Teaching and Advising Committee
Minutes
4 April 2018

Phinney 102 Conference Room
Present: Stephan Flores (Chair), Allan Caplan, Erin Chapman, Matt Doumit, Helen Joyner, Karen Launchbaugh, Sara Mahuron, Christine Slater, and Brian Smentkowski.

Stephan called the meeting to order at 11:32 a.m.

The Minutes of the meeting of March 21, 2018 were approved, M/S by Erin/Karen.

Prior to the meeting, Stephan had drafted and distributed (by email) a memo on “Review of Research on Possibilities for Gender Bias in Students' Evaluation of Teaching” for Faculty Senate. He asked Brian and Karen to review and revise the section provisionally titled “(2) Suggestions for Formative and Summative Evaluations of Teaching and Related Support to Improve Teaching,” and also asked Sara and Helen to review and offer suggestions for revisions to the rest of the memo, which includes sections entitled “(1) Conclusions” and “(3) Summary-Review of Research.” The suggested, possibly optimistic ‘deadline’ for this review and suggested revisions was set for a week later, Wednesday April 11, with Brian to work on his already sketched out ideas, and Karen to then review following Brian’s edits. Karen suggested this productive method of two-to-three step ‘pass it along’ series of reviews, rather than individuals sending all their suggestions at once to Stephan.

Stephan commented on some of his aims/intentions in crafting the Conclusions section so that it included some of the reasoning and review of studies on SETs and the issue of gender bias, and also included some of the committee’s expectations and surprise about our conclusions. The first draft paragraph of this section reads as follows: “Based on review of the studies forwarded to us, of several additional studies, and of the recent analysis of data from UI SETs, we did not find a sufficient aggregate basis to indicate significant instances of gender bias—this is the case for research based on external data and for UI SETs. Our assessment is that the data, evidence, and methods found in external studies are not in accord with the tone and degree of emphasis that popular review articles as well as the referenced studies themselves, tend to forward and to claim in their conclusions. That is, these external studies lacked statistically substantial and relatively clear evidence in data sets and in methodologies and analysis, to support claims of anything more than relatively small (on the order of 1% or less) or statistically minute variations to indicate bias according to gender.”

Stephan had also asked Matt to follow up on developments and discussions regarding advising at UI, particularly “VandalStar” implementation, by conferring perhaps with Cynthia Castro and with Kristi Overfelt, and at Matt’s suggestion, he also will check in with ACADA and the Vandal Success Coalition. He and Erin may be able to report back from a Vandal Success Coalition (which includes several sub-committees) meeting that is scheduled for April 11th.

Stephan also asked Christine and Erin (over the next week or so) to review the teaching awards (Teaching Excellence and the Hoffman), to include scope of eligibility, communication and instructions for nominees and for instance, what is requested of nominees in their ‘packets.’ He suggested that they could also ask Allan to provide another level of review and advice on their observations and suggestions.

TeAC spent the rest of the meeting in a substantial, wide-ranging conversation about advising, including different supportive as well as critical observations about the effects of the UI having shifted to centralized advising (and this includes shifts at departmental levels for advising managed by one or more staff for first and second year students), recent discussions in departments that tended to be highly
critical of the potential ‘surveillance’ and ‘labeling’ mode of VandalStar’s prospective coordination of information and categorization of students, and the kind of specialized knowledge/expertise that informed faculty can offer to advisees that other advisors may not—and in a sense—can not be expected—to know about.

The meeting adjourned at 12:29 p.m.

Next meeting is 11:30 a.m. Wednesday April 18, 2018, in Phinney 102, and will likely focus on reviewing suggestions for teaching awards, and any updates on advising at UI.

Minutes submitted respectfully by Stephan Flores.