MEETING MINUTES

COMMITTEE FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE UNDERGRADUATE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Monday, November 1, 2021, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Present in person: K. Chenoweth, E. Davis, D. Meighan, L. Sunderlin, K. Wiemer

Present via zoom: D. Dugas, E. Fredericks, D. Gliesman, J. Gray, W. Johnson, N. Knutson, V. Korampally, T. Libert, K. Padron, A. Radasanu, N. Richards

Guest: Stephanie Richter, Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning

Adoption of Agenda. Motion to adopt the agenda made by Fredericks, seconded by Dugas. An amendment to the agenda was announced; instead of Jason Rhode, Stephanie Richter was in attendance to talk to us on behalf of CITL. The agenda was accepted unanimously.

Introduction new members. Two new student representatives, K. Chenoweth and E. Davis, were welcomed and briefly introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes from October 4. Fredericks moved to approve the October minutes. Meighan seconded. There was no discussion. Motion to approve passed unanimously.

Report from CITL (S. Richter). Richter started with a short overview of CITL and some upcoming workshops. She then addressed two specific topics of interest to the CIUAE: syllabi (especially policies) and classroom technology.

Syllabi. CITL advocates for a learner-centered design that is useful to students; CITL also provides a checklist of common elements that should be on a syllabus (https://www.niu.edu/citl/resources/guides/syllabus-checklist.shtml). The site lists policy statements that specifically promote equity and inclusion. Sunderlin asked how policies may be added to the link. Richter said that faculty can email suggestions to CITL. CITL then evaluates the utility of the proposal and whether it is generally useful or only to specific classes. Policies posted to the checklist should be useful for any kind of class.

Richter then invited input from the students. Davis stated that most useful to students is a detailed calendar with clear deadlines, and information on required resources such as textbooks with a date on by when students need to have those resources on hand. Chenoweth and Meighan concurred with this. Additionally, it was noted that details about assignments in the syllabus are not useful but would better be posted separately. Also, "piecemeal" delivery of the syllabus (such as topics) are difficult for students.

Students were in agreement that inclusion language was noticeable in syllabi in recent years, but that at times syllabi were overdoing the point by adding this language repeatedly to

parts of the course in ways that are redundant. The best practice from the students' perspective would be a clear statement at the end of class policies.

Classroom technology. Richter reported that CITL has a multiyear plan to update classroom technology, as many systems are outdated, and will form a committee for improvements which will include students, faculty, as well as a CIUAE representative. Students reported some difficulty over the last semesters having to learn quite varying systems to access content and assignment for their different classes as faculty were using different tools. Generally, the student representatives reported liking Blackboard and being quite familiar with its functions. For web conferencing tools, Davis reported a preference for Teams.

Dugas asked if it is possible for students on Blackboard to download their graded papers along with instructor comments; Richter stated that that function is available. Richter also asked faculty to inform CITL if classroom documentation is not available in a classroom. CITL is also using QR codes now for quick access to helpful information about technology in each classroom.

Old business.

Student representatives. Sunderlin reminded faculty representing those colleges who are not yet represented by a student to continue to try to recruit students to the committee. Dugas reported timing conflicts for students in the College of Education.

Updates on awards. Wiemer reported that the committee voted for a 1-week extension of the department deadline for teaching nominations, which will permit departments to complete nominations after final grades are processed. This extension should not negatively impact the period available for rankings by the committee. Sunderlin explained the name change from the David Raymond "grant" to "award" that the committee had voted for in the previous academic year and said that changes were being made to the online forms.

Wording changes for nomination and rating prompts. Wiemer asked for a motion to formally vote to approve the wording change from "pedagogy" to "teaching effectiveness" in two prompts (only one prompt was discussed at the previous meeting) as follows:

[Prompt 5] This instructor demonstrates thorough and current knowledge of their subject area and its ~~pedagogical~~ effective teaching practices. Evidence of such achievement could be demonstrated through professional publications, public presentations or lectures, attendance at or organization of appropriate workshops, participation in professional development activities in order to enhance their instructions, or through other venues. Priority should be given to the nominee's contributions to undergraduate ~~pedagogy~~ teaching effectiveness, and to their most recent and relevant activities and achievements.

[Prompt 6] This instructor works actively with students, faculty, and administrators to improve undergraduate education at NIU. Achievements in this area could include extra-classroom programming, curriculum improvement, providing assistance to student organizations, and other activities directed toward the improvement of program quality and undergraduate ~~pedagogy~~ teaching effectiveness.

Dugas moved to approve both changes; Korampally seconded the motion. The changes were approved unanimously.

New business: Focus theme for the coming year. Wiemer reported the results from the Qualtrics survey on committee members' rankings of the concerns discussed at the September meeting. The topic voted as most important and most urgent to address was that of ways to improve accessibility of information such that students can find relevant information more easily. The runner-up topic was access to mental health resources.
The committee broke into three groups to brainstorm a) centers / individuals on campus to work with on the issue, b) specific concerns and ways to more systematically get input from a larger number of students on the issue, and c) ideas of how to address the issue. After the smaller group sessions, each group briefly reported ideas which were noted down for future action planning.

Adjournment. A motion was made by Korampally to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Fredericks. The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by: Katja Wiemer and Lee Sunderlein