

**Subcommittee on Teaching and Learning
of the Academic Policy and Planning Committee
21st meeting held on Tuesday, 28 October 2008
from 10:00 to 12:00
in James Administration Building – Room 310**

Present: M. Mendelson (Chair), B. Baker, J. Clark, A. Costopoulos, A. Jaeger, R. Harris, H. Sleiman, D. Starke-Meyerring, M. Kreiswirth, J. Luker, M. McIntosh, C. Urbain, C. Weston, Y. Steinert, A. Ippersiel (Secretary to the Committee)

Regrets: A. De Motta, J. Everett, S. Franke, T. Kirby, S. Tran, T. Wheeler

Guests: Adam Finkelstein and Marcy Slapcoff (TLS)

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was accepted.

2. Approval of minutes of SCTL meeting held on 28 October 2008

Minutes of 9 September 2008 should be amended to record that A. Jaeger was present at last meeting. The minutes were accepted as amended.

3. Membership list 2008-09

Currently Professor Jaeger serves as the delegate for the Dean of Continuing Education. However, since there is a new Dean, Professor Jaeger asked whether this situation should be reviewed. The Chair suggested that Professor Jaeger discuss this with Dean Judith Potter who should then contact the Chair with her decision.

4. Business arising from minutes of previous meetings

Student participation in the University Teaching Labs Working Group

Professor Mendelson reported that he raised the topic of student participation in the University Teaching Labs Working Group (UTL). After some discussion at UTL, it was decided that it would make more sense to involve students at the local level. Faculties are committed to consulting with students.

The Director of TLS, Cynthia Weston, gave a report on the *Learning to Teach Workshop* that will be offered to graduate students on Saturday November 8th. This is a collaborative effort with Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies which has been very well received; over 300 students are registered for this one day workshop.

Use of clickers for exams

Adam Finkelstein of TLS presented the advantages and disadvantages of using clickers for high stakes testing.

The general sense of the committee was that clickers should not be used for examinations or for any other high stakes assessment situations. It is crucial for students to know that academic integrity is valued at this University; testing situations that are inherently problematic undermine this principle. Some of the problems involved with their use are related to technology and may be overcome in time. Of greater concern are the pedagogical disadvantages, e.g., that there is no opportunity for students to review questions or to answer at their own pace which are important characteristics of effective testing.

Clickers should primarily be used for increasing student engagement and formative assessment (giving feedback to students about their learning). When used in this way, some professors find it motivational to attach a small percentage of grades to their use. The discussion revolved around an acceptable threshold for the percentage of a grade assigned to clicker use.

Action: The document should be revised so that the technological and pedagogical advantages and disadvantages are highlighted separately. A draft recommendation should also be developed. Based on this, the committee does not endorse the use of clickers for exams. If clickers are used as part of the evaluation for a course, then this should be a minor percentage for each individual use (e.g., 1%) , and a minor percentage of the overall grade (e.g., 5%). This should be circulated before the December 9th meeting. SCTL then could make recommendation to APC regarding possible use of clickers for summative evaluations.

5. Committee members' reports

a) Executive Director of Student Services

The Executive Director of Student Services, Jana Luker, reported that Student Services is working in collaboration with several groups across campus concerning diversity. There is a Diversity Initiative that is attempting to create a more supportive environment at McGill for marginalized students. The first Workshop, targeted to faculty and staff, will take place on November 17th and is entitled *Creating a Safe Space for Students*.

The members of this initiative would like to extend an invitation to the various groups on campus that are working on diversity related issues to bring forward ideas for the next workshop.

b) Teaching and Learning Services (TLS)

The Director of TLS, Cynthia Weston, gave a report on the Learning to Teach Workshop that will be offered to graduate students on Saturday November 8th. This is a collaborative effort with Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies which has been very well received; over 300 students are registered for this one day workshop.

Comments/questions:

The graduate student representative asked about the emphasis on Science in the March 2008 workshops. Another question was the extent to which TLS will develop workshops that are Faculty specific and will draw on existing initiatives in the Faculties. The emphasis at the moment is on university wide workshops but the goal is to move increasingly towards Faculty and department specific ones. Some work has already been done to integrate existing initiatives, for example with the Faculties of Science, and Agricultural and Environmental Science, as well as the Department of Sociology.

6. Nexus between Research and Teaching (TL.08-10-04)

Marcy Slapcoff of TLS was invited to SCTL to present a draft of the "Nexus" proposal previously discussed at the SCTL meeting of 9 September, 2008. The Nexus Project is proposed in three phases: 1) University- wide survey, 2) University- wide event, and 3) Multidisciplinary network of professors. Phase 1 and 2 can be ramped up this year and done in parallel; phase 3 would follow the next year.

