

Minutes of the University Council on Teaching

Monday, December 15, 2008 1:30-3:00 p.m.

Waul House

Committee members present: Chris Hepburn (chair), Sue Barrett, Jackie Lerner, Virginia Reinburg, Akua Sarr, Lad Tobin, Peter Wilson, Fred Yen.

Also attending: Pat DeLeeuw and Don Hafner.

Akua Sarr recorder. Meeting called to order at 1:35 p.m.

Minutes from 11/24/08 approved with revisions. Akua Sarr, secretary for the day.

1. Discussion of draft report to the provost on grade inflation/compression at BC and recommendations. Some points brought up in discussion include:

A. On Pedagogy:

To take action about grade inflation and not to take any action about pedagogy does not take us to where we want to be as a university. We should consider taking a further look at what we are expecting of our students – and how and if these expectations relates to grade inflation. An amended statement on pedagogy is recommended – and that grade inflation is a sign of a larger systemic problem related to teaching.

B. On Data:

Will releasing the departmental average grade data and school average grade data lead to more grade inflation?

Should we separate undergrad courses from grad courses? Probably too difficult to do given the number of courses with both grads and undergrads enrolled.

Committee decided to leave average for school and for department and release data.

Some questions on data:

1. No A's in Nursing in 2000.
2. More A's than A-s in many schools.
3. Percentage of A's going up in some schools.
4. # A's in Geology in 2008 due to 1 lab course – so data is skewed.
5. Why didn't A&S EPC do anything with recommendations from 2006? Might

introduces the possibility of discussion of differences in the way performance is measured between schools and colleges and departments.

2. Junior faculty in particular would benefit from a discussion about how performance is measured and the norms of grade distribution.

Committee all in agreement with the recommendations and agreed that the data should be distributed to faculty, chairs and deans as a way to start conversations.

Chris Hepburn will make some revisions to document based on discussion.

Don Hafner will send Murphy Report(?) to committee and it will be referred to in report.

We will NOT move toward putting average grade on BC transcripts at this point.

3. Faculty Teaching Awards

We no longer have a teaching award because of problems in the past with communication about what the purpose of the award was and what the expectations were for nominations. There were huge variations in the nomination dossier and most recently, there were very few nominations. Out of the nominations received, no one was determined to be “distinguished.”

So what should we do? Some ideas:

1. Decide the purpose of the award and lay out the process very clearly.
2. Award should build an awareness of teaching among faculty and students – improving the campus dialogue on teaching is key.
3. Recipients could do a campus-wide talk on teaching philosophy, methodology, maybe a talk at commencement, or a seminar.
4. Nominations should come from students and faculty – very important that students be involved.
5. Should be a monetary award – maybe even funded similar to an endowed