

Date: 2013-05-09

To: Karen Roche, Secretary of Senate

From: Monica Ilie, Chair of Senate Teaching and Learning Committee

Subject: Annual Report of the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee (STLC) to Senate

The Committee has been very busy this year, and I would like to thank all the members for their commitment and work. The search for a new chair was lengthy and it was finalized at the beginning of December 2013. The members of the committee would like to thank the Institutional Development Center for working tirelessly during that time, especially in organizing the Teaching and Learning Week (November 18-22, 2013).

This report includes some of the highlights from the Instructional Development Centre (IDC) and from the collaborative work of the committee, including a detailed report of the online Student Evaluations of Teaching.

1. INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER

During the month of November (18-22), the Instructional Development Centre in conjunction with the Vice-President Academic, Continuing Education & Distributed Learning, Library, Centre for Place and Sustainability Studies, Student Accessibility Services, Aboriginal Initiatives, Writing Center, organized the Teaching and Learning Week 2013. This year's theme was 'The Pedagogical Journey: Reflecting on Goals, Issues and Practice' and the week included a mix of conversational Q&A styled panel discussions, workshops and hands-on training sessions, which resulted in a significant increase in events offered and people involved from previous years. New to this year was hosting a Teaching & Learning Week reception. Events included:

- Workshop: *The teaching Life Cycle: Reflections from Early, Mid and Late Career Faculty*
Facilitators included: Frances Helyar, Alice den Otter, Zubairu Wai, Pam Wakewich, Harvey Lemelin, Rhonda Koster (Chair) (Nov18)
- Workshop: *People, Place and Planet: Teaching Sustainability Across the Curriculum in the Anthropocene (Introductory Session)*
Presenters: David Greenwood and Natalie Gerum (Nov 18)
- Workshop: *People, Place and Planet: Teaching Sustainability Across the Curriculum in the Anthropocene (Advanced Session)*
Presenters: David Greenwood and Natalie Gerum (Nov 22)
- Training session: *A Cite to Behold: Copyright*
Presenters: Valerie Gibbons and Gisella Scalse (Nov 18)

- Training session (both campuses) : *Let's get accessible: accessibility training for faculty and staff (Microsoft Word)*
Presenters: Nancy Cahill (Nov 18) and Danielle Poeta (Orillia, Nov 19)
- Training session (both campuses) : *Let's get accessible: accessibility training for faculty and staff (PowerPoint)*
Presenters: Nancy Cahill (Nov 20) and Danielle Poeta (Orillia, Nov 21)
- Training session (both campuses) : *Let's get accessible: accessibility training for faculty and staff (PDF)*
Presenters: Nancy Cahill (Nov 21) and Danielle Poeta (Orillia, Nov 22)
- Training session: *Let's get accessible: accessibility training for faculty and staff (AODA/Ontario Human Rights)*
Presenters: external presenter (Nov 22)
- Workshop: *Walking (and Understanding) the Talk on Social Justice at Lakehead University (part I)*
Presenter: Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux (Nov 19)
- Workshop: *Walking (and Understanding) the Talk on Social Justice at Lakehead University (part II)*
Presenter: Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux (Nov 20)
- Workshop: *Walking (and Understanding) the Talk on Social Justice at Lakehead University (part III)*
Presenter: Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux (Nov 21)
- Workshop: *"You Call that and Essay? This is an Essay!" Reflexions on and Strategies for Improving Student Writing*
Presenter: Anthea Kyle (Nov 19, Nov 22)
- Workshop: *"You talkin' to me?" A discussion on Interpreting and Using Student Feedback*
Panelists (Thunder Bay campus): Monica Flegel, Richard Khoury, Donald Kerr & Peter Lee (Nov 19)
- Workshop: *Inquiry Based Teaching and Learning*
Presenter: Timothy Kaiser and Cheryl Lousley (Nov 20)
- Workshop: *A scholarly feast: New Research Support from the Library*
Presenter: Janice Mutz and Moira Davidson (Nov 19, Nov 20)
- Workshop: *How to Prepare and Use a Teaching Dossier*
Presenter: Gillian Siddall (Nov 21)

These sessions were facilitated by 27 faculty and staff, with 302 people registered, of which 239 people attended. This year saw greater graduate student participation by offering events during the week that qualified for our graduate student instructional development training program.

