

Senate Educational Policies Committee

Meeting Minutes for January 13, 2020

Attendance: Bonneau, Chris (absent); Cecchini, Nicole; Falcione, Bonnie; Hampton, Marian; Horvath, Zsuzsa; Jacqueline, Camille (absent); Dang, Lynn (absent). Kelly, M. Kathleen (absent); Kucinski, Barb; Landsittel, Douglas (excused); Lausberg, Cynthia (absent); Lotz, Andrew (excused); McCarthy, Joseph; Molinaro, Lori (absent); Oh, Eunjoo (excused); Pollini, Lorraine (excused); Rikstad, Pam; Schein, Michelle; Shaver, Kevin; Stoner, John; Vento, Barbara; Urban, Nathan; Wilson, Frank (absent)

Call to Order: the meeting was called to order at approximately 3:00pm by Co-Chair John Stoner.

Approval of Minutes: the minutes were approved pending any edits received by Friday January 17th.

Old Business

- Spring meeting schedule – Co-Chair Stoner reminded that the May meeting is planned as a regular meeting and will be held on the 3rd Monday of the month (May 18th).
- Subcommittee on Religious Observations (Kevin Shaver, Barb Kucinski, and Michelle Schein) - Member Shaver requested that they take more time before updating the committee at a future meeting and the committee agreed.

Updates from Vice Provosts

- Vice Provost Urban reported on the Plan for Pitt (VP Urban is Co-Chair with Vivian Curren from the law school). He updated that 18 workshops were announced for the Plan for Pitt across the university including the Oakland and regional campuses. The first one took place at the Council of Deans the week prior and generated a lot of ideas. He offered that EPC could host a workshop if interested; the committee was very enthusiastic about coordinating this for the upcoming February meeting (with or without VP Urban present). Ultimately six Goal Committees will be formed to gather and prioritize ideas to be in the next Strategic Plan; ideas for members for these committees can be forwarded; the Steering Committee will be forming these at their upcoming meeting. VP Urban also reported on the UCGS Policy that is undergoing revision where the intent is to address how membership is structured and to streamline university policy and practice; policy revisions will be sent to the EPC for review. Lastly, VP Urban updated that a faculty development session on mentoring and assessment will take place on March 3rd. A session on mentoring is also planned for the graduate studies retreat.
- Vice Provost McCarthy reminded that PACUP (Provost's Advisory Committee for Undergraduate Programs) is undergoing policy review. He also reported that there is a new policy being formed on student leave of absence. He described that current practice is that students remain active until not enrolled for 3 consecutive terms and that currently this takes place without a formal process. Ideas for the new policy to address include

availability of a status report, processes for reapplication for reenrollment for medical versus mental health, and involuntary leave of absences when a student is a threat to themselves or others. Discussion was generated including: schools at PITT that already address some of these ideas, whether this policy will apply to both undergraduate and graduate students, that this should address timelines for leave before re-registration and the need for physician/medical clearance versus the pros and cons of allowing students to make these determinations for themselves, the implications of tuition refund after withdrawal on work grants and financial aid, and the possible repercussions on other graduate students for extra teaching requirements due to the medical leave of a fellow graduate student. VP McCarthy noted that this new policy will be sent to the EPC for review. Lastly, VP McCarthy announced that there are two calls for proposals to universities from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute on the topic of inclusivity; one is relevant to the EPC because it asks to look at inclusive teaching and the advancement of teaching. Cynthia Golden will be program director for this and VP McCarthy is lead authoring the submission

