita Olivieri, Virginia Reinburg, Lad Tobin, Pete Wilson

Guests: Vice Provost Don Hafner, Vice Provost Pat DeLeeuw, Professor Richard Cobb-Stevens, Director of the Core Committee

Minutes of February and March UCT meetings were approved.

Chris reported on the TAM and TAME grants. Four TAME applications were received and all were funded. Seventeen TAM applications were received, of which 15 were at least partially funded. He clarified that \$5,000 was the total amount of summer stipend for any grant.

Discussion of Advanced Placement Credits

Professor Cobb-Stevens joined the UCT meeting to discuss the affects of AP tests on the core curriculum. Growing numbers of students enter BC with AP scores that allow them to place out of core courses. The UCT is concerned that this may undermine the core and also has questions about who at the university decides whether a test is a suitable replacement for a given course.

Professor Cobb-Stevens pointed out that BC has raised the scores required to place out of core courses. Previously, students could place out of some courses with 3's, but now 4's or 5's are required for all. He also mentioned that many faculty members speak enthusiastically about the high quality of students who come to BC with advanced placement courses.

The UCT is concerned that some students place out of almost the entire core. Professor Cobb-Stevens said that the only courses which are impossible to replace with AP scores are Philosophy, Theology and the Diversity course. A few years ago the core committee considered making a rule that students could receive core credit for no more than 6 courses, meaning they would still have to take 9 core courses at BC. However, student services said that implementing this requirement would be too complicated for their system.

Professor Cobb-Stevens and the UCT discussed possible ways to address the situation. One suggestion would be to say that high AP scores qualify students to take a more advanced course in the subject, rather than not taking any course at all. For example, there could be an honors section of European history for students with a certain AP score. One could also do away with AP credits entirely. This would be unusual, as most universities do recognize AP tests, but BC's core involves much more than the distribution requirements at most schools.

Another possibility is raise the accepted level to a 5 for all AP courses, which would significantly lower the numbers of students testing out of core courses.

The UCT will write a report to the provost on this subject. They hope that the Core Committee will look carefully at AP credits as they consider the upcoming transfer from a course to a credit-based graduation system.

Teaching Awards

Vice Provost DeLeeuw distributed a draft teaching award proposal. (See attachment.) The proposal calls for one large university-wide award, presented at graduation, publicly demonstrating the high value placed on teaching by the university. Students would nominate any faculty member to the Teaching Award Committee, who would then evaluate evidence submitted by the nominees and choose the winner. The winner would be expected to make a public presentation on teaching and to serve on the Teaching Award Committee.

UCT members welcomed the proposal, but had various questions and suggestions. Would it be better to have a number of smaller prizes? Should there be a proportional number of prizes for each school, and one large university prize? Should there be separate prizes for full and part-time faculty? How can we maximize the amount of student involvement in the award?

The Carroll School already has four teaching prizes and Peter Wilson explained that the process of choosing the winner, requiring an in-depth discussion of good teaching, is valuable in itself. Pete will distribute the CSOM guidelines to UCT members.

This discussion will be continued at the next UCT meeting. That meeting will be held on Friday, May 8, from 11:00 to 12:30.

Sue Barrett, recorder.