

Academics Committee Meeting

January 23, 2002

Attendance: I forgot to write it down. Bad secretary! The following people participated in discussion: Lauren Webb, Julie Fry, Chip Sumner, Marissa Mock, Theofilos Strinopoulos, Heather Cox

Graduate Student Handbook. Lauren said that she had already researched where to find most of the information necessary for the handbook sections assigned to the Academics Committee. She planned to assign those sections to people by email. She had a few remaining questions about the handbook sections that she wasn't able to answer in her research: 1) How does one get an ITS account? and 2) What is the official policy on obtaining keys to campus buildings? The committee's answer to 1) Go to Steele (more details are on the ITS webpage). We weren't sure about 2, but suspected the information is in the Technique. Lauren said she'd look into it.

Teaching Awards. Theo said that he had received 10 nominations for the GSC Teaching Awards from Fall Term. Last year's total was 20-25 for the entire year, so we're on pace to meet or exceed those numbers. Theo said that he will continue to do the teaching awards for the rest of this year, and emphasized again the importance of advertising in ensuring a successful award process.

SURF Survey. We got 19 responses, out of a pool of hundreds of potential responses. This is a low rate and not statistically significant. We will still be handing out the randomly selected prize of a Simpson's first season DVD. Jason may have already purchased it, so Lauren will check with Alex before buying the prize.

TA Evaluations. We should talk to all Divisions about using a form to evaluate the performance of TAs. We may consider using particularly good evaluation forms as nominations for the GSC Teaching Awards. Marissa mentions that the evaluation form has already been created, and it's simply a matter of getting the Divisions to agree to hand it out. The representatives of the GSC-II should add this to their agenda when meeting with Division chairs about the thesis advising committee recommendations.

Lab Reviews. We are again concerned with "capturing" each student before they leave to take the lab review survey. We wonder if there is a standard Caltech "exit process" that we can piggyback onto. Julie suggests putting a standard article into each Newsletter. Chip suggests sending out an all-student email once or twice a year (e.g., December and June). We all agreed to talk to recently graduate friends to find out if they went through an exit process. Chip wondered how many reviews we'll need before we can begin to release numbers for specific advisors. Heather said that it would depend on how long the professor had been here. Julie promised to put the results together for the meeting after next (when she's finished with Candidacy).

Everhart Lecture Series. We haven't heard from Ramesh in a while, and we have no idea what's going on. Lauren will try contacting Ramesh.

Library Committee. Lauren said that it hadn't met in quite a while.

GSC-II. Mike F. isn't here to report. Chip said that he had met with the Physics Option rep. Stephanie said that she had talked to 3 of the 4 people to whom she had been assigned, and brought a report. Lauren asked Chip if he had any documentation that the "mythical solution" in the Catalog isn't actually a good solution [background: When discussing our recommendations for thesis advising committees with some option reps, we were surprised to find that many regarded research-related problems deriving from student-advisor conflict to be solved problem. They mentioned a change made to the catalog a few years ago that "fixed" these problems, yet when the option reps actually consulted this section of the catalog, they were surprised to find how insignificant the actual changes had been.] Chip suggested that we create a form that students and committees would be required to fill out during yearly committee meetings. We also note that it will be important to sell the idea of yearly committee meetings to students as well as faculty . . .

Meeting adjourned at some time that I forgot to write down. Again. Bad secretary!