

Faculty Teaching and Learning Center Advisory Committee
2010-11 Report to ECS/UAS
April 15, 2011

FTLCAC 2010-11 Roster

Elected Members

Peter Riemersma, CLAS (Geology), Chair
David Bair, COE, Chair-Elect
Pete Coco, University Libraries
Jason Crouthamel, CLAS (History) Fall
Mayra Fortes, CLAS (Mod Languages) Winter
Patrick Gerkin, CCPS
Vijay Gondhalekar, SCB (Finance)
Heather Gulgin, CLAS (Movement Science)
Elena Lioubimtseva, CoIS (Fall)
Wael Mohktar, PCEC (Fall)
Aziz Rahman, PCEC, (Winter)

Ellen Shupe, CLAS (Psychology)
Laurie Stickler, CHP
Joy Washburn, KCON

Ex-Officio Members

Christine Rener, Pew FTLC Director
Kurt Ellenberger, Pew FTLC Associate
Director of Grants
Kim Kenward, IT/Ed Tech
Patty Stow Bolea, Pew FTLC Assistant
Dana Munk, Pew FTLC Assistant

ECS/UAS Charge to FTLCAC

1. Support Dr. Christine Rener, the FTLC Director and meet with the FTLC staff to set goals for the 2010-11 academic year.

The FTLCAC Chair met with the FTLC Director biweekly to respond to the ECS charge. These meetings ensured that FTLCAC meetings addressed real-time advisory needs and balanced these requests with the governance role of the FTLCAC. The frequent and open communication between the FTLC staff and FTLCAC streamlined the operations of the FTLCAC and ensured their responsiveness to the teaching and learning needs of GVSU.

2. Assist in the discussion during Fall of 2010 with ECS, UAS, FPPC and the University Counsel to address policy issues identified by University Counsel that must be resolved before the Board of Trustees may consider and support the policy revisions to the Faculty Handbook and Administrative Manual language faculty personnel policy revisions regarding "Effective Teaching" in Chapter 4, 2.9.1.A recommended by UAS in 2009-10.

The FTLCAC Chair, Kurt Ellenberger and Kris Mullendore met at the beginning of the fall semester with University Counsel Tom Butcher to discuss the teaching effectiveness language. Based on these discussions and following the FTLCAC committee meetings on September 13 and 27th, (and in concert with the FPCC) the teaching statement below (approved by unanimous vote) was forwarded to ECS/UAS for approval:

"Effective teaching facilitates student learning and includes, but is not limited to, knowledge of the field taught, classroom performance, communication skills, and human relations skills. Faculty members teach effectively by challenging and engaging their students, and by supporting their academic and professional growth. Their courses address relevant knowledge together with intellectual and practical skills pertinent to the discipline or profession. They use appropriate pedagogies, and relevant assessments of student learning. They contribute to revising or developing courses and curricula as needed by their units. Effective teaching must be documented by: a) self-evaluation, b) peer evaluation, and c) student evaluations."

Our outstanding statement above was slightly modified by ECS/UAS before submittal to the Provost and Board for approval. In addition to minor grammatical changes, their modifications included "classroom and mentoring performance, and inclusion of the statement "establishing and maintaining high academic standards".

3. Support ECS/UAS and FPPC in considering policy revisions concerning the use of student evaluations of teaching at GVSU based on the FTLCAC report submitted to ECS/UAS and FPPC in 2008-9 as the 2009-10 Faculty Handbook and Administrative Manual language faculty personnel policy revisions regarding "Effective Teaching" in Chapter 4, 2.9.1.A after they are adopted by the Board of Trustees and ready for implementation.

This charge was the main focus of the committee this year, which was expanded to include other aspects of teaching effectiveness such as peer and self-evaluation. Our discussions centered on how faculty could demonstrate effective teaching, the challenges faculty encounter, and what guidance could be provided to assist faculty. Pertinent articles on effective teaching were identified by the FTLC and were posted and reviewed by committee members to assist in the discussion. The FTLCAC also invited chairs of college personnel committees to participate in an FTLCAC meeting and obtain their perspectives on assessment of effective teaching. We met with representatives from CLAS, SBC, BCOIS, CCPS, CHP and KCON and observed that a variety of different procedures and approaches are being used to assess effective teaching in the different colleges. To summarize our discussions of effective teaching, we prepared a list of top ten issues (included as Appendix A at the end of this report) that we shared with the Provost who attended our final meeting of the year. Two key student evaluation issues that we identified were that the often poor response rate of online evaluations and the importance of determining the validity of the student evaluation questions themselves. The FTLCAC anticipates continuing this discussion in the 2011-2012 year and preparing guidance to assist faculty in preparation of documents to support effective teaching using student evaluations, peer evaluation and self evaluation.

