



General Faculties Council  
Committee on the Learning Environment  
Approved Open Session Minutes

Wednesday, April 02, 2014  
2-31 South Academic Building (SAB)  
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

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**ATTENDEES:**

Voting Members:

Bill Connor	Co-Chair, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction)
Kathleen DeLong	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian
John Boeglin	Member, Academic Staff
Katy Campbell	Member, Dean Representative, Selected by Deans' Council
Kathryn Orydzuk	Member (Delegate), Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union
Scott Delinger	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President (Information Technology)
Monty Bal	Member (Delegate), President, Graduate Students' Association
Sheree Kwong See	Member, Director (Interim), Centre for Teaching and Learning
Jacqueline Leighton	Member, Chair Representative, Selected by Chairs' Council
Ada Ness	Member (Delegate), Vice-Provost and University Registrar
Nikki Way	Member, Undergraduate Student-at-large

Presenter(s):

Garry Bodnar	Secretary to General Faculties Council and Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
John Boeglin	Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment Subcommittee on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology
Bill Connor	Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment
Scott Delinger	Information Technology Strategic Initiatives Officer, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Kathleen DeLong	Associate University Librarian, Libraries, University of Alberta
Alexis Hillyard	Education Coordinator, Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services
Sheree Kwong See	Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning
Kris Wells	Director, Programs and Services, Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services

Staff:

Garry Bodnar, Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment  
Andrea Patrick, Scribe

**OPENING SESSION**

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

*Presenter:* Bill Connor, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

Motion: Delinger/Boeglin

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Agenda.

**CARRIED**

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of January 29, 2014

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

*Presenter:* Bill Connor, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

Motion: Ness/Boeglin

THAT the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment approve the Minutes of January 29, 2014.

**CARRIED**

3. Comments from the Co-Chair

The Co-Chair commented on a number of relevant issues to members.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

4. Safe Spaces Campus Climate Report: Gauging the Environment for Sexual and Gender Minorities at the University of Alberta

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

*Presenter(s):* Alexis Hillyard, Education Coordinator, Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services; Kris Wells, Director, Programs and Services, Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services

*Purpose of the Proposal:* In 2008, the University of Alberta and Faculty of Education created the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services (iSMSS) to lead groundbreaking research that affects policy development, intervention, education, and community outreach for sexual and gender minorities, locally, nationally, and globally. In 2011, iSMSS began to research and develop the University of Alberta's first campus climate survey to assess the climate on the University's campuses for undergraduate students in relation to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression issues, needs, and concerns.

With support from the Dean of Students, the Safe Spaces survey was sent to a random sample of 10,000 undergraduate students and had an impressive response of 2,046 students who completed the survey, which represents one of the largest and most comprehensive surveys of its kind to be conducted at a post-secondary institution in Canada.

The survey examined the following key areas: student demographics (with 17% of survey respondents identifying as sexual and gender minorities); campus atmosphere; perceptions of acceptance and safety; prevalence and impact of homophobic and transphobic language and attitudes; experiences of coming out;

impacts of hetero and gender normativity; and views about the inclusiveness of campus facilities (eg, residences, campus athletics, and sports teams).

Based on survey responses, themes from student focus groups, and a review of sexual and gender minority inclusive best practices for post-secondary institutions, seven key findings and themes were revealed and 26 recommendations were made in the following areas: (1) Institutional Supports; (2) Academic Resources; (3) Student Services; and (4) Campus Protective Services.

*Discussion:*

The Co-Chair introduced presenters of this Report.

Dr Wells provided a brief history of the Report, noting that it is the first survey of its kind within a Canadian post-secondary institution and that it emanated from the University's Safe Spaces Initiative. He added that, in conjunction with the Office of the Dean of Students, a random sample of 10,000 undergraduate students received the survey *via* BearTracks. He noted that there was a high completion rate of over 2000 survey participants, considered to be an excellent sampling.

