

2018 - 2019
Report of the University Council Committee on Academic & Related Affairs
April 8, 2019

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Chair:	Joe Libonati
Faculty:	Julie Fairman Daniel Raff Marc Schmidt Lisa Servon Alan Strudler Guobin Yang
Graduate and Professional Students:	Gregory Callahan Rina Madhani
Undergraduate Students:	Dhruv Iyer William Yoo
PPSA:	Yuhong He Patty Lynn
WPPSA:	Rhonda Kirlew
Administrative Liaison:	Leo Charney
Staff:	Diane Fassett

COMMITTEE GENERAL CHARGES

- (i) shall have cognizance over matters of recruitment, admissions, and financial aid that concern the University as a whole and that are not the specific responsibility of individual faculties, including the authority to carry out studies on existing recruitment and admissions procedures and their relationships with existing policies on admissions and financial aid and to recommend changes in policy to the Council;
- (ii) shall consider the purposes of a University bookstore and advise the Council and the management of the University bookstore on policies, development, and operations;
- (iii) shall review and monitor issues related to the international programs and other international activities of the University, including advice and policy recommendations in such areas as services for international students and scholars, foreign fellowships and studies abroad, faculty, staff and student exchange programs, and cooperative undertakings with foreign universities;
- (iv) shall advise the vice provost and director of libraries on the policies, development, and operation of the University libraries;
- (v) shall have cognizance over recreation and intramural and intercollegiate athletics and their integration with the educational program of the University, including the planning and provision of adequate facilities for various sports and recreational activities; and
- (vi) shall have cognizance of all matters of policy relating to research and the general environment for research at the University, including the assignment and distribution of indirect costs and the assignment of those research funds distributed by the University, and shall advise

the administration on those proposals for sponsored research referred to it because of potential conflict with University policy.

2018-2019 SPECIFIC CHARGES

1. Review and comment on the affordability of a Penn education for all undergraduate and graduate students by considering expenses related to tuition, fees, and costs-of-living and to socioeconomic and cultural concerns of both first generation and low-income students and of middle-income and other students.
2. In collaboration with the Center for Teaching and Learning, the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty, and school-based representatives, review and comment on existing preparation provided to classroom instructors (e.g., teaching assistants and full-time/part-time/adjunct faculty).

SUMMARY OF COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

The committee met five times during the 2018-2019 academic year. At the first meeting, the committee reviewed the charges and established a working strategy for the year. In the second meeting, Bruce Lenthall (Executive Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning) provided an overview of the type of teaching preparation programs that exist at the various schools through the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). In the third meeting, the committee debriefed on teaching preparation opportunities and discussed the schedule for future invited guests. Beth Winkelstein (Vice Provost for Education) attended our fourth meeting, where the topic of instructor evaluations was discussed. Lastly, Anita Allen (Vice Provost for Faculty) was our invited guest for the fifth meeting where she provided perspective on the significance of teaching practice in tenure and promotion. All guests were provided a list of discussion questions/discussion points prior to meeting with the committee.

RESPONSE TO 2018-2019 SPECIFIC CHARGES

Overview:

Educational excellence is a central tenet of the University of Pennsylvania. Given the significance of this topic, we prioritized our efforts towards the specific charge of reviewing existing teaching preparation. The university is currently implementing strategies related to affordability, i.e. the Penn First Plus Program; hence the committee thought it prudent to examine this charge during the 2019-2020 academic year when more data become available.

Teacher preparation generally falls under two categories: 1) individuals starting their careers (new faculty, adjuncts, teaching assistants) and 2) already established instructors (those who are interested in applying new educational strategies and/or who want to improve their teaching practice).

For new faculty and lecturers, teacher preparation programs are not standardized across the university and vary from school-to-school. For example, some schools/departments have several hour-long teaching preparation sessions prior to the start of the academic year. Other academic units hold workshops and/or provide online orientations for new instructors while some schools/departments do not provide any preparation programs. Teaching preparation sessions are often led by school representatives with or without collaboration/consultation with CTL. CTL's role in school-led teaching orientations often centers on general teaching tools such as: course planning and design, assignments, examination preparation, and managing student expectations.

