January 27, 2012  MINUTES: TEACHING LEGACY TASK FORCE

Present: Kathy Albertson (Chair), Christine Draper, Terri Flateby, Laura Frost, Hemchand Gossai, Stacey Kluge, John O’Malley, Amy Jo Riggs, Daniel Rivera, Sonya Shepherd, Mark Yanochik, and Candace Griffith (Recorder)

Update on the Mid-Year TLTF Report
The TLTF Mid-Year Report has been shared with the Provost; however, if anyone has any additional comments, changes, or suggestions, please let Candace know so that she can incorporate those into the document and send the Provost a ‘final’ version.

Discussion of Role of the (Proposed) Standing Faculty Committee
1. Serve as an advisory body (providing information on faculty programming/technology needs)
2. Serve as an advocacy body (with Faculty Senate)
3. Serve as a resource body (recommending university policy changes; teaching incentives and/or awards)

This item was placed on the agenda as a reminder to the Task Force that we will need to make recommendations regarding a potential standing faculty committee in our final white paper.

Update on the Conference Calls with Southern Polytechnic State University (1/17/12); University of Central Florida (1/20/12); and Upcoming Conference Call with University of Auburn (2/2/12)

1. Southern Polytechnic State University (SPSU) Take-Aways
   SPSU has consolidated the equivalent of our CATS, COL, and CTLS; however, their CTLS equivalent is physically located elsewhere due to lack of space. The most interesting and perhaps relevant item of this discussion was the incentive structure incorporated into online course development. SPSU has provided a mechanism for compensating departments whose faculty participate in the formal online course development process and pass the external review process.

2. University of Central Florida (UCF) Take-Aways
   UCF has consolidated the equivalent of our CATS and COL, but their faculty development center (despite being very technologically oriented) is housed elsewhere. This organizational structure has created some impediments which are slowly being addressed. UCF also compensates faculty directly for course development (like SPSU), but does not have a mechanism in place to incentivize departmental participation. Of interest, UCF has dedicated staff support primarily to track and assess how well their programs meet the intended outcomes. Is this a level of support needed here?

Questions from the Task Force members included the following:
- Are the course development programs offered at these two universities only for courses catering to distance learners or are they for any fully online course that include campus-based students? This question led to a discussion on the differences between online courses developed for distance learners versus those developed for campus-based students.
- Are there any other University System of Georgia institutions which have merged all three functionalities into one super center?
- Do the faculty at SPSU or UCF “own” their course after it has been developed for online delivery? At Georgia Southern, it is a major concern that courses are developed and
then shared where they are then modified to the point of becoming unrecognizable from the original. How can we maintain the quality of online courses once developed? Incentivizing departments to participate in the online course development process would help address this concern; however, we would still need to factor in a departmental level course-content review component.

- What are the challenges to teaching online courses (e.g., design, exams, evaluation, communication)? This question led to a lengthy discussion about the communication challenges of teaching online as well as the time involved. Essentially, student culture is the same regardless of instructional delivery. Students who fail to pay attention in class and ask redundant questions will be the same as those who fail to pay adequate attention to the discussion boards and email the faculty member. Also, discussion boards need to be limited to 8 to 10 participants to be truly effective. This limitation can be problematic in online classes with 40 students.

It was noted that there may be additional technologies that can help faculty manage these discussions, but faculty need to be both aware of those technologies and trained on them. Part of the problem is that given current faculty workloads, faculty simply do not have time to add more training to their schedules. This comment launched a discussion on how we measure the workload involved in teaching online courses. Should an online course count as 1.5 courses to capture accurately the increased amount of work involved (i.e., treated in similar fashion as faculty who are given course reductions for scholarship or for teaching doctoral level courses which require more student interaction)? To be done well, faculty teaching online need to have a certain level of technological competency in addition to their subject matter expertise. Faculty should be allowed time to develop those additional technological skills and receive recognition for the amount of time involved. Another way to frame the discussion is to consider what the other responsibilities are for faculty teaching online. For instance, are faculty who teach online held to the same research expectations as those who teach face-to-face? How can we help people to understand the significant time investment that teaching online effectively requires? or, why is the technology not user-ready rather than requiring extensive training to incorporate technology into class environments?