He emphasized five key areas of the Report and also areas of future focus. He reported on student demographics of survey participants; noted that the data suggests that the student population at the University of Alberta is becoming increasingly diverse; and commented that a model of inclusivity tailored towards sexual and gender minority students must be a focus within the classroom.

Ms Hillyard, in turn, reported on the top five concerns of sexual and gender minority students, as detailed within the Report, and suggested several options for workable solutions to address these concerns at the University.

Dr Wells expanded on the topic of sexual and gender minority inclusive practices as outlined with the Report. He commented that important work continues in conjunction with the Office of the Registrar relating to gender inclusivity and that there is now an online gender-inclusive washroom map for North Campus available. He stated that collaboration with Facilities and Operations continues with respect to facility-related gender inclusivity issues, touching upon new projects at the University of Alberta.

Ms Hillyard noted a need for increased institutional visibility, including addressing safe and inclusive classroom practices.

Dr Wells explained that, following the Report's distribution, several positive steps forward have been realized, including the creation of a new position of Sexual and Gender Minority Equity Advisor, the raising of the Pride flag on the Administration Building during the University's second annual Pride Week, and the organization of an increasing number of activities in observance of Pride Week at the University of Alberta.

During the ensuing discussion regarding the Report, members provided a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: clarification regarding ways in which GFC CLE may be able to assist in developing policies related to the results of the Report; a suggestion for the creation of a credit certificate in this area of research/study; clarification surrounding the availability and online location of the all-gender washroom map for the University's North Campus as well as online information related to Safe Spaces; whether there is a visible identifier deployed by those units that have gone through Safe Spaces training; clarification on the process of requesting an all-gender washroom in specific facilities; clarification on sexual and gender minority considerations in relation to hiring and selection practices and processes at the University of Alberta; clarification regarding the singular focus on undergraduate students in the survey conducted; general expressions of support for the Report; clarification regarding the recommendation

within the Report regarding adjusted pedagogical approaches; clarification with respect to the scope and representation of the Safe Spaces Network; a suggestion to present this report to Faculty and Department Council meetings; clarification regarding related activities offered by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL); a suggestion to add sexual and gender inclusivity considerations as criteria on course syllabi and evaluations; clarification on whether there are any current projects specifically aimed at international students; clarification regarding how sexual and gender minority-based sensitivity training might be implemented across all disciplines and Faculties; further suggestions on ways to operationalize the recommendations contained in the Report; and commentary that the University's campuses could be ideal places for sexual and gender minorities to feel both supported and included.

5. Proposed Revisions to the Terms of Reference for the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

*Presenter(s):* Bill Connor, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment; Kathleen DeLong, Associate University Librarian, University Libraries; Garry Bodnar, Secretary to GFC and Coordinator, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

*Purpose of the Proposal:* To revise the Terms of Reference for GFC CLE to clearly and formally acknowledge the important role Learning Services units play within the academy and in the fulfillment of the University's Academic Plan; to modify the Committee's composition to provide for more realistic replenishment of this body and to reflect the University's current staff categories; and to accommodate a series of minor/editorial changes to ensure the currency of these Terms.

*Discussion:*

The Co-Chair provided members with a brief synopsis of proposed changes to the Terms of Reference for GFC CLE.

Ms DeLong, in turn, briefed members on the proposed revisions to the Terms of Reference and explained that the new section 3.c is intended to clarify the governance approval route of policies developed by any of the University's Learning Services units.

Mr Bodnar spoke to a number of the proposed revisions within the documentation, specifically, the references which highlight Learning Services (including Libraries) within the Terms of Reference, changes to staff categories, and the removal of the words "or Delegate" following *ex-officio* member roles.

