Committee on Teaching
Minutes
February 14, 2018

Members Present: Cynthia Ellwood (chair), Jake Carpenter, Evelyn Donate-Bartfield, Kristen Foster, Kristin Haglund, Laurieann Klockow, Crystal Lendved, Susan Schneider, John Su, and Joyce Wolburg

Excused: Jerrin Cherian, Shaun Longstreet, Terrence Ow,

Reflection: Evelyn Donate-Bartfield

1. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the January 24, 2018 meeting were unanimously approved with minor edits.

2. Announcements: John Su noted that the Committee would soon be providing feedback on the 10 nominees for the University Teaching Award. On the whole, he was pleased with the caliber of nominees and looks forward to receiving the Committee’s recommendations. For the benefit of members who have not served on the Committee in the past, John explained the process. Committee members make their recommendations to him, and he summarizes the results and shares them with the Committee while not disclosing the names and rankings of each nominee. The Committee then discusses the rankings at the next meeting to finalize the process. When asked the rationale for not disclosing the candidates’ names, he noted that it is a process that he inherited and that the goal is to protect the privacy of the nominees, particularly if one becomes ineligible. Various members commented on the challenges with this process, and John offered to talk to General Council to see if it is necessary to take this step. The Committee was in agreement that they preferred to speak openly without the additional layer of secrecy, and that the results of their deliberation would remain confidential.

3. Continuing Business

Committee’s position on IDEA. John suggested that we discuss the position and plan to draft a two-page document to the Senate with the main ideas in favor of or against adoption. He was asked what the university’s position is so far on the resources needed to adopt IDEA, and he noted that it appears that the resources are there, provided that there is support for adoption. He also noted that if approved by the Senate, the Provost and President will make the final decision.

Cynthia led the discussion back to reactions to IDEA, particularly after the information session from the January meeting. For the benefit of members who were unable to attend the meeting, she noted that one finding was a potential “deal breaker” for some
because the Instant Feedback Instrument for interim evaluation reveals the names of students providing input. Although final student evaluations are anonymous, the interim feedback is not. Many issues were raised including a fear that the process would erode trust, a worry over potential lack of follow-up from the data gathered, and a concern over accuracy if anonymity could not be guaranteed. While the data might be useful and beneficial, there was concern that the process could backfire.

Various remedies were discussed including the possibility of creating a D2L instrument that gathers feedback anonymously; however, the use of the exact items from IDEA would result in a copyright violation so the questions would have to differ significantly. Another suggestion was that we disable the feature if IDEA is adopted. Ultimately, the committee asked that we find out the possibility of disabling the feature—not just for individual classes but for the whole university. [Note: On Feb. 15, Cynthia emailed the group to inform them that the university can opt out of this feature, thus eliminating the problem].

Cynthia asked if there are any other misgivings about IDEA that we need to discuss. She noted that some have expressed concern over the length of the instrument, but that the feedback doesn’t bear out that concern. A potential issue is the complexity of the instrument because it may prevent some faculty from using the tools. Since the response from other institutions has been good, faculty members have apparently been able to embrace it. Cynthia reiterated three things that are important:

1. We must find out if the interim feedback with students’ identity can be disabled.
2. In-class administration at the beginning of class should be recommended.
3. A plan should be included for professional development for faculty.

Cynthia then called for a vote. Seven voted in favor—with three people noting that their favorable vote assumed the ability to disable the Instant Feedback Instrument—and two abstained. John suggested that we query the absent members by email for their thoughts. [Post-script by Cynthia: After polling the absent members, the count was:

9 yes
1 no
2 abstain]

Plan for composing communication to the UAS. The discussion then moved to organizing the points in favor of adopting IDEA that could be included in the summary to the UAS. The following points were made in its favor.

• It offers faculty the ability to gain resources for how to address low performance areas and help improve teaching.
• The added length and complexity will improve student engagement in evaluating the course.
• Instructors have the opportunity to tailor the objectives and outcomes measured.
• Evaluations take into consideration characteristics and features of the course, such as large lecture classes, discussion sections, lab classes.
• IDEA has supporting evidence from data gathered from other institutions.

Main concerns were:

• The added length means more time is needed.
• The expense is significant.
• The university will need to address the differences between MOCES and IDEA so that faculty going up for promotion have a consistent form for evaluation.

Members reiterated that the university needs to consider course evaluations as only one data point for evaluating teaching.

Cynthia Ellwood, Laurieann Klockow and Kristen Foster volunteered to draft a statement for UAS.

4. New Business

Plan for review of Teaching Excellence Award guidelines. The Committee was provided with a rubric for evaluating the dossiers of the nominees, and the recommendation was to use it as a guide rather than an absolute method of calculating points. Various members talked about the need for a holistic approach and suggested that the utility value of the rubric was greatest for deciding between candidates who are very closely matched.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45.

Respectfully submitted,
Joyce Wolburg