

University of Washington
Faculty Council on Teaching and Learning
December 4, 2014
10:30am – noon
Gerberding 142

Meeting Synopsis:

1. Call to Order
 2. Review of the minutes from November 6, 2014
 3. Discussion with Faculty Senate Chair Kate O’Neill
 4. Learning spaces
 5. Course evaluation results in MyPlan
 6. ASUW initiative – course evaluations and diversity
 7. Adjourn
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1) Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Wilkes at 10:30am.

2) Review of minutes from November 6, 2014

The minutes from November 6, 2014 were approved as written.

3) Discussion with Faculty Senate Chair Kate O’Neill

Faculty Senate Chair Kate O’Neill was in attendance to discuss the council’s role in the Faculty Senate. O’Neill explained that many of the issues that impact FCTL are interconnected with policies across campus, especially policies that impact faculty. O’Neill explained that President Michael Young’s priority for the year is to enhance the undergraduate experience through research and education which this council can play a significant role in supporting by identifying opportunities to improve teaching and learning activities. Examples include investing in technology, developing hybrid courses, improving the quality of teaching, and reaching non-traditional/distance students.

O’Neill commented that she spoke with Matt Sparke who is spearheading the new ISS degree program who reported that some faculty are concerned about the contract terms they signed with Canvas. O’Neill explained this issue is being addressed by the Senate Committee on Intellectual Property and Commercialization to identify how content and courses will be managed over time. O’Neill noted that she has also heard concern over online course evaluations which this council can discuss. O’Neill explained that her expectation is for the council to address these issues, along with any others, and provide recommendations to the administration to ensure UW preserves the academic integrity of the institution.

Members discussed their personal experiences. Concern was raised that there is a lack of funds to begin new teaching initiatives which limits the university’s ability to successfully adopt new approaches to teaching and learning.

4) Learning spaces

Jerry Baldasty (Senior Vice Provost for Academic and Student Affairs) was present to provide an overview of the classroom scheduling initiative. Baldasty explained the goal is to be more efficient with the use of current spaces and avoid the need to construct more classrooms. For example, the cost to build another Kane Hall would cost the university \$75-100 million. UW began to review the problem last year along with a group of consultants to examine current classroom use. Baldasty explained several “symptoms” of the scheduling problem include:

- Allowing a wide variety of scheduling options comes at the expense of efficiency.
- Significant demand at “prime time”, less so at other times.
- “Enrollment Inflation” to get particular classrooms during prime time.
- High prime time demand requires a lot of classrooms, and these rooms are expensive to maintain.
- Students complain it is difficult to get to their classes on time.
- Faculty complain the 10-minute window is too short for transitioning between classes.

A consequence of current class scheduling is that some rooms sit empty when they could be utilized, including Kane Hall. Baldasty explained there is approximately 50 hours of schedulable time across the university and UW is only using half right now based on the way classes are currently scheduled. By reorganizing how classes are scheduled UW can maximize the rooms that are currently available and allow the university to update and refresh the classrooms. Baldasty explained the group is reviewing several recommendations, including:

- **Block Schedule:** Develop clearly defined time blocks with an associated number of days each week, and increase pass time to 15 minutes.
- **Schedule Distribution:** Create departmental requirements and incentives to schedule a particular percentage of courses during off-peak times. Also, expand daily schedule.
- **Increased Pass time:** With expansion of campus (especially to the west), the current 10 minute pass time makes it difficult for some students to get to their classes, and presents challenges to faculty trying to get ready for their class.

Baldasty explained that the committees tasked with the initiative will be presenting their recommendations in the spring quarter so it is important for the council to provide its feedback as soon as possible. Implementation will likely occur in Fall Quarter 2016 for the university to adjust to the new time schedules.

A comment was raised that the goal is to avoid scheduling around the “peak capacity” period and take current funds to reinvest into current classrooms. Members discussed their experiences in receiving feedback from faculty and students regarding current class schedules, difficulties with large classes, departments receiving scheduling priority over others, teaching schedules, and traffic flow. A comment was raised that many departments are moving finals to Saturday exams which should be reviewed as well. A question was raised asking if there will be professional development support to assist faculty with moving to new classrooms as part of the recommendations. Baldasty explained support will still be available. Discussion ensued about new learning technologies available to faculty.

Wilkes noted this issue is on the agenda for the FCTL subcommittee and will report back on its progress. Baldasty explained that it would be ideal to have the council's recommendations by January.

