Provost's Faculty Development Committee
Subcommittee on Teaching

Notes: March 23, 2009

In Attendance:

▪ Arthur Eisenkraft	▪ Wei Zhang
▪ Peter Langer	▪ Ping-Ann Addo
▪ Vivian Zamel	▪ Ivan Sascha Sheehan
▪ Alexia Pollack	

Please note that the following is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all matters discussed in the subcommittee meeting on 3/23 but rather to serve as a broad outline of several important issues that were addressed. I apologize, in advance, for any attribution errors which are surely my own. Please feel free to amend the notes as you see fit.

*For additional reading, please also see handouts distributed at the meeting by Alexia, Vivian, Ping-Ann, Sascha, Peter and Arthur.

Prior to the subcommittee meeting members undertook research related to how faculty development and evaluation of teaching is carried out and valued at other institutions. The research was undertaken through an examination of resources made available on university websites and also through informal surveys carried out on listservs associated with individual member disciplines.

Our discussion began with Alexia providing a handout she compiled with links to faculty development resources at a variety of universities across the country. Particular attention was spent discussing the wealth of resources available at the University of Massachusetts Amherst related to faculty development and teaching effectiveness. Alexia also surveyed a neuroscience listserv on resources available for faculty development and received several responses.

From this research she found that patterns existed in terms of faculty development resources available on a variety of campuses. The patterns were consistent with similar research undertaken by Vivian, Sascha, Peter, Arthur, and Ping-Ann.

Faculty development resources available at more than one campus and deemed potentially useful at UMB included:

- A Well-organized, easy-to-navigate, resource-heavy website that displayed, among other things:
    - ▪ Resources related to best practices/scholarship of teaching and learning
    - ▪ Campus workshops related to teaching effectiveness
    - ▪ Consulting/mentoring services available to faculty
    - ▪ Resources related to evaluating, documenting, and examine one's own teaching
    - ▪ Interdisciplinary, multi-site workshops and short courses
    - ▪ A clear mission statement consistent with the purpose of the university
    - ▪ Links to university-wide assessments of teaching effectiveness

- Luncheons that addressed issues related to teaching effectiveness (some organized around specific themes and some more "free-form" in nature and meant as an opportunity for faculty to discuss matters important to them).

Vivian distributed a report carried out by Jay R. Dee at the Graduate College of Education (2005) that examined "Centers for teaching and Learning" and how they are organized, shaped, and nurtured.

It was found that each university that had a "center" for teaching effectiveness, of some variety, was staffed in a different way. Some were "faculty-driven" and some were led solely by administrators. In most cases it was clear that faculty development with regard to teaching effectiveness was made a campus priority by virtue of the fact that the center was well-resourced and adequately staffed (e.g. George Mason University appointed an Associate Provost for Faculty Development to lead the center, in addition to a faculty fellow and an administrative staff). Similar models were discussed with regard to other universities.

Several subcommittee members were concerned with how best to get faculty to use development resources made available to them. A number of "carrot and stick" approaches were discussed including the development of a cohort model. Some expressed concern that resources made available should be "change-driven" and not simply made available for the sake of making them available. There was agreement that in order for such resources to have any impact, faculty must invest their time and effort. One idea suggested was for faculty chairs to communicate their expectation that new faculty would avail themselves of these resources and somehow document, perhaps through a "teaching portfolio," the impact on their subsequent teaching. It was hoped that such an exercise would result in an opportunity for faculty reflection that would impact teaching positively.

Ping-Ann suggested, and everyone agreed, that a survey should be undertaken to develop a sense of UMB faculty needs in terms of development. Peter pointed out that previous surveys indicated a concern, on the part of new faculty, about developing a research agenda but there was comparatively little focus on development with regard to teaching. It was decided that such a survey could serve as a guide to specific concerns at UMB with regard to faculty development/teaching that might be missed by outside scholarship. It was agreed that such a survey could be carried out in tandem with a careful review of outside scholarship on best practices associated with teaching effectiveness and that the two efforts should be seen as complimentary.

Wei and others expressed the committee's concern that not enough attention is currently devoted to how teaching is evaluated/measured and what types of benchmarks are expected. Difficulties associated with establishing clear benchmarks were discussed relative to the expectations set for scholarship. An important issue was raised related to how faculty can be encouraged to experiment with new methods of teaching within the current constraints imposed by the system of teaching evaluations that currently exist.

The meeting ended with several recommendations that might be discussed/explored further in Friday's full committee session. These suggestions included that:

- ✓ A website should be developed to make available the full range of resources available on campus to improve teaching effectiveness, drawing on both best practices in the field and the needs of UMB faculty. Development of the website should follow a careful examination of resources available on other campuses and be tailored to meet the needs of the UMB community. One idea discussed was to include a social-networking/self-populating component of the website through which faculty could make available new and useful resources related to teaching effectiveness.
- ✓ Department chairs should be expected to clearly communicate expectations to new faculty with regard to teaching effectiveness within their respective programs and a formal model of mentorship should be established. Several noteworthy models at UMB were discussed, including the English department. Ping-Ann also distributed a series of suggestions for faculty mentorship distributed at other institutions.
- ✓ Finally, it was agreed that a survey should be undertaken to develop a sense of what types of resources are currently available with regard to teaching effectiveness/faculty development at UMB and what types of resources faculty would like to see made available in the future. The hope is that such a survey will illuminate "what specific resources provide most value to the teacher."