4. Support the work of governance in its consideration of the action items in the report submitted by the 2009-10 Academic Integrity Committee as it applies to teaching.

The committee reviewed the Academic Integrity Final Report and we support its recommendations, especially the need for a central authority to support faculty and provide leadership and control on this issue. The committee also shared their experiences with academic integrity within their colleges and discussed how to design assignments to minimize plagiarism, how to monitor academic integrity in online courses, and how to catch cheaters.

5. Recommend revision to the Faculty Handbook language governing FTLCAC membership to add a non-voting member representing Informational Technology.

Kim Kenward, representing IT, was an active participant and ex-officio member of the FTLCAC this year, although revision to the Handbook language has not yet been achieved.

Additional items addressed by the FTLCAC during the 2010-11 Academic Year

1. *Teaching Award and Grant Committee Membership* – Each member of the FTLCAC was assigned to a Teaching Award or Grant subcommittee. In recognition of the time commitment to review the awards/grants and scheduling challenges associated with meetings, several subcommittee meetings were scheduled during regular FTLCAC meeting times (and regular scheduled meetings at those dates were cancelled).
2. *FTLC Blackboard site* – A blackboard site for FTLCAC members was constructed to post articles, pictures of FTLCAC members and facilitate communication between members of the committee.
3. *Teaching Award Nomination Form* - The committee reviewed changes to the nomination form for Teaching awards.
4. *Teaching Award Subcommittee Comments* - The committee discussed FTLC responses to subcommittee comments on the teaching award criteria, particularly on promoting the Teaching with Technology Award to receive more nominations.
5. *2011 Fall Teaching Conference* - The committee discussed the proposed theme for the Fall Teaching Conference "Responding to a Changing Student Body".

Respectfully Submitted on April 15, 2011

**Peter E. Riemersma, Associate Professor of Geology
2010-11 Chair, FTLCAC**

Appendix A

Top 10 observations and issues concerning demonstration of effective teaching at GVSU

The FTLC Advisory Committee

April 11, 2011

1. Response Rate of Online Student Evaluations

We noted that the response rate of online student evaluations is typically much less than in-class paper student evaluations and we were concerned about the validity of low response rates. We also commented on the different setting between online and classroom evaluations and how this might impact student responses. How can we ensure adequate numbers of student evaluation responses?

2. Student Evaluation Comparison

Typically individual faculty use their self-reflective or integrative statements to comment in various ways on their student evaluations. Against what norm can or should a faculty member compare their student evaluation comments and numbers to? Departmental or college or university averages?

3. Variability in Department and College Procedures

In our discussions with college personnel committee chairs it became obvious that there is a lot of variability in how different colleges deal with demonstration of "effective teaching". For example, some colleges have example portfolios and conduct classroom visitations while other colleges provide more general guidance. How can we provide better guidance and uniformity to all faculty?

4. Hot Button Topic and Policy

Student evaluations are a faculty "hot button" item and many faculty have strong opinions concerning different aspects of student evaluations. How can we as a university discuss this topic? How does this discussion and guidance on teaching effectiveness get turned into policy?

5. Role of Student Evaluations

How are student evaluations used at the college level and above after the unit and personnel committees have examined the portfolios? What is the role of the college personnel committee in the process - as a check on the unit recommendation and as an "objective" evaluator? What role does the personnel committee and student evaluations play in terms of formative evaluation versus summative evaluation?

6. Student Evaluation Questions

From our readings it is apparent that questions used on student evaluations need to be assessed and "validated" in order to ensure that only appropriate questions are asked. We believe that there would be value in having common questions across the university with additional questions added per discipline for flexibility.

7. Student Evaluation Interpretation

From our discussions and readings we identified that several factors that likely affect interpretation of student evaluations and include: 1) class size, 2) type of students - undergrad or grad 3) required vs. non-required course, and 4) lab versus non-lab courses.

8. Peer Evaluations

There is a lot of information (i.e. books) on how to conduct peer evaluations, including classroom visitation, course content analysis and exam analysis. How should our guidance on this subject proceed? Should we propose several different models (~3?) and let units/colleges decide which to follow or should we let each unit decide individually on how to conduct peer evaluation?

9. Rigor

Some colleges include questions on student evaluations to assess the rigor of the course. Is this something for the students to assess or better as part of the peer review process?

10. Student and University Perceptions

We observed that students come with many different perceptions about professors and individual courses. How can we as a university foster an environment of teaching effectiveness and excellence and demonstrate to students the important role they play? How can we more clearly identify what is meant by teaching effectiveness so that expectations are clear for new faculty? How can we identify and reward excellent teachers?