5) Course evaluation results in MyPlan

Nana Lowell was in attendance to discuss plans to add course evaluations to MyPlan. The purpose of the project is to display course evaluation data in MyPlan with the goal to provide students with summarized course/instructor rating in a meaningful, valuable way. After speaking with students there are several issues that have been raised:

- Online course evaluation results are highly desired by students
- Evaluations provide better informed course selection decisions
- Students are currently using less credible sites
- Third parties are able to scrape data off UW's site and build their own
- Course evaluation data is public information

Students chose course sections based on many different factors including time, location, instructor, enrollment restrictions and more. These variables have hierarchal significance that were taken into consideration during the design phase. The hierarchy of displayed section content include:

1. Meeting days and times
2. Location of the section
3. Enrollment restrictions
4. Instructor
5. Course evaluation
6. Additional details, other

Low explained that students value the ability to find, consume and understand the information without deliberation. Additionally, it is important to visually and numerically display the rating data so that the student can easily locate and identify the information while keeping the displayed information high-level for easy engagement.

Guidelines and constraints include:

- Keep the rating creative treatments subordinate to functional elements
- Be minimalistic
- Use real estate efficiently
- Easily blend into existing content. Nothing jarring.
- Create a visual "flagging" treatment to draw the eyes.
- Don't add elements that put an emotional twist on the data.

Lowell presented an example of screen shot that students would use to evaluate a course section with the ratings included. Members discussed the differences in providing the scores graphically or as a specific ranking number. Concern was raised that MyPlan provides different scale spreads for "course challenge" and "amount learned". Lowell explained that "course challenge" has a different scale since it is a composite score of other rankings. A suggestion was raised to provide the overall rating, then provide a drop-down menu so users can see all the individual ratings for the course section.

Discussion ensued about how students will use MyPlan when making decisions on what courses to take. A comment was raised that students prefer to have additional information to make informed decisions, but not too much information to complicate the process. Members discussed whether students will spend time “splitting hairs” in determining which course section to take based on a very small differences between scores. Members discussed previous user testing which is important because it may have a dramatic impact on future registration. Lowell explained there is no plan to go live in the near future and her office is still in the process of studying this option. Members discussed possible revisions to the example provided by Lowell.

6) ASUW initiative – course evaluations and diversity

ASUW Director for Diversity Varsha Govindaraju was present to discuss options to include diversity as part of course evaluations. This is a proposal being discussed by the Faculty Council on Women in Academia (FCWA), Faculty Council on Multicultural Affairs (FCMA) and ASUW. The proposal would add diversity to standard course evaluations to ensure that diversity is being addressed in the classroom. Additionally, this is being proposed in conjunction with an FCMA/FCWA’s resolution requiring anti-bias training for promotion and review. Govindaraju explained that ASUW is currently reviewing legislation and a senate resolution is currently being drafted by FCMA and FCWA.

Discussion ensued. The resolution would address how a teacher’s course addresses student diversity and incorporate diversity into their instruction. Govindaraju noted that she has met with several other groups on campus, including diversity councils for certain colleges, outlining this proposal which has received positive feedback. Beth Kalikoff added that the Center for Teaching and Learning is willing to meet with departments to assist with training and mentoring faculty because every instructor, at some point in time, will be faced with addressing diversity issues in the classroom because it arises more often than faculty are aware, such as group work or team projects. Govindaraju read off examples of diversity questions that could be used in future course evaluations. Members pointed out some concerns, and she indicated her group would welcome comments and suggestions for changes in wording. Members also discussed the differences between cases where diversity is a part of course content, versus diversity issues common to pedagogy, affecting all teaching.

7) Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by Wilkes at 12:00pm.

Minutes by Grayson Court, council support analyst, gcourt@uw.edu

Present: **Faculty:** Jeffrey Wilkes (chair), Ellen McGough, Jaime Olavarria, Jennifer Taggart, Dan Turner, Brenda Zierler
President’s Designee: Ed Taylor
Ex-Officio Reps: Robert Corbett
Guests: Varsha Govindaraju, Tom Lewis, Nana Lowell, Christine Sugatan, Jerry Baldasty, Rovy Brannon, Kate O’Neill

Absent: **Faculty:** David Masuda, Bruce Nelson, Jan Spyridakis
Ex-Officio Reps: Terry Ann Jankowski, Hailey Badger