

Teaching Academy Executive Council Minutes

February 28th, 2020

Members Present:

Bob McDonald, Angela Lumpkin, Courtney Meyers, Comfort Pratt, Patrick Hughes (via Skype), Brie Sherwin, Suzanne Tapp, Upe Flueckiger

Members Not Present:

Ali Nejat, Mark Webb, Mitzi Lauderdale, Ali Duffy

Approval of Minutes:

Comfort Pratt motioned to approve the previous meeting's minutes; Courtney Meyers seconded.

Report:

Departmental Excellence in Teaching Award

Andrew Stetson, the chair of the Departmental Excellence in Teaching Award selection committee gave a report on the selection made on February 25th. He announced that the three applications were Classical & Modern Languages & Literatures, Kinesiology & Sport Management, and the Law Library. Each committee member individually scored the applications and met to discuss the results. They agreed with the Olympic scoring outcome and unanimously voted in favor of Kinesiology & Sport Management. The Provost will announce the award recipient and send the department a letter of congratulations. Andrew Stetson will send letters to the other two departments, sharing the committee's comments about their applications.

Andrew stated a concern about the low number of applications this year and he hopes that sharing comments from the committee will encourage departments to apply.

The committee noticed that the timeline of the application was difficult since it opens and closes at the beginning of the spring semester. They suggested opening the application in the early fall and closing it in December, with the review process taking place in the Spring.

Andrew did note that a detailed description of how the award money will be used really sets apart an application. Applications are not as strong when the money would only affect a small number of student jobs in the department and the committee preferred to see plans that would impact the community. He suggested that the department's plan for award money be made part of the recipient announcement.

Angela Lumpkin shared that Kinesiology will use the money to create a health clinic which will help community members as well as student research. She suggested it might be better to give applicants examples of what not to do regarding the award money.

Andrew suggested that applicants stay away from using the money as a scholarship for teaching assistants. He shared the possibility of adding extra money that would be attached to the award to be specifically for teaching assistants.

Comfort asked why that would not be a good use of award money. Andrew stated that it only affects that small number of students for a short time and doesn't create a lasting impact for the department.

The committee selected Michael Orth to be the next committee chair and thanked the TLPDC staff for their assistance in the award process.

Angela thanked Andrew for the committee's feedback and the feedback from the previous recipient. She is happy to give advice to any departments applying next year.

Andrew recognized the disadvantage for small departments. This year the Law Library applied and is a three-person department. The committee does not have any solutions for the issue at the time but took note.

Comfort noticed that unavoidable issue with grants as well.

Brie Sherwin remembered that the Law Advocacy Program received the award recently and the department was only one person.

Comfort suggested giving the option for small departments to combine to create a larger unit.

Brie noted that if staff are included, it makes for a stronger application.

Bob thanked Andrew and the committee for their hard work.

Andrew said he was very encouraged to see such a strong focus on excellent teaching while reading the applications during his time on the committee.

Discussion:

Voting Protocol

Bob raised the issue of nominations for new members coming from the New Members Selection Committee members. The Olympic scoring process takes care of bias, but should those committee members be able to write nomination/recommendation letters?

Comfort believes the committee members should not write any letters for applicants.

Bob thinks applicants should reach out to other Teaching Academy members in their colleges who are not on the committee.

Upe Flueckiger shared that it could be hard for applicants in colleges where the Teaching Academy is underrepresented. He has chosen to not write any recommendation letters while he is on the Executive Council.

Angela shared the example in tenure and promotion of Melanie Hart having one vote for her department, not for the Provost's office.

Brie asked if committee members who write letters could abstain from voting in the selection.

Comfort asked if the issue was with being able to write a letter and vote, or just with voting.

Bob stated that the Olympic scoring helps to negate bias within the department or college, but it does not account for bias in committee members who have recommended or nominated an applicant.

Brie suggested a policy that would allow members to write a letter and not vote or to not write a letter and vote.

Suzanne reminded the council that every committee member needs to vote and that the main issue is the writing of letters.

Courtney asked when committee members begin their term. Suzanne said they begin in the spring.

Comfort asked if this rule would apply to all standing committees.

Suzanne said it would only apply to the New Member Selection committee and the Departmental Excellence in Teaching Award committee.

Comfort said that the rule will be specifically for those two committees.
Suzanne asked if the Executive Council should be able to write letters.
Courtney mentioned that she had already agreed to write a letter for an applicant this year.
Bob clarified to the council that they are able to write letters, he has just made the personal choice to not write any while on the council.
Comfort also decided to not write any letters while a member of the council.
Angela noted that the council has no influence on the standing committees so there would not be a conflict.
Comfort mentioned that committee members could be biased toward applications if they knew their letter was written by an Executive Council member.
Bob and Courtney both agreed that the council should still be able to write letters for new member applicants.
Suzanne suggested the following statement be added to the voting protocol: "Executive Council members can write letters of recommendation or nomination."
Angela suggested the addition of this statement: "New Member Selection Committee members cannot write nomination or recommendation letters for applicants." She clarified that this would apply starting next year.
Suzanne noted that no one should be able to recuse because their vote should be based on the application alone and nothing outside of that.
Patrick Hughes also mentioned that the committee can adjust the scores together in the selection meeting and that works as a good control.
Suzanne adjusted the statement and it will be added to the Voting Protocol:

"New Member Selection, Departmental Excellence in Teaching Award, and Chancellor's Council Distinguished Teaching Award committee members cannot write nomination or recommendation letters."

Bob brought up the second issue of the time limit for the selection committees to make reviews. The Voting Protocol gives 10 business days and Bob asked if that is enough time to review. Comfort said it depends on the year and how many applications were submitted. The Executive Council should determine the time limit.
Angela brought up a set time limit would be problematic with the delayed deadline for letters for new member applicants.
Courtney suggested adding the work "completed" to the language to allow for the letter deadline extension.
Bob and Suzanne agreed that it is a good solution.

Commencement Representatives

Courtney said she would be able to attend the ceremony on May 16th at 9am.
Angela said she could attend one of the ceremonies on Friday, but would like to open the opportunity to other members.
Courtney suggested asking specifically those who were not able to attend the meeting.
Upe agreed to attend the ceremony on Friday at 7:30

Comfort shared that she would like to present the findings of the Visibility and Impact subcommittee again this semester.

Adjourn:

Upe Flueckiger motioned to adjourn the meeting, Angela Lumpkin seconded.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Molly Jacobs.