Overall comments about the proposal:

Phase 1- University- wide survey: This should be done within the culture of McGill therefore the survey should be sent to the Deans and through them, to the Chairs. This has to be accompanied with an educational piece even if it is short. It would be important to create a sense of excitement so that Faculty members are excited to share their strategies for integrating teaching and research/scholarship. Members liked the idea of a survey but suggested that it doesn't have to be a complete survey; it can be a scan of the environment. It was also emphasized that it is important to be sensitive to Faculty-specific use of terms.

Phase 2 – University- wide event: The main goal of the event is to showcase McGill professors who already integrate teaching and research/scholarship in an exemplary fashion, and bring in an expert (e.g., Mick Healey) to help develop our institutional language and understanding. This event would probably be in late February or early March 2009. It was also suggested that this could be part of the Capital Campaign through DAR.

Phase 3- Multidisciplinary network of professors: This would be a longer phase that requires more in-depth involvement from individual professors interested in learning how to integrate teaching and research/scholarship within their courses. Professors would attend workshops and be introduced to a conceptual framework, and instructional and assessment strategies. There would also be an assessment team that would help professors track how this initiative affects learning and teaching. What kind of incentives (rewards) can be given at both the individual and department level to free up the individual to participate? How will junior faculty members receive recognition for participation in this kind of activity?

One of the members suggested that Ms. Slapcoff should make presentations at various Faculty meetings.

Action: The document/report will be revised to incorporate suggestions offered by the committee.

7. Sustainability across the Curriculum Report (TL.08-10-06)

Marcy Slapcoff reported on her attendance at the AASHE conference at San Diego State University in June 2008. The American Association of Sustainability in Education (AASHE) is an association of colleges and universities in the United States and Canada working to create a sustainable future. About half of the G13 are active members of AASHE; all universities in the AAU empirical and aspirational categories are members.

Broad definitions of sustainability include sustainability as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” and sustainability as the intersection of 3 domains: the economic, the environmental and the social. The idea of sustainability and the curriculum is to invite disciplines to think about the relationship of sustainability to their own area; not to impose it as a requirement.

Comments/questions:

- Some Faculties at McGill are already doing quite a bit for the environment, e.g., Engineering accreditation requirement includes discussion of impact of technology. There is also the McGill MBA as well as the Rethink Forum yearly.
- Danger would be not to coordinate or look for links that already exist. Need to bring it into context of what we are already talking about. Speak to people who are already active, eg. McGill School of the Environment, Rethink conference etc.
- One suggestion was to integrate sustainability with nexus rather than have it stand alone as a separate thing.
- Service learning would be another important aspect – research in communities.
- Sustainability and the environment is something that will easily engage students. We should reach out to invite them to participate (eg PGSS and SSMU).
- Again it was suggested that Marcy Slapcoff do a presentation to the various Faculties.

8. Principal’s Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Teaching (TL.08-10-05)

The Director of TLS presented a draft of a Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Teaching for discussion and approval. This draft was drawn from other teaching awards in the G13. The nomination package parallels other Principal’s Prize Awards and is aligned with the Teaching Portfolio to make it easier to move winners’ dossiers forward to the 3M National Teaching Fellowship.

The Director asked for comments from the committee concerning the form of recognition that should accompany this award.

Comments/clarification:

- One question was whether it had been intentional that no mention was made of tenure/non tenure. Professor Weston responded that it was intentionally written to be inclusive. The Chair suggested that this be written explicitly.
- Does it have to be one award per year? Could it be awarded to 2 outstanding people retiring in one year? Could a case be made on a “need basis?” This will have budget implications.
- What is the threshold for number of years teaching at McGill? It was suggested that 15-20 years be the minimum.
- The 25 year threshold excludes a lot of people. What about Emeritus professors?
- How much would the award be worth? \$10K was suggested.

TLS will make revisions and will move this forward with the Chair.

Action: The Chair and Director of TLS will follow up on Principal’s Award and bring it to APG.

9. SCTL Report to APC 2007-08 and plans for 2008-09

The Chair presented the SCTL Report that will be brought to APC. He stated that there were 3 main items that SCTL discussed last year – 1) Course Evaluation and Implementation; 2) Teaching Awards and 3) the Nexus Between Research and Teaching and these will be moved forward to APC for approval.

The question was raised why some other reports received by the Committee were not on this list (e.g., Enhancing Student Engagement). The Chair explained that these are unit reports that do not necessarily go to APC. It was felt that there were some interesting discussions during the year that do not get adequately circulated. The Chair suggested that the Committee look for ways to spread the word.

Action: A paragraph will be added to the SCTL Report to APC as follows:

“SCTL also received regular reports from, and provided advice to, Teaching and Learning Services, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, and Student Services related to initiatives that impact teaching and learning at McGill.”

Action: The next Agenda should include an item regarding mechanisms to move SCTL discussions forward in the University.

10. Other Business

11. Adjournment : 11:45 am

Andree Ippersiel November 17, 2008