Committee on Teaching
Annual Report to University Academic Senate
April 20, 2016

1. Committee Membership

- Jake Carpenter (Chair)—Law School
- Bridget Dolan—Graduate Student Organization
- Evelyn Donate-Bartfield—School of Dentistry
- Cynthia Ellwood—College of Education
- Kristin Haglund—College of Nursing
- John LaDisa—Opus College of Engineering
- Shaun Longstreet (Ex-officio)—Center for Teaching and Learning
- Patrick McNamara—Opus College of Engineering (fall replacement during John LaDisa’s sabbatical)
- Daniel Meissner—Klinger College of Arts and Sciences
- Gary Meyer (Ex-officio) (fall semester)—Office of the Provost
- Maura Moyle—College of Health Sciences
- Terence Ow—College of Business Administration
- James Pokrywczynski—Diedrich College of Communication
- John Su (Ex-officio) (spring semester replacing Gary Meyer)—Office of the Provost
- Joyce Wolberg—Diedrich College of Communication (spring replacement during James Pokrywczynski’s sabbatical)
- Cameron Vrana—Marquette University Student Government

2. Committee Meetings

- The committee met for monthly meetings on the following dates: September 9, October 14, November 11, December 2, January 20, February 10, March 9, April 13, and May 4 (upcoming)

3. Senate Charges to the Committee

- The committee was charged with evaluating the proposals for the Way Klinger Teaching Enhancement Award and recommending to the Provost a winning proposal.

- The committee was charged with evaluating the dossiers of the finalists for the Teaching Excellence Award and recommending to the Provost who should receive the award.
4. Responses to Charges

- The committee reviewed all proposals submitted for the Way Klinger Teaching Enhancement Award and provided a recommendation to the Provost as to which proposal should be chosen.

- The committee reviewed the dossiers of all of the finalists for the Teaching Excellence Award and provided a recommendation to the Provost as to which finalists should receive the award.

5. Committee Work and Accomplishments

A. Timely Student Feedback: In spring, 2015, the committee began discussing a concern raised by some students on the undergraduate senior exit survey that they were not receiving “timely feedback.” In the fall, 2016, the committee continued this discussion. The committee gathered data from the National Survey of Student Engagement to compare responses by Marquette students about timely feedback with students from other universities. The committee also reviewed the 2015 Graduating Senior Survey and met with Alix Riley, Director of the Office of Institutional Research & Analysis (OIRA) to discuss the data. The committee discussed various factors that may influence the timeliness scores, including class size, course content, exam format, and the amount of paper comments. The committee also noted that student satisfaction significantly improved by senior year. In its December meeting, the committee concluded that it would not recommend any action on this matter be taken at this time.

B. On-line Digital Course Support Systems: The committee discussed a topic that could affect on-line courses. Publishing companies now create course materials for students to access on-line. These materials can include not only substantive content such as online lectures, outlines, and study guides, but also summative tools such as tests and quizzes. These materials are “generic,” meaning that they are the same for any student, from any university, whose professor directs students to them. The materials are not created by Marquette professors. While these materials can be a helpful supplement to a professor’s self-generated materials, the concern is if a professor of an on-line course relies too much on these materials. In other words, would the professor in such a course be providing a distinctive, unique, Marquette educational experience? Would the professor being adding his or her own value to the course and students. The committee does not believe the University has any guidelines or parameters regarding the use of these on-line course support systems. The committee discussed whether it should create and recommend guidelines; whether it should create a document educating faculty and supervisors about its concerns; etc. The committee is not aware of whether other universities are addressing this topic. Ultimately, more questions were raised than answers reached. The committee expects to continue discussing this topic.
C. Evaluation of current MOCES questions and procedures: In January, the committee proposed to the Senate that the committee begin a project of evaluating and potentially recommending changes to the current MOCES questions and procedures. During its January meeting, the Senate voted to authorize the committee to take on this project. To begin its research, the committee has reviewed reports from 2008 and 2009 that were created by Senate sub-committees after the current MOCES was adopted. The committee is currently working with Alix Riley, Director of OIRA, to determine what types of information her office can help the committee gather, such as evaluation instruments used by other universities, research about best practices, etc. With the help of the OIRA, the committee plans to gather research over the summer. Then, when the committee reconvenes in the fall, it will review the research and plan how to move forward.

D. Additional funding to support teaching: The committee brainstormed for ideas about how it can further recognize and reward excellence in teaching. The committee also reviewed what teaching awards are given in the various colleges and departments. Several ideas were raised, but none which the committee felt comfortable pursuing. The committee agreed that this topic should remain open for consideration if any committee members have new ideas to discuss.

E. Revising rubrics for evaluating Teaching Excellence Awards: After recommending the winners of the annual Teaching Excellence Award, the committee discussed whether it should revise the current rubric that the committee uses to help review and evaluate the finalists’ dossiers. Committee members discussed whether certain rubric items should be revised for clarity and whether new rubric items should be added. The committee expressed interest in revising the rubric, and it intends to revisit this in the fall before the process begins again.

F. Non-evaluative Faculty Peer Assessment: In the spring, 2015, the committee completed its project of creating a mechanism to encourage faculty to seek voluntary, peer review of their teaching with the focus being solely on “how can I improve my teaching.” The committee created a document to help guide the faculty member seeking a review and the peer who would conduct the review. The Center for Teaching and Learning has hosted workshops on being a peer reviewer and on how to seek feedback from peers. The committee will continue to work with the Center for Teaching and Learning (1) to encourage faculty to use this resource and (2) to try to gauge if faculty are undergoing these voluntary, formative peer reviews.

6. Unfinished Business

Of the work discussed above, the only matter that is completely finished is the first: consideration of the timeliness of student feedback. Most of the remaining items are somewhat open items: they do not have specific actions that the committee is charged
with completing, but the committee would like to continue considering them when the time allows. However, the item that the committee will place the highest priority on moving forward is evaluating and potentially recommending new MOCES questions and procedures. The committee expects this project will be its main focus next year.

7. Committee Recommendations for Unfinished and Future Business

This spring the committee proposed to the Senate that it undertake the project of evaluating the current MOCES, with a potential outcome of recommending specific changes. The Senate voted to allow the committee to pursue this project. The committee recommends that this project be its main focus and priority for the next school year. In addition to this MOCES project, the committee will also continue to fulfill its annual charge of managing the selection process for the Way Klinger Interdisciplinary Teaching Award and the Faculty Awards for Teaching Excellence.