

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE
Vice Provost Laurie J. Kirsch, Chair
October 31, 2019

Minutes

Present: N. Benedict, B. Falcione, G. Hamad, T. Haley, R. Jones, T. Jones, H. Lee, L. Wang, C. Golden, L. Kirsch

Guest: Provost Ann Cudd

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 10:30. Chair Laurie Kirsch welcomed 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 council members to the meeting. Members introduced themselves.

Assessment of Teaching

In Summer 2019, the 2019-2020 Advisory Council on Instructional Excellence submitted a report (attached) to Provost Ann Cudd on Assessment of Teaching. The report was the result of Council's effort during the academic year to fulfill the charge given by Provost Cudd. Specifically, ACIE was asked to provide recommendations to the Provost about "... expanding ways in which we as a university assess teaching." In her charge, Provost Cudd noted that "research suggests that experimenting with additional ways of measuring and assessing teaching, beyond student opinion surveys, can be valuable and help instructors to improve and refine their teaching practices."

The 2019 report submitted to the Provost from ACIE provides historical context related to the assessment of teaching, summarizes current assessment practice across the University, and describes the process used by the Council to address the Provost's charge. The report then articulates a set of guiding principles developed by ACIE along with a set of specific recommendations for expanding the assessment of teaching.

The October 31 meeting began with Laurie and Cynthia providing an overview of the recommendations in the report, focusing on the guiding principles and recommendations. In summary, they noted:

Guiding Principles

1. A multi-faceted assessment process should be a central component of the teaching practice of all academic units
2. Assessment efforts should focus on pursuing excellence

3. Recognize the value of student input
4. Use multiple forms of assessment, including input from students and from peers.
5. Discipline-specific implementations will be needed and approaches may vary for assessment of full-time and part-time faculty. Units need flexibility to design their own assessment approaches.
6. Faculty engagement will be critical.

Recommendations

1. Each academic unit will develop its own processes, criteria and an action plan to be used in the evaluation of the teaching performance of its faculty. Teaching Center staff should be consulted for input and support. Each Dean and Campus President should submit their plan for approval to the Office of the Provost.
2. Each unit's plan should recognize that data used to assess teaching effectiveness should come from at least three sources: input from students (both undergraduate and graduate) such as that from student opinion of teaching surveys, feedback from faculty colleagues, and representative teaching materials, such as those that would be contained in a teaching portfolio, or teaching inventories. In addition, a self-assessment should be submitted by each instructor.
3. Each unit's plan should describe how faculty were engaged in the development of the assessment plan, and how faculty will continue to be engaged going forward.
4. The Teaching Center will make available to all schools and campuses an inventory of research-based effective practices, sample assessment plans and resources.
5. Academic Units, with support from the Office of the Provost and the Center for Teaching and Learning, should enhance the value of student opinion surveys by raising faculty awareness of the effective use of student input, and the potential biases in these types of surveys.
6. Academic units should develop specific guidance for all faculty regarding expectations for teaching and the use of formative and summative assessment data to be included in annual reviews and promotion/tenure dossiers. Guidance should be tailored for faculty at different stages in their careers, and consideration given to needs of full-time and part-time faculty.
7. All deans and campus presidents should be given access to their school or campus Student Opinion of Teaching Survey results for all instructors of all ranks. Further, deans and campus presidents, in conjunction with their faculty and in accordance with each unit's governance practices, will determine how the data are shared within their unit.

The Provost then offered her perspective. She noted the importance of regularly reviewing how we assess teaching as well as the importance of developing the skills and capabilities of the faculty. She also commented on her desire to see richer reports of teaching effectiveness in promotion and tenure dossiers in the future. The Provost also expressed a need to more effectively gauge the effectiveness of faculty efforts to mentor doctoral students.

With respect to the ACIE report, the Provost found the historical record interesting and appreciated the effort to provide that context to the practice of teaching assessment. She strongly agreed with the guiding principles and believes the recommendations are solid. She noted that

we will need to think about dates for implementation, and what is reasonable to expect in terms of submitting plans and allowing for appropriate feedback and approval processes. Though she has some ideas and questions going forward, she approves the recommendations and plans to take the report to Council of Deans for their review.

At this point in the meeting, the floor was opened to a general discussion. Council members raised a number of points, including the need to expand opportunities for recognition of excellent teaching, the difficulty of standardizing assessment across disciplines and fields, and the need to clarify teaching opportunities and contributions such as the contributions associated with supervising directed or independent study.

Council members also raised the importance of sharing plans across units, both as a way to share best practices and as a way to educate the university community about effective assessment practices. Several ideas were suggested: holding a summit on assessment of teaching and learning, prominently displaying assessment plans on websites, and clearly communicating expectations for annual reviews as well as promotion and tenure dossiers (for tenured, tenure-stream and appointment-stream faculty).

There was a discussion about tying teaching effectiveness to learning outcomes. This sparked a discussion about assessment and accreditation requirements, and the differences between assessing a program and assessing a class. Council members also discussed making expectations for teaching clear to all faculty. They noted that, to move the recommendations forward, academic units will need to develop more expertise in assessment, and devote adequate resources to the task.

The discussion ended with the Provost reiterating her support of the report and its recommendations, and her plan to discuss the report and implementing the recommendations with the Council of Deans.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 16, 2020, from 11:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. The meeting will take place in 815 Alumni Hall.

Adjournment

There being no further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 p.m.