During the discussion surrounding these revisions, members expressed a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: clarification surrounding whether voting members can send delegates; a suggestion that "or Delegate" needs to be struck from reference to the Vice-President (Research); clarification surrounding the Co-Chair role on the Committee; a suggestion to replace "i.e." with "e.g." in the (current) last paragraph of section 2; a suggestion to strike out all instances of "Co-Chair" in the document and replace with them with "Chair"; clarification regarding revisions to section 3 of the document; whether there could be a definition of "learning environment" provided within the Terms of Reference; concerns with some of the language used within the revisions surrounding teaching and learning; that capitalization inconsistencies within the revisions cause confusion; the differentiation between teaching and learning and Learning Services and suggested amendments to the proposed revisions; that the revisions include broad terms which might be problematic; and additional suggestions for various minor revisions to the language of the Terms of Reference.

The Co-Chair thanked members for their feedback and noted that this would be brought back for further review at the next meeting of GFC CLE.

6. University of Alberta's Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL): Update from the Interim Director

There were no documents.

*Presenter:* Sheree Kwong See, Interim Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning

*Purpose of the Proposal:* For discussion/information.

*Discussion:*

Dr Kwong See reported on a number of recent initiatives undertaken by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), including:

- The University of Alberta Blended Learning Awards have been awarded to those involved with eight distinguished courses.
- The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) Summer Student Awards have been awarded to three undergraduate students and two graduate students.
- A reminder concerning the Festival of Teaching travelling video booth for students to record their experiences with teaching excellence at the University of Alberta.
- A reminder concerning the upcoming panel discussion, "Assisting and Fostering Excellence."
- A reminder about the Mentorship Programs Workshop being offered on April 14, 2014.
- A reminder regarding the upcoming catalyst series, "Blended Learning: Creating New Opportunities for Learning" being held on April 25, 2014.

7. GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Subcommittee on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology: Update

There were no documents.

*Presenter:* John Boeglin, Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) Subcommittee on Fostering Pedagogy of Technology

*Purpose of the Proposal:* For information/discussion.

*Discussion:*

Dr Boeglin reported that the Subcommittee has been busy gathering feedback from members of the University community and that the surveys previously shared with GFC CLE have been amended based on the feedback collected. He reported that, following the pending approval of both the Research Ethics Office and *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIPPA) clearance, there will be a pilot of the surveys conducted later this Spring.

A member enquired about the timing of the surveys.

8. Electronic Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (eUSRI) – Update

There were no documents.

*Presenter:* Scott Delinger, Information Technology Strategic Initiatives Officer, Office of the Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

*Purpose of the Proposal:* For information/discussion.

*Discussion:*

Dr Delinger reported that there was no recent usage of electronic Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (eUSRI) at the University of Alberta with the exception of certain alternatively-delivered courses. He noted that Course Eval and Blue surveys have been distributed and that he is pleased with the number of responses to date. He explained that modifications to GFC Policy Manual Section 111.3 (Teaching and Learning and Teaching Evaluation/Universal Student Ratings of Instruction) will be coming forward at the May GFC CLE meeting for discussion.

Mr Bodnar suggested distributing these proposed changes to members between meetings so members would have appropriate time to review the proposed changes.

A member enquired about the status of the discussion surrounding e-USRIs as a tool.

## **STANDING ITEMS**

### 9. GFC Academic Planning Committee (APC) Update

There were no documents.

*Presenter:* Bill Connor, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

*Purpose of the Proposal:* For discussion/information.

*Discussion:*

There was no discussion.

### 10. GFC Academic Standards Committee (ASC) Update

There were no documents.

*Presenter:* Bill Connor, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

*Purpose of the Proposal:* For discussion/information.

*Discussion:*

There was no discussion.

### 11. GFC Facilities Development Committee (FDC) Update

There were no documents.

*Presenter:* Bill Connor, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction) and Co-Chair, GFC Committee on the Learning Environment

*Purpose of the Proposal:* For discussion/information.

*Discussion:*

There was no discussion.

12. Question Period

The Co-Chair took this opportunity to thank the departing student members for their engagement on GFC CLE.

**INFORMATION REPORTS**

13. Items Approved by the Committee by E-Mail Ballots

There were no items.

14. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

**CLOSING SESSION**

15. Adjournment

The Co-Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:50 pm.