- Co-Chair Stoner related events from both the past month's Faculty Assembly and Senate Council meetings. Co-Chair Falcione reported that the next ACIE meeting would be held later this same week.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Guest Speakers:** Cynthia Golden (Associate Vice Provost and Executive Director of the University Center for Teaching and Learning, UCTL) and Michael Arenth (Director of Educational Technologies, UCTL) presented on various aspects and updates pertaining to the UCTL including: physical location in Alumni Hall, the testing center in the Cathedral, the media studios in the IS building, the general areas for provided services (pedagogy, classroom support, online and hybrid learning, academic services) and the staff. Attention was then focused on a detailed update on the new course management system, CANVAS, its timeline for implementation (Summer 2020) and the experience from early adopters in the Fall of 2019 and Spring of 2020 reporting that implementation is going well so far and that surveyed faculty gave positive results. Further details were described for the available training and support to be provided for CANVAS including 24/7 through the vendor, regular hour via the UCTL, resources on the website and via the vendor. CANVAS is currently available to all faculty to test use the environment. A question was posed about the telephone number for vendor support seeming not being readily available on the CANVAS site and the use of rubrics less streamlined than in Bb; these will be looked into. Another question about how long migrating of BlackBoard (Bb)/CourseWeb will be available was asked; faculty are being encouraged to do this as soon as possible however while Bb archives are planned to be available for two years, current access to Bb will go away in June. Another question was posed regarding ongoing study of Bb use as a marker of attrition and how this impact. The committee was reminded that with the change to CANVAS faculty are being reminded that this is a good opportunity to make changes toward adopting best practices and the UCTL is available to assist with this. Additional news and updates for the UCTL were then focused on including: Course Incubator with three initial courses originally supported under past Provost Beason selected (Biology, Chemistry, Economics) with involvement of the LRDC and a new active RFP for a second round supported by Provost Cudd for 2020-2022 and initial selection of proposals (2-tier process) to occur January 15th. Next, the committee was reminded to attend the upcoming Assessment and Teaching Conference on January 24th that will include breakout sessions and keynote speaker

David Laude, a chemistry professor at the University of Texas at Austin, who transformed how he taught large classrooms. The committee asked if the keynote would be recorded; this is planned if permission is granted from the speaker. After this, it was shared that a pilot midterm OMET formative course survey was conducted this year and – of faculty who surveyed students, 88% said they made changes as a result of the survey and 97% of these said they will do this midterm survey for students again. Also, faculty thought students were more forthcoming because they saw the results of the midterm survey being put into effect and thus, they gave more feedback at the end of the term. The committee asked about the survey duration (1 week) and return rate (approx. 60%). The midterm survey is available to all Spring faculty in 2020. After this the committee was apprised of the Technology for Innovation and Exploration Open Lab which is located in Hillman and another lab is located in Alumni Hall. It is a place for faculty and staff to try new technology with a driver for this being students who propose to the instructors if they could do something other than write a paper (for example a 3D creation in virtual reality). Over 1,000 walk-ins and 42 course projects done by faculty. Video clips of examples were played for the committee. Consult requests can be made on the website (Teaching.pitt.edu/open-lab). It was pointed out that for those interested a course has been introduced, Multimedia Bootcamp for Interactive Course Design, which is a full year offering but workshops are offered as well. The remaining updates focused on the upgrades to learning spaces with a recent renovation to CL G8 which just opened in January, upcoming 6th Diversity Institute is planned for this year, and an announcement that Mike Bridges, PhD and an author of the book “How Learning Works” will be the new Director of Teaching Support of the UCTL. The committee was reminded that consults are available for all faculty and are confidential if that is preferred, PITT Online has many courses available, the Teaching partners program is available, and the newsletter can be received by email. Brochures were made available to the committee on the topics of the Course Incubator project, the Assessment and Teaching Conference and the Center for Mentoring.

- **Teaching Loads:** Member Vento described the issue of possible changes to the teaching load in SHRS. Questions surrounding this include if there is a standard across the university and what is the standard, how is this derived and how are changes justified, if there is not a university standard then can there be one? Interest in this by the unionizer was reported. With ongoing requests for innovations in teaching and doing more in general such a change would bring concerns. Suggestions for a formula for teaching load (undergraduate versus graduate) and how service time for committees is counted were made. Co-Chair Stoner pointed out relevance to the Faculty Affairs and the Tenure and Academic Freedom Committees. He also noted that contracts may not specify what is expected of faculty members and variations across units may exist. Co-Chair Stoner recommended that this needs to be watched and to bring this forward with Faculty Affairs once there is something to respond to formally so that it can be explored, noting that a one-size-fits-all is probably not feasible, but as pointed out previously the member expressed unions indicate that it is when unions exist. Co-Chair Stoner indicated this will be added as an old business item for future meetings.

Adjournment: the meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:30pm.