

23 April 1998

REPORT OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND LEARNING (SCUTL)

SCUTL has been a productive committee in 1997/98, meeting eight times. The first meeting in August was chaired by Dr. Ellen Gee with the remaining seven meetings chaired by Dr. Irene Gordon. At the meeting in August it was decided that the most important action for SCUTL to undertake was to recommend revisions to the Committee's terms of reference. Additionally, SCUTL identified a number of activities related to teaching and learning that deserved the Committee's time and attention. These actions as well as several other items sent to the Committee are outlined below.

A. Terms of Reference

In response to SCUTL's uncertainties and doubts that arose from its original terms of reference and reported to Senate last year, SCUTL's mandate and terms have been revised in consultation with Dr. D. Gagan, Vice-President, Academic. SCUTL members think that the revised mandate and terms are more appropriate to a Senate Committee. Under the new terms of reference, SCUTL provides advice and guidance on a broad set of teaching and learning issues.

B. Environment for Teaching and Learning at SFU

In September SCUTL determined that to understand the environment of teaching and learning at SFU, the Committee required information. One method of collecting information deemed expedient was to invite individuals to attend a SCUTL meeting and to discuss aspects of their units or work that had a direct bearing on this environment. Four individuals were invited to make presentations on three topics.

Mr. T. Greenwood, Director, Instructional Media Office, and Ms. C. French, Director, Student Academic Resources, were invited to SCUTL's October meeting. Mr. Greenwood and Ms. French discussed the functions and services that their offices provide within the University. In both cases questions were asked about these services and how SCUTL might assist and work with them. From these meetings SCUTL members thought that two points could be incorporated into its proposed terms of reference. First, the Director of Student Academic Resources is proposed as a new member of SCUTL. Second, it was suggested that a relationship be established between SCUTL and the Instructional Media Office. As incorporated in SCUTL's revised terms of reference, this relationship will see SCUTL reviewing and commenting on this office's reports.

Walter Wattamaniuk and Joanne Heslop of Analytical Studies attended SCUTL's December meeting and J. Heslop presented the preliminary results of the 1997 undergraduate survey. While many questions were asked of W. Wattamaniuk and J. Heslop, Committee members particularly wanted to know where in the survey process SCUTL might comment and be involved in making suggestions about questions to include. From this discussion it is anticipated that SCUTL will be invited to comment on preliminary surveys sometime in September. Additionally, SCUTL will be asked to review and comment on the completed annual undergraduate surveys as reflected in the revised terms of reference.

C. Action Plans and Formation of Subcommittees

At its September meeting, SCUTL outlined a list of possible action plan items for 1997/98. In November SCUTL decided that two items would be undertaken this academic year. To put these plans into action two subcommittees were formed. One subcommittee was established to examine workload issues that surround information technology and its use. This subcommittee's members are G. Poole, L. Kanevsky, J. Stanley and L. Weldon. The other subcommittee was formed to exam the handling and administration of teaching surveys. This subcommittee is composed of I. Gordon, J. Morris and P. Winne. The work of both subcommittees is on going and completion is expected during 1998.

D. Cooperation with the Centre for University Teaching

SCUTL's relationship with the Centre for University Teaching has resulted in three events during 1997/98. First, the Centre organized a Forum on Evaluation of Teaching held November 14th. While the forum was organized as a result of SCUTL's 1996/97 meetings, it resulted in Committee members identifying that Faculties and departments seem to be handling and administering teaching evaluations differently. Second, a roundtable discussion on technology and associated workload issues held on January 22nd was a direct result to SCUTL's discussions. Third, a roundtable was organized and held on February 26th to promote dialogue on the use of open labs and computer assisted marking. Again, this roundtable was an outgrowth of SCUTL's work but acted on by the Director of the Centre for University Teaching.

E. Other Business brought before the Committee

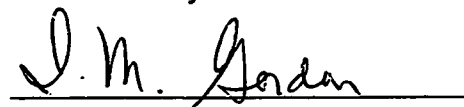
During the Fall, SCUTL was asked by SCAR to comment on whether two changes were likely to compromise academic quality: changes from tutorials to open laboratories and from individual marking to computer aided marking. SCUTL responded in a memorandum (February 9th) providing an overview of the positives and negatives on both these issues. This memo was forwarded by SCAR to SCUS for further comment.

Also, during the Fall, SCUTL received an invitation to comment on a proposal from TSSU to recognize teaching accomplishments by its members. SCUTL responded and was assured that suggested revisions would be incorporated by TSSU. TSSU also indicated that when revisions were complete that these would be sent back to SCUTL for comment.

After receiving the results of the annual undergraduate survey for 1997 from Analytical Studies, SCUTL raised concerns with the Registrar about the examination scheduler. These concerns were taken from the students' written comments. While the Registrar has responded to SCUTL's March memorandum, some concerns are still outstanding and will be pursued.

As Chair of SCUTL, I would like to express my appreciation of the Committee members and recognize their work undertaken on behalf of Simon Fraser University. The members for 1997/98 were L. Berggren, L. Kanevsky, J. Morris, G. Poole, J. Stanley and P. Winne.

Submitted by:



Irene M. Gordon
Chair, SCUTL