CTL also offers classroom observations for both new and established instructors and provides instructors with teaching feedback upon request.

CTL commits significant resources toward preparing teaching assistants for the classroom. For example, a three-day training program is offered to new doctoral teaching assistants and is a requirement for many before entry into the classroom. There are approximately 300 doctoral teaching assistants who go through this program each year from a variety of schools (not all schools participate). CTL also offers separate orientations for undergraduate and Master's student teaching assistants, as well as SAIL classes (Structured Active In-Class Learning). SAIL training consists of a four-session program on preparation, in which 40 teaching assistants per year participate (as referred by faculty). CTL likewise offers mini-courses for professional development and workshops (120 workshops attended by over 2000 graduate students).

Established faculty utilize CTL for a variety of reasons. Some faculty self-initiate consultation with CTL because they want to change or improve their teaching practices. Some established faculty are referred by their department because of teaching practices that may have been identified as 'poor.' Approximately, eighty percent of faculty self-initiate consultations with CTL, while approximately twenty percent are referred (with mid-career faculty assuming the largest number). CTL also offers 50 to 60 teaching workshops per year for all faculty.

CTL is also expanding its involvement with online course offerings. CTL has been instrumental in helping faculty design online courses and is collaborating increasingly with central and school online design teams to address larger teaching concerns. CTL is working toward increasing faculty participation at all levels.

Instructor feedback is an important tool for evaluating teaching practice. Department chairs and individual schools provide oversight to faculty regarding teaching practice, and teaching evaluations are considered a significant part of the tenure and promotion process. Course evaluations from students are the principal mode used in evaluating teaching practice. They are conducted in both paper and electronic formats. The metrics from course evaluations are complicated and can be marred with biases toward subject area, class size, and faculty identity. The university is working to refine course evaluations and improve the manner of processing them. Individual academic units often use additional methods of assessing teaching practice such as faculty peer evaluations and alumni surveys. Teaching assistant evaluation data are often funneled through the faculty to whom they are assigned and teaching assistants who teach their own sections or labs may not receive evaluation data themselves. More work is needed to refine teaching evaluations at all levels.

CARA conclusions/recommendations:

- The university offerings for teacher preparation for new instructors are very robust. CTL provides many programs for teaching assistant preparation. CARA applauds these efforts and recommends maintaining such programs.
- Individual academic units often provide teacher preparation for their new instructors. CARA encourages CTL to continue to supplement individual academic units as needed and continue to reach out to schools that currently commit few resources toward teacher preparation. Likewise, schools should reciprocally reach out to CTL to enhance teacher preparation.
- The total number of established faculty using CTL (both self-referred or referred from department) is not very large but varies greatly across schools. CARA recommends

- that CTL and individual schools forge further connections to increase faculty utilization (i.e., publicize the excellent CTL resources and offerings for faculty). If successful in expanding that effort, more CTL resources and staff will be needed.
- Varying class formats and class sizes (e.g., online courses and large gateway courses) require niche teacher preparation. CARA recommends that CTL continue to expand its role in helping faculty develop these types of courses.
 - A number of courses are taught by new instructors who may not be aware of Penn's core teaching values. CARA recommends that a central document summarizing Penn's teaching values/aims be regularly circulated around the university.
 - Diversity and wellness are integral elements of the classroom experience. CARA recommends that CTL develop formal relationships with the offices of Diversity and Inclusion and Wellness in order to more deeply include training in these areas for faculty across all schools.
 - The validity and utility of course evaluations are often questioned. CARA recommends that the university continue to reassess and test methods to best reflect teaching practice and examine processes in peer institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE CHARGES

1. Review and comment on the affordability of a Penn education for all undergraduate and graduate students by considering expenses related to tuition, fees, and costs-of-living and to socioeconomic and cultural concerns of both first generation and low-income students and of middle-income and other students.
2. Review and comment on admissions practices for all undergraduate students.