THE COMMITTEE ON TEACHING

REPORT OF ACTIVITIES: 2012-13

The Committee on Teaching is broadly charged with:

1) stimulating and aiding campus academic departments in strengthening their efforts to foster, recognize, and reward good teaching;

2) initiating, receiving, and funding proposals for teaching and instructional improvement and development;

3) undertaking activities to improve teaching and learning on the campus;

4) studying problems concerning the improvement of teaching on the campus and its recognition through promotion and tenure, and making appropriate recommendations to the Berkeley Division.

To fulfill these charges, the Committee consults on a number of grant programs, recognizes excellence in teaching through the Distinguished Teaching Awards, co-hosts ceremonies to promote interest in and awareness of good teaching, co-sponsors workshops and discussions on teaching practices, and makes recommendations to improve teaching and the climate for teaching on the Berkeley campus.

A new committee structure was introduced this year in order to fulfill additional committee functions. A DTA subcommittee worked solely on the DTA selection and nomination process. A Policy subcommittee worked mainly on two pressing issues on the Berkeley campus, online education and evaluation of teaching effectiveness.

Grant Programs

In 2012-13, the Committee on Teaching continued its consultation on the campus's Instructional Improvement Grant program. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) administered the grant program without deadlines, accepting applications on a rolling basis between August 15, 2012, and May 10, 2013.

Instructional Improvement Grants provide rapid access to modest funds (up to $3000) for small-scale projects to improve existing courses, develop new courses, evaluate instruction, and assess curricular needs. In 2012-13, 40 applications requesting $70,226.08 were received from faculty for course and curriculum improvements; 37 or 93%, of the applicants were awarded full or partial funding, with a total of $64,515.38 distributed.

Distinguished Teaching Awards
Each year, the Committee solicits and reviews nominations for faculty Distinguished Teaching Awards (DTA) for approval by the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate. The Committee received 23 nominations this year, an unusually large number, which suggests the recognition on campus of the importance of fostering excellence in teaching.

The selection of DTA nominees is a two-stage process. In stage one, during fall semester, departments initiate nominations by submitting a brief nominating letter, a chronological list of courses taught during the last eight semesters of residence, a summary of teaching evaluations, and raw data from student evaluations in representative recent courses. Following a full review by the Committee, approximately 1/3 of the candidates are then selected for stage two. Additional documentation is required at this stage, and following a pre-arranged schedule, each finalist is observed in a classroom or lab setting by at least two members of the Committee on Teaching. The award recipients are announced later in the spring.

The five faculty members selected to receive the DTA this year were: Rauri Bowie (IB), Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby (History of Art), Timothy Hampton (Comp Lit & French), Terry Johnson (Bioengineering), Ula Taylor (African American Studies).

Ceremonies and Events

On April 24, 2013, the Committee again hosted the campus Teaching Awards ceremony at Zellerbach Playhouse. At that ceremony, recipients of 2013 Distinguished Teaching Awards were honored. The Committee hosted the reception that immediately followed the Teaching Awards ceremony.

Online Education at Berkeley

A new subcommittee of the COT, focused on teaching related policy issues, chose first to explore the landscape of online education at Berkeley. The committee heard from and discussed various online learning efforts with guest speakers, which included Keith Williams, UCOE; Daphne Koller, Coursera; Armando Fox, edX; and Lisa Rothrauff/Justin Lipp, ETS and the newly coming LMS to replace bSpace, Canvas (or bCourses). The committee acquainted itself with what is happening within each of these efforts and about the implications of each for teaching. After a year of collecting, examining and interrogating information about the status and future of online education at Berkeley, the committee intends to work next year on creating a document to inform faculty about online education at Berkeley, the challenges and possibilities. Main areas of concern include “How do we focus on good pedagogy when there are so many other pressures on the success and implementation of online teaching?” and “How do we counter the hype that is driving so many of the decisions being made around online education?” A goal is to point out models that are likely to be effective in integrating tools of online education into instruction AND raise concerns about policy decisions’ impact on good teaching in an online space.

Evaluation of Teaching

The new subcommittee focused on teaching related policy issues also re-examined the 1987
Policy for Evaluation of Teaching (for Advancement and Promotion) at the request of Academic Senate Chair, Christina Maslach. The committee entered into a larger collaboration between the College of Letters & Science, the department of Statistics, and the Center for Teaching and Learning. Statistics piloted peer review of course instruction this spring semester with two faculty members. The committee provided feedback on the creation of peer review forms and recommendations, developed by the Center for Teaching and Learning. The committee also met with Chair Maslach, Mark Richards and Bob Jacobsen from L&S, Richard Freishtat and Cynthia Schrager (CTL), and Philip Stark (Chair of Statistics) to discuss the pilot and considerations for using peer review as an additional source of evidence of teaching effectiveness. Finally, COT Chair Glynda Hull and staff representative Richard Freishtat met with the Budget Committee to present the peer review forms, recommendations and discuss how peer review may be taken into account in merit and tenure review cases. The Budget Committee expressed concerns about the logistics of scalability of the peer review effort, but praised the effort and were interested in receiving more evidence of teaching effectiveness in this manner.

Committee Representation
Representatives of the COT sat on the following external campus committees:

- Online Evaluation of Courses Steering Committee
- Facilities and Management Committee
- Center for Teaching and Learning Special Faculty Advisors
- LMS Steering Committee (for the new bCourses)
- BRCOE (Berkeley Resource Center for Online Education) Steering Committee

The Future

In 2013-2014 the Committee will continue to consult with the Center for Teaching and Learning on several of its programs (including the Instructional Improvement Grants, Presidential Chair Fellows program); it will again select nominees for the Distinguished Teaching Award.

After a year exploring the landscape of online education and online pedagogy across the Berkeley campus, the committee intends to work next year on sifting through the information it has gathered to begin formulating a report about the state of teaching in online learning, possibilities that exist, and pitfalls to avoid within the broader discussion around the validity and viability of online learning in its many and varied capacities.

Finally, following its work to broadly review current teaching and course evaluation policy and procedures, the Committee looks forward to continued involvement in the pilots of peer review of course instruction, and collaborating with and assisting other Academic Senate committees, academic departments, and the Center for Teaching and Learning in whatever way possible to further the use of varied types of evidence of teaching effectiveness in line with the 1987 Policy for Evaluation of Teaching (for Advancement and Promotion).

The Committee on Teaching welcomes suggestions about its mission and activities from members of the campus community.
Respectfully submitted,

Glynda Hull, Education (Chair)
Karl Britto, French & Comparative Literature
Cindy Cox, Music
Gary Firestone, MCB
Andrew Garrett, Linguistics
Ole Hald, Mathematics
Edward Miguel, Economics
Juan Pestana, CEE
David Tse, EECS
Joseph Otayde, Undergraduate Student
Richard Freishtat, Staff Representative