

Teaching Council of the Faculty Senate
Annual Report to the Senate
April, 2008

Committee Members: India Lane, Chair; Richard Bennett; Marie Garrett; Richard Heitmann; Diane Hendrix; Ruth Darling, Lynne Parker, Susan Martin (Acad. Aff. ex-officio) and Carolyn Hodges (Graduate School ex-officio), Janice Appier, Patricia Freelan, Suzanne Kurth, Ramon Leon, John McRae, Mark Moon, John Mount, Tim Young, Steve Dandeneau, Kristin Goddard, Thomas Boehm, Lloyd Rinehart

- I. **Charge and Goals.** The Teaching Council works to advance excellence in teaching and academic advising at UTK. Areas of concern include incentives for recognizing quality instruction and advising, methods for improving instruction, guidelines for evaluation of teaching, advising and curriculum, and policy issues related to teaching. Goals for 2007-08 were:
 - a. Be involved in promoting and planning return of a teaching and learning center
 - b. Improve communication and discussion about teaching at UTK by continuing seminar series
 - c. Review SAIS methods and instruments
 - d. Selection of Chancellor's awards for Excellence in Teaching and Advising

- II. **Background .** The Council was made up of new and returning members this year. India Lane continued as Chair. The Council includes the Dean of the Graduate School, the Director of the Honors Program, the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, and the Director of the Student Success Center as well as faculty representing multiple colleges and departments.

- III. **Promoting Discussion and Communication about Teaching at UTK.** The Council discussed ways of promoting teaching and discussion of educational issues across campus. Two major ideas evolved, including 1) considering a website for exchange of resources and information; and 2) providing periodic seminars or book discussions. This past fall, a panel discussion was sponsored on "What the Best College Teachers Do" and was attended by more than 90 individuals.

Other units on campus also presented seminars last fall. The Teaching Council looks forward to helping collaborate and coordinate sessions next year to support UT faculty. Council members have also been involved in the search process for a Director of the re-established Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center.

- IV. **Teaching Awards Process.** Using processes implemented and refined in 05-06 and 06-07, the Council continued to devote a large amount of time to the Teaching Awards process, especially in Spring Semester. Goals for the last two years included starting earlier in the year with the process, moving to a completely online/electronic nomination and review process, streamlining the materials provided by nominees, increasing nominations for the non-tenure track and advising categories, and revising the candidate scoring/ranking system. These goals have been generally achieved. Specifically, support from Teresa Jones and Dustin Hurt in the College of Veterinary Medicine was instrumental in developing and awards management process last year. Almost all materials were submitted electronically this year and distributed to Council members by password protected web access.

A total of 22 eligible tenured or tenure track faculty nominees, 13 eligible non-tenure track, part-time or adjunct teaching faculty nominees, and 11 eligible advising nominees were reviewed. This represents an increase from 06-07 in numbers of nominees in all categories. Members of the Council reviewed groups of nominees and scored each individual in the group. Collectively the Council reviewed the overall rankings and determined finalists. Sixteen teaching finalists and 9 advising finalists were further evaluated with classroom visits and by references from advisees, respectively. Final awardees were determined after review of Council members' rankings of all finalists and Council discussion. Advising awardees were determined after review of the top 5 candidates by two members of the Council and by one previous award winners. Other previous advising award winners were contacted for input but did not reply.

- V. **Awards Process Needs/Issues:** The Council still struggled with the manpower needed for classroom visits. Many Council members choose not to participate in any activities, including classroom evaluations.

We were very pleased to receive many excellent nominees this year; however some difficulties arose in giving appropriate review to all candidates. With multiple nominations, it also makes it more difficult to select the top candidates and disappointing for the many other deserving nominees. We would also like to improve the identification and nomination of excellent teachers, recognizing that many excellent teachers go unnoticed in this process. A major issue this year was the loss of clerical assistance. After Ms. Teresa Jones moved to a new position last fall, the Department of Small Animal Clinical Sciences was unable to provide reliable clerical support for the process and later refused to provide any support. This lapse in support delayed and confused our awards process significantly this year and led to some oversights and errors. As this is a university service commitment, we hope that clerical/administrative assistance will be found from the Faculty Senate, the Chancellor's Office, or the Teaching and Learning Center next year.

- VI. **Other Business.** A pending issue is review/revision of the SAIS system, including forms and processing methods. Major concerns include the use or non-use of online submission, the length of forms and education of faculty members in the process and use of SAI. After preliminary discussions with Ms. Elizabeth Pemberton, we planned to proceed with this issue using a small number of teaching council members and other experts across campus. For 2008-09, it is expected that the Council activity directed toward this issue will increase, in collaboration with Institutional Research and Assessment .
- VII. **Acknowledgements.** The Chair would like to acknowledge the efforts of the Council members in implementing the Chancellor's award selection process. In particular, the Chair would like to recognize Marie Garrett for three years of exceptional service on the Council.

We also appreciate the website support from Mr. Dustin Hurt, Webmaster, in the College of Veterinary Medicine and Mr. Erik Bledsoe, UT administration. We would also like to thank Provost Holub and Dr. Todd Diacon for support of the fall teaching discussions and future support of teaching and instruction on campus.

Submitted by
India Lane, Chair