Another stream of discussion related to teaching online is the concept that instructional technologies amplify one’s teaching ability. If a faculty member is poor in the classroom, the teaching performance will be even worse online. Ideally, our best teachers should be the ones asked to teach online, but even then, they require the time to allow them to create a meaningful online learning experience. It would be helpful to highlight what faculty need to know technologically to teach online.

While instructional technology specialists can help faculty teaching online, one specialist cannot serve an institution our size. Instructional technology specialists will also have areas of expertise and will be able to serve certain populations of faculty better than others. We need to consider this fact when recommending how many instructional technology specialists may be needed for this new center and how they should be assigned—**to be included in the white paper at end of the semester.**

Of note, while it is critical to promote excellence in online teaching to sustain our teaching ethos, it is equally important that online faculty do not become more valued
than faculty who teach face-to-face. Moving forward, it will be important to keep circling back to ensure that our final recommendations do sustain all teaching excellence.

Finally, do we need to revisit assignment of teaching and research assistantships related to online programs? It is problematic that online programs are not eligible for assistantships. Is there a plan to include online TA training for those programs with online faculty who need to do research, but cannot be spared from teaching online?

Discussion of Subcommittee Assignments Moving Forward

1. Teaching Assistant (TA) Training

   This subgroup will need to involve the College of Graduate Studies as they have been working on TA training also. Questions to be addressed include:
   - What is the training needed (from the COGS perspective? from the disciplines' perspective? From the SoTL perspective?)
   - Can we identify a core group of knowledge, abilities, and dispositions that all TAs must have, recognizing that additional, discipline-specific knowledge, etc, are needed for the teaching area, which might be covered through the departments?
   - How do we sustain TA teaching excellence once they have completed their training?
   - How should we assess the effectiveness of our training program? What measures should be used?
   - Why does TA training matter? What is the relevance to the Task Force's mission as well as the University's strategic goals and mission?

2. Workload Analysis of Existing Centers

   Questions to be addressed include:
   - What are the services currently offered?
   - Are they effective (percentage of time spent on various job/role expectations)? How do we know this? What is their impact?
   - What is the current staffing?
   - What is the optimal level of staffing (ratio of staff per faculty; dollars spent per faculty on professional development)?
   - What are the services that should be offered to enable Georgia Southern to achieve its strategic teaching goals and mission?

3. Synopsis of All Teaching Awards (Campus and System)

   Questions to be addressed include:
   - What are the types of teaching awards available, including those at the department, college, campus, and System levels? How are they compensated? What is the award amount, if any?
   - What are the other types of faculty awards (research, service) available, including those at the department, college, campus, and System levels? How are they compensated? What is the award amount, if any?
   - How do faculty value the award? How do administrators value the award?
   - Why do teaching awards matter? What is the relevance to the Task Force's mission as well as the University's strategic goals and mission?
4. Technology Training
   Questions to be addressed include:
   
   - What instructional technology training is currently done? and for whom? How are
decisions made about what technology will be purchased for faculty use? At what point
in decision making are faculty involved, and should the contact be made earlier in the
process?
   - What kind of instructional technology support do the faculty at Georgia Southern
require? How many instructional technology specialists? How would they be assigned?
   - Why does instructional technology matter? What is the relevance to the Task Force’s
mission as well as the University’s strategic goals and mission?
   - How do the librarian college-specialist liaison’s factor into the new center? Does there
need to be a linkage?

The closing discussion centered on whether a teaching-focused faculty could be profitable in the sense
of money and prestige brought to the University. Should the discussion be on how teaching impact in
the field is measured through prestige and dollars generated like scholarship? Open courseware could
have thousands of viewers versus a research article read by a very small group of discipline specialists.
What is the potential impact of teaching process videos? There is also the scholarship of teaching and
learning. Do we need to consider or discuss this aspect further? or is this a question for the Pathways
team to address?

Adjourned: 9:55 a.m.

Next meeting: TBD