Over the course of the year the Instructional Development Centre offered workshops for Faculty as well as the Graduate Student Teaching Practicum. For the third year in a row, faculty and graduate student workshops were held in conjunction. In total, 8 workshops were held with 195 people registered and 131 attending (total attendance includes faculty, staff, and graduate students).

Instructional Training for Graduate Students- Brett Shermann
Monday, September 23, 2013

Principles of Instructional Design- Rhonda Koster
Tuesday, October 1, 2013

Creating Experiential Learning Using Social Media-external webcast
Friday, October 25, 2013

Creating Multiple Choice Exams- Mary Louise Hill
Monday, January 20, 2014

Philosophy and Goals of Teaching- Jason Blahuta
Tuesday, February 4, 2014

Teaching Critical Thinking-Wayne Melville
Wednesday, March 5, 2014

Team-Based Learning: One approach to student engaged learning- Rhonda Koster
Tuesday, April 8, 2014

2014 Teaching and Learning Swap Meet- Rhonda Koster and Brett Sharman
Wednesday, April 23, 2014

Building on the success of the inaugural swap meet last year, the 2014 Teaching & Learning Swap Meet provided an opportunity for instructors from across both campuses (last year's was held in Thunder Bay only) to connect with one another in an informal setting to swap ideas on enhancing teaching and learning. This year most issues and strategies centered around student engagement. Faculty that have attended the swap meets have indicated they find it a unique and valuable learning and social experience.

2. TEACHING AWARDS

The committee reviewed the process of nominations for Contributions to Teaching awards and implemented a new campaign targeting students which led to a big increase in this year's nominations for this awards (20). A sub-committee was recently struck to look into new ways of engaging students in this process throughout the year. The sub-committee will report to the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning, which will report to the Senate on the sub-committee's activities. The nominations for Contributions to Teaching awards and for the Distinguished Instructors Award will be reviewed at the end of this month and recommendations will be made to the Provost and Vice-President Academic.

3. ONLINE STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF TEACHING

Overview

Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) is an important component in the overall assessment of teaching and learning. Stakeholders in the SET process include faculty, students, administration, and staff. For faculty members, SET surveys are important in re-evaluating pedagogical practices and course design, along with providing evidence of teaching effectiveness for promotion, tenure, renewal and merit. Section 16.06.02 (B) of the current Lakehead University Faculty Association collective agreement requires faculty members to provide summary scores as part of their annual report. For students, the SET surveys

provide an opportunity to give anonymous feedback on the quality of instruction and the course content. The aggregate data provides an important snapshot of teaching effectiveness across campus.

The Senate Teaching and Learning committee conducted considerable research examining online SET evaluations and found that online data collection provide significant benefits, including:

- increased security of data
- increased quality and quantity of comments
- increased anonymity for students
- increased accessibility for students
- more timely feedback to faculty members
- decreased costs
- potential to customize survey instrument

Based on this research and substantive discussion in Senate, the committee brought forward the following motion, which was approved by Senate April 25th, 2013:

MOVED that the procedures for administering the existing instrument for Student Evaluation of Teaching be conducted online through the Lakehead University website using myInfo with faculty members having the option to continue to use paper-based evaluations by annually opting out of the online process and that Senate revisit the student evaluation process in three years.

Since this motion was passed by Senate there have been three administrations of the online SET. The first, in the summer of 2013, was a pilot designed to test the mechanics of the online evaluation system including the opt-out mechanism and address identified difficulties. The feedback from instructors to Institutional Analysis was critical during this period, as it allowed for corrections and improvements to the system. The first full administration of online SETs was conducted in the fall of 2013 followed by a second administration at the end of the winter 2014 term.

Opt-out

As per the Senate motions (April 2013, February 2014), instructors were given the chance to opt-out of having their SET conducted online and remain with the traditional paper methodology. In the fall 2013 term 83% of instructors had their SET surveys conducted online while 74% had them conducted online for the 2014 winter term.

