

Learning Commons Committee

February 28th, 2011

10-11:30 am

921 YRT

Agenda

1. Notes from Jan. 17, 2011 meeting
2. LC Statement – Update (5 min)
3. Academic Initiatives Fund (AIF): Virtual Learning Commons proposal (5 min)
4. CST/LC Joint Workshop on Academic Literacies for Faculty (40 min)
5. Revisit LC Phase 2 plans (30 min)
6. Undergraduate Conference in Learning Commons – Update (5 min)
7. Other Business

Learning Commons Committee Notes

Mon. February 28, 2011, 10-11:30 a.m.

Location: 921 YRT

Present: M. Robertson (chair), C. Bova, S. Bury, P. McFarlane, N. Majekodunmi,
T. Scott, R. Woodhouse

Regrets: N-S. Fisher-Stitt, R. Sheese, T. Greenwald, D. Twombly

1. **Notes from the January 17, 2001 meeting** - no changes.

2. **Business Arising**

Learning Commons Retreat Follow-up

There were 2 outcomes from the retreat:

1. Develop a shared model/philosophy for the LC approach (See #3)
2. Engage faculty in LC (See #5).

Ergonomics of the pods - Update

M. Robertson was speaking with planners, has a proposal to alter the pods according to the needs of each group using the pods. The proposal for the research side, involves a cut-out with a keyboard tray that's adjustable. The writing skills side doesn't need the cutout, because they don't use PCs as much. They discussed adjusting the height of the table as a better option but this may interfere with computer wiring; consequently, laptops may have to be used if we make use of adjustable height tables.

Announcement

N-S. Fisher-Stitt's term as AVP Learning Initiatives will be ending in the beginning of June and she will return to the Dance Department. The new AVP position will be for "Teaching and Learning". It is expected that new AVP would be involved in the LC committee, and the position's expanded emphasis may be positive for the LC committee.

3. **Shared model/philosophy for the LC approach**

A small working group has been set up including M. Robertson, S. McLaren (Libraries), P. O'Neill (Writing) and C. Boyd-Withers (Learning Skills). They have had an initial meeting, and they expect to have a half-page draft statement ready for discussion for the April LC meeting. They will base the statement on some of the discussions at the December LC retreat. The statement is designed to be a "vision" statement to be used when communicating with faculty or administrators and for promotional material and on websites. R. Woodhouse offered to forward some literature that would help frame the discussion, and volunteered to join the group.

It was noted that an online forum for sharing material (drafts documents, reading lists, minutes) and collaborating would be useful. R. Woodhouse volunteered to set up a Moodle site for the group which should accommodate those functions.

4. **Academic Initiatives Fund (AIF): Virtual Learning Commons Proposal**

A proposal for a 3 year project, has been submitted at the category 1 level by the Virtual Learning Commons group. The proposal was circulated to the committee for information. The group has asked for approximately \$200,000 to get the

initiative started. Regardless of funding the initiative will proceed, on a smaller scale. M. Robertson and S. Bury are participating in review of proposals for the AIF selection committee.

5. CST/LC Joint workshop on Academic Literacies for Faculty

The purpose of the workshop will be to introduce the concept of academic literacies to faculty and to promote the role of the LC partners as consultants and collaborators for the design of curriculum. The Course Design Institute is on April 27 & 28th. LC partners were also invited to take part in the CDI Program as consultants. The session is envisioned as a pre-CDI event on April 26.

The committee reviewed a draft workshop agenda and proposed the following revised structure:

Part 1. Student "Fish Bowl"

This section would involve an exercise with students intended to gain insight into the challenges faced by students related to academic literacies.

Part 2. Modeling

Generate discussion with faculty on how to address these challenges in course curriculum. Use example course syllabi and/or assignments as a model for feedback.

Follow Up: Work with faculty individually?

Participants

15 – 20 faculty is optimal

Would need 5 – 6 students (diverse background/programs/U/g/grads) for the fish bowl

Each LC member was asked to nominate a student. M. Robertson and R. Woodhouse will be in touch for further discussion.

If this joint workshop were held just prior to the Course Design Institute (CDI), LC partners could join the CDI as consultants available to CDI participants who are designing/re-designing their courses.

Discussion:

- It was noted that at Guelph, a team of consultants is available for faculty who are wanting to address academic literacies in their curriculum. We discussed the idea of piloting a similar approach following the workshop in which faculty could meet with a LC team.
- An ongoing LC program of faculty consultations would require more thought and planning since it would have resource implications.
- CST is considering developing a new initiative called **FACT: Find A Consultant on Teaching**. This would be a referral/matching service between faculty and people with expertise on campus.
- Model consultation could be one way to show transformation on how people think about their class/course. Subject: assignment design, structuring a syllabus, or designing a tutorial.
- Foundation courses instructors are in some ways logical places to work on academic literacies, but faculty sometimes make the assumption that Foundations courses absolve them from dealing with academic literacies in their own courses.

- In order to engage faculty, workshops should be grounded in a cognitive tasks approach - not a prepared session, but an unpacking of issues faculty have, what are the questions faculty have.
- After we have piloted this joint workshop, we could later consider a session for academic administrators in the future.

6. Revisit LC Phase 2 Plans

The Libraries are fundraising for Phase 2 of the Learning Commons @ Scott. The purpose of this discussion was to ensure that the original plans for phase 2 created 2 years ago, are still relevant to our needs.

Classrooms:

- 2 classrooms to be located behind the Hub.
- One is intended to be a "flexible classroom" and primarily for Writing skills, Learning skills, and Career Services instruction. Emphasis on desk space, rather than technology.
- The 2nd classroom would be more hard-wired with technology. It would be designed in consultation with Librarians. Less flexibility because of the technology.
- Statistics for classes were circulated. LC was asked if teaching and programming will continue. The space can be used for other things: e.g. Archives, to show documents; or different types of cultural programming, such as a faculty presentation, art event, fundraising, student events or presentation.
- N. Majekodunmi will meet and discuss the plans with workshops group, look at the statistics and see if they will continue in same direction.
- Visibility of classrooms should help promote the workshop offerings.
- Drapes or frosted glass was suggested for the classrooms. Wall space is very important for teaching, maximize wall work surfaces.
- Round tables – R. Woodhouse pointed out that currently there are only 3 places on campus have round tables and they are in high demand.
- If LC partners have any further thoughts on the setup, please contact M. Robertson.

Other areas:

- Scott Ref offices
- Quiet study area
- Group study rooms: do we need more or should we create more quiet study areas or computing areas instead

7. Undergrad Conference in Learning Commons

T. Bristow and A. Hamilton are leading this initiative. The idea came from the Library Student Advisory Group and it was partly inspired by a similar initiative at Queen's. It was originally conceived as a half day conference. However to be practical more lead time would be required. Instead the conference has been reframed: Key undergrads (3-4) are being invited to speak and their various engagements, and the relationship between their studies and their other involvements (eg. with their communities, or research interests). The conference will occur near the end of March.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:32 a.m.

The next LC meeting is April 12, 10:30-12pm, 921 YRT.