Attendee: Erin Chapman, Stephan Flores, Helen Joyner, Kamal Kumar, Raffaella Sini, Christine Slater, Darryl Woolley, Dean Panttaja, Cynthia Castro, Carlos Vazquez, Brian Smentkowski, Guest: Jesse Watson

I. Minutes from 8/29/18 meeting were approved, M/S by Stephan/Darryl.

II. Introductory statements

III. Stephan will send a document on +/- grading before the next meeting (agreed to be scheduled for Oct. 3, 2018) for review and discussion before TeAC sends the report back to Faculty Senate.

IV. Cynthia talked about VandalStar implementation and early warning grades. Integration of faculty advisors in using VandalStar may potentially occur next spring (2019). TeAC will continue to need updates as further discussions are likely to be had based on the charge given to us by Faculty Senate. Look for feedback from faculty solicited/compiled by Faculty Senate coming our way.

V. Cynthia also updated the committee about centralized advising. Explained V.P. Kahler visited Faculty Senate earlier this fall; advising issue not yet settled partially due to a failed search within Academic Advising. Cynthia explained that front-line advisor morale is low and advisors are feeling uncertain, frustrated, and some have left UI; this has been communicated up to V.P. Kahler and the Provost.

VI. Awards criteria will be the focus of the next meeting. Brian and Cher will meet to discuss strategies to streamline and make more impactful; will report back at the next meeting. Stephan will ask some prior award winners for their opinion on the nomination packet requirements as well.

VII. Jesse Watson, ASUI Rep. on Faculty Senate, presented about the complex issue of timely grade reports by instructors. There is concern among some students that grades are not released quickly enough during the semester—this has been an ongoing issue students have brought up to ASUI over the past 4 years. Although ASUI originally began by advocating for BbLearn as the host of all grades, ASUI now wants to focus on timely grade reporting rather than BbLearn Gradebook usage as not all faculty use BbLearn. Ultimately, ASUI would like to work with Faculty Senate on a way to hold instructors accountable for timely reporting of grades. One idea ASUI and the special taskforce created by Faculty Senate in the spring of 2018 to explore this issue suggested is to put a question about timely grades on student evaluations. Jesse explained that Joe DeAngelis (ASUI Rep. on Faculty Senate) is drafting a survey to go out to department chairs/faculty; Darryl recommended Jesse reach out to Associate Deans regarding how to assess faculty grade-reporting habits. Jesse also mentioned another survey going out
to students to update the now 3-year-old data from the survey collected in 2015. Brian also explained that BbLearn usage has spiked since the 2015 data was compiled.

a. Raffaella mentioned/questioned the compulsory nature of grade reporting; early warning and midterm grades are not mandatory, but final grades are. Erin mentioned that she was under the impression that midterms were mandatory, based on her experience with receiving “reminder” emails from CALS; Darryl explained there is variation across colleges/deans/associate deans regarding how strongly instructors are encouraged (expectations?) to submit midterm grades and that there is no formal enforcement mechanism to do so. Darryl also explained that reports from Registrar regarding a lack of reported final grades is sent to Associate Deans, however, this report is not generated (?) or sent regarding midterm grade reporting or lack thereof.

b. There was discussion regarding the vast variation across colleges and departments regarding structure of courses, assignments, etc. and how reporting grades is dependent upon the enrollment of the course, help of a TA, having grades to report on a regular basis, etc. Stephan mentioned that not all courses are designed to have many assignments or activities “to grade” during the semester, such as project-based courses for which the final project is the main source of a course grade. However, Stephan brought up the importance of offering some form of feedback to students particularly in light of midterms and course drop/withdraw dates.

c. Kamal surmised the overall concern as (1) an instructor-level issue of keeping students informed of grades and (2) an institutional-level issue of enforcing grade reports by instructors (such as early warning, midterms, finals). Kamal brought up teaching evaluation return rates (typically low); Brian and Darryl mentioned there are evidence-based strategies for boosting student eval return rates.

d. Stephan and Darryl mentioned the difficult and time-consuming process in changing the overall format of student evaluations (requires Faculty Senate approval), however, perhaps adding one question or customizing the form with an additional question is possible. Due to changes/updates to Banner 9 software, this might be the time to do so.

e. Stephan reiterated that this is highly complex issue without a clear solution; faculty may not even be aware this is a problem or a concern of students. Erin asked if there was “low hanging fruit” TeAC could recommend to Faculty Senate, such as mandating midterm grades in addition to final grades. Darryl mentioned that faculty morale is down and that making anything “mandatory” is not the answer. Brian supported a “developmentally persuasive” approach that will help with an overall culture-shift of increasing communication and expression of expectations among instructor and learners rather than a “punitive” approach with mandates. Jesse reiterated that ASUI wants faculty to be held accountable. Stephan pointed out that students do have the option to include written comments on evaluations. Darryl again suggested Jesse visit with Associate Deans and Chairs regarding this issue. Brian stated that CETL could be
tapped for data regarding BbLearn usage among instructors/courses at the college-level.

Meeting adjourned 12:35pm.
Next meeting is Wednesday, Oct. 3rd, 11:30am-12:30pm, location TBA.

Minutes submitted by Darryl Woolley and Erin Chapman