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Minutes

43rd meeting of the Subcommittee on Teaching and Learning (STL)
of the Academic Policy Committee
Tuesday, 21 May 2013, 10:00am – 12:00pm
James Administration Building, room 301

Present: Jeremie Abitbol, Nicole Allard, Lawrence Chen, Andre Costopoulos, Jaye Ellis, Svetlana Komarova, Sara Laimon, Jana Luker, Morton Mendelson (Chair), Sharon Roy, Nancy St-Pierre (Secretary), Carole Urbain

Regrets: James Archibald, George Azmy, Ian Henderson, Murray Humphries, Maggie Kilgour, Lucy Lach, Sujata Madan, Laura Nilson, Doreen Starke-Meyerring, Yvonne Steinert, Cynthia Weston

Guests: Frédéric Fovet, Director, Office for Students with Disabilities
Heather Mole, Access Services Advisory, Office for Students with Disabilities
Divya Pahwa, Undergraduate Student Assistant, Teaching and Learning Services
Laura Winer, Associate Director, Teaching and Learning Services

1. **Adoption of the agenda**

   The agenda was adopted as circulated.

2. **Approval of the minutes of 25 March 2013**

   The minutes were approved as circulated.

3. ***Presentation on Universal Design*** *(Guests: Frédéric Fovet and Heather Mole, Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD))*

   The Chair of STL welcomed the guests to the meeting. A presentation on the mission of the OSD followed with some of the highlights noted below.

   The work of the OSD is guided by five imperatives:
   - *Resource management*: there has been a significant increase in the volume of users and requests (from just over 400 in 2004-2005 to over 1200 for 2012-2013);
   - *The ' disability specialist' is obsolete:* there has been an increase in the complexity of diagnoses, with an estimated 10% of students coming forward and 60-70% of students with invisible diagnoses;
   - *Sustainability:* OSD is developing sustainable teaching practices as a 'lens' to target the environment, rather than retrofit the environment;
   - *Shift from Medical to Social Model of disability:* OSD is working towards transferring and implementing the social model in the management of disability;
   - *Inclusion:* end-user evaluation of OSD services is being implemented.

OSD has identified three ways in which it anticipates implementing universal design:
- to collaborate with Faculties and Departments on resources that are specific to their needs and fields of study;
- to ensure the effective use of existing resources with course instructors;
- to consult with Faculties and Departments on reframing course outlines and evaluations methods.

The OSD has produced a wide range of resources that are both University-wide as well as Faculty-specific and have been working with the Classics Department to model universal design principles and evaluate their impact on course delivery and evaluation methods. The OSD also has an IT specialist to assist with technology-based design.

STL members noted several concerns, including the need to increase knowledge of how students with invisible disorders can present to instructors and how/when instructors should ask for assistance or refer students to OSD as well as the need to ensure that students are not given false hopes. Heather Mole noted that outlining the expectations of a course and/or program at the outset is vital; some core skills may not be accommodated and students should be made aware of that.

It was suggested that OSD might provide instructors with evidence-based literature, establishing the effectiveness of universal design strategies to address some of the barriers that might be encountered during the implementation phase. It was noted that universal design benefits not only students with disabilities, but also a wide range of other students.

OSD has identified their next steps and will be working with Faculties to tailor workshops, recruit Faculty liaisons and redeploy their resources to assist instructors in implementing these strategies.

The Chair thanked Mr. Fovet and Ms. Mole for their presentation.

4. **Course evaluation student research project** *(Guests: Divya Pahwa and Laura Winer, Teaching and Learning Services)*

The Chair welcomed Ms. Pahwa and Dr. Winer to the meeting. Ms. Pahwa's presentation reported the findings of a research project she undertook, which focused on what influences students to respond or not to course evaluations. Based on interviews and focus groups, an online survey was developed; 73 students responded to the question "what motivates you to do or not to do course evaluations?"

Based on the responses and follow-up interviews, three recommendations have come forward:
   i. extend course evaluation dates until the end of exam period;
   ii. conduct the course evaluations in class (if the dates cannot be extended);
   iii. provide evidence of impact by communicating to students that instructors do care about the results. Two ways in which this could be achieved would be by encouraging mid-year evaluations and developing professor profiles.

The Dean of Students noted that he usually sets up a discussion board on myCourses, which allows him to address student concerns right away. If instructors address the feedback they receive and indicate what can and cannot be modified, students would be reassured that their comments are taken seriously.

Laura Winer asked members to communicate with her directly should they be aware of instructors who have modified their courses based on student feedback, because she is trying to build profiles to help other instructors.

5. **Unit updates**
   5.1 *CIO:* Sharon Roy advised that the CIO's office is considering an upgrade to the current LMS system. Should the upgrade proceed, there will be significant changes in the interface, but workshops, training and knowledge-based articles will be available to assist instructors in navigating the upgrades. A decision on whether to proceed with the upgrade will be made by June 17th. *(Secretary's note: on 2 July 2013 all academic staff was notified that the LMS upgrade would take place on 26 July.)*
   5.2 *TLS:* The Deputy Provost announced that the Director of TLS, who was not able to attend the meeting, would be stepping down on August 31st. He expressed the Committee's appreciation for the work she had done in advancing the cause of teaching and learning at McGill as well as leading the many changes that have taken place at TLS during her tenure as Director.
   5.3 *Libraries*: Carole Urbain advised that the Library is reviewing new copyright regulations to ensure that coursepacks (both hardcopy and electronic formats) are compliant.
   5.4 *Student Services*: Jana Luker confirmed that Student Services is working with OSD to develop note-taking procedure. A report should be presented at a Fall meeting of STL.
   5.5 *Dean of Students:* Dean Andre Costopoulos noted that his office is also working with the OSD to provide assistance to instructors on implementing strategies. In addition, he advised that McGill's Turnitin license is under review. The current license expires on May 31st and a decision will be made shortly whether to renew with Turnitin or to proceed with another supplier. *(Secretary's note: The contract with Turnitin was not renewed, but other options are being explored; in addition, appropriate notices will be sent to the community during the summer.)*

The Deputy Provost ended the meeting by thanking the members for their dedication in working towards, and sharing ideas to advance, teaching and learning at McGill.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 11:30am.