Communication

Over the course of the 2013-14 implementation, a number of communications initiatives were undertaken by STLC in conjunction with the Instructional Development Centre (IDC) to support the movement to online evaluations. These included:

- The development of a FAQ section on the IDC website to offer support and answer questions from both students and instructors.
- Professional development training sessions and open forums during Teaching and Learning week.
- Enhanced communication strategies with messaging specifically targeting the two biggest issues for students – the anonymity of responses and the value of completing evaluations. The campaign for both students and instructors began two weeks prior to the release of the online SET (for both fall and winter terms), through the following channels:

- the University's website and social media channels
- direct emails to students
- direct email to faculty providing suggestions for encouraging students to complete the surveys
- communication bulletins
- banners around campus
- advertisements in The Argus and on University computer desktops

Although STLC has worked hard to increase the profile of SET and online SET in particular, research has shown that it is the instructor that has the greatest influence on student SET completion rates. In the coming year, STLC will continue to promote online SET, and recommend that instructors visit the IDC website for suggestions on how they can encourage student SET completion.

Response Rates

Despite technical issues, the online SET process was conducted successfully and on time for most course-sections in both the fall and winter terms. The overall online response rate in 2013F was 30% with the response rates varying by Faculty; the highest being 45%. The online response rate fell to 22% for the 2013Y / 2014W terms with the highest Faculty response rate being 31%. A technical issue may have contributed to this lower response rate for the 2013Y / 2014W terms.

One of the major components of the online transition was creating a whole new technical piece called the dashboard, which allows instructors to easily access their online SET results via myInfo at the end of term. Technical challenges that presented during the fall term, delayed the release of the fall term evaluations to instructors; however, the dashboard was finally launched on March 7th with the release of the 2013F results. This automatic process had its first real test at the end of the 2014 winter term when the results from the 2013Y and 2014W evaluations were released automatically and successfully at the end of April.

Technical Difficulties

The availability of the necessary resources and skills was carefully considered when the STLC first proposed moving to online SET. STLC was assured that the University had the resources to accomplish the task. However, changes in personnel within Technology Services (TSC) exacerbated the difficulties that were encountered. The problems have been identified, in most cases have been addressed, and in others, are in process. A summary of the technical challenges are provided.

The online SET process is an automated process that relies completely on the University information system to function accurately. The process requires many course and instructor nuances unique to the SET process to be documented in the system. Data entry errors, coding insufficiencies and unforeseen system malfunctions caused problems with both the 2013F and 2013Y/2014W administrations.

Specific problems experienced include:

- Difficulty in definitively defining the course-sections to be evaluated using existing coding system (fields and codes).
- Defining instructor(s) to ensure that evaluations only open for the instructor(s) and not for other people who may be legitimately named on a course.
- Evaluation timing. For evaluations to open during the 3rd and 2nd last weeks of class an accurate record of when students are 'in class' is necessary. In the case of two instructors named to a yearlong course, but who split the teaching load by semester there is currently no way to define when to evaluate each instructor.

While many of the aforementioned errors and problems were fixed on an as needed basis over the course of the last two administrations, Institutional Analysis is working with the Registrar's Office, the Faculties and TSC to resolve these data problems at a system level to ensure that they do not occur during future SET administrations. Such challenges are to be expected during a transition period and it is assumed that in moving forward, such occurrences will be minimal.

Conclusion

Overall Lakehead's online SET process ran as smoothly as can be expected during the first year of an institution wide implementation. Most of the online evaluations were conducted without incident and where problems arose they were resolved quickly. We anticipate a much smoother process as we move into the 2014/15 administration.

The IDC will continue efforts to promote the completion of evaluations and offer support and assistance to instructors. The office of Institutional Analysis will continue to work with the Registrar's Office, Faculties and TSC to ensure a smooth administration in 2014/15.

Finally, as chair I would like to express my thanks to everyone we have worked with this year. It has been a real pleasure to work on this committee and with people from across campus on these initiatives, especially the IDC, TSC, and Institutional Analysis. We appreciated all the feedback we received from the Lakehead University community and all of the discussion on the committee's proposals and activities.

Respectfully submitted,
Monica Ilie

