



Dear Professor Cooper,

On September 19, 2019, you sent an email charging me with chairing an ad hoc committee to discuss the UofSC Experience Extended Transcript initiative. The committee you assembled included myself as chair, along with Professor **Lara Lomicka Anderson**, Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures and Principal, Preston Residential College, Professor **Charlie Pierce**, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Professor **Toby Jenkins**, Instruction and Teacher Education, **Pam Bowers**, Associate Vice President for Planning, Assessment & Innovation, Professor **Lara Ducate**, Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures and Faculty Executive Director of USC Connect, **Doug Foster**, CIO, and **Aaron Marterer**, Registrar. The committee met on October 18, 2019 to discuss the history of the project and to evaluate the participation of faculty. Toby Jenkins and Aaron Marterer were absent and did not participate in the discussion. Our goal was to assess what role faculty have played and should play in governing the program, which has to date been spearheaded primarily through the Provost's Office.

Our discussion quickly reached consensus around the following conclusion: The program so far has been highly successful and faculty have been involved at all stages and all levels. We do not advocate any major changes to the program as it currently operates. However, although we agreed that the program's curricular and co-curricular purpose falls squarely under the authority of the Faculty Senate, we noticed that the program as currently structured places all decision-making authority in a small committee of appointed faculty and administrators. We believe that the structure of the committee is appropriate and should be preserved, but recommend that, in the future, faculty and administrators who are chosen for the committee should be confirmed by the Faculty Senate before assuming that role.

History of the Beyond The Classroom Matters (BTCM) initiative and its relationship to the UofSC Experience Extended Transcript. Pam Bowers described the BTCM as the culmination of a decade-long effort to enhance student experience and to collect records in a usable system. In 2017, the Provost's Office under Joan Gabel decided to launch the experiential learning initiative using the BTCM system. Bowers worked with Irma VanScoy (and now Lara Ducate) to identify and document courses and co-curricular programs in the BTCM system. The BTCM is a system for defining, collecting, organizing, managing, and reporting student "engagements." An engagement is an educationally purposeful activity that occurs outside the classroom, is designed and monitored by faculty or professional staff, is often not a required component of a degree program, and may include student-specific characteristics (different employers for internships, different topics for undergraduate research). Some engagements happen through specifically designed experiential courses. Others involve non-credit experiences, such as mentored student research, supervised internships, or other non-credit experiential learning opportunities. An engagement qualifies as "experiential

learning” if it meets the requirements set forth and approved by a special committee called the Experiential Learning Opportunities (ELO) Committee. Courses and internship opportunities that are approved by the ELO Committee are documented in BTCM and available for the UofSC Experience Extended Transcript, which reports records of each student’s recorded engagements and, beginning Spring 2020, will be available to be shared by students with prospective employers.

The purpose of the BTCM initiative was to provide a single, regular clearinghouse for educationally purposeful experiences that were previously recorded in diverse campus programs. For example, student engagement in peer educator roles or university-organized community service events was previously recorded only in a department (Leadership and Service Center) rather than in university records (BTCM). Similarly, student engagement in internship courses, undergraduate research (for academic credit), and other high-impact educational programs were not recorded in a standard manner across colleges and departments; recording student engagement in these activities in BTCM enables institution-level monitoring and data reporting on these practices. The purpose of the BTCM is to reconcile these heterogeneous programs into a single, coherent record of students’ co-curricular learning experiences. BTCM includes records of student engagement in programs and events that are differentiated by the nature and depth of students’ educational involvement. Some ‘deeper’ engagements are designated as Experiential Learning Opportunities.

In 2018, the ELO committee was formed. That committee is chaired by the Director of USC Connect and includes five members, including three faculty (Lara Ducate (chair), Lara Lomicka Anderson, and Joe Jones) and two full-time administrators (Amber Fallucca and Julie Morris). The Director is appointed by the Provost. Other members of the committee are chosen by the Director. Because it is a very active committee, requiring weekly and sometimes daily interaction, faculty are paid a \$1,000 annual stipend by USC Connect for their participation.

The ELO Committee exercises broad authority over experiential learning on campus. Its primary responsibility is to solicit and evaluate proposals by individual faculty members for existing courses that satisfy experiential learning requirements. (See “Proposing Experiential Learning Opportunities” on the USC Connect website.) When a course is approved by the ELO committee, it is forwarded to the Courses and Curriculum Committee for final approval, at which point it receives special designation. When co-curricular activities (such as peer educator roles) are recommended for ELO designation, those recommendations are sent to the ELO Committee for approval. The ELO Committee is further responsible for making and approving changes to the Experiential Learning Criteria listed in the “Proposing Experiential Learning Opportunities” document, should such changes be deemed necessary.

Evaluation of faculty participation in the BTCM Initiative. Faculty have been closely involved in all aspects of this initiative, and indeed the ad hoc committee agreed that the entire program has been a model of successful collaboration between faculty and administration.

The most important aspect of faculty participation occurs at the individual level. By designing and coordinating experiential learning opportunities through specific courses, faculty retain control over all aspects that directly affect students’ academic work.

At the department level, faculty decide whether to require experiential learning for their majors, and they decide what experiences count or don't towards the major.

At the administrative level, faculty make up the majority of the ELO Committee, and so have supervisory control over all aspects of the program that include academic credit, as well as the authority to approve or decline the designation of "Experiential Learning Opportunity" for co-curricular (not for academic credit) experiences, such as peer educator roles or internships that are facilitated by the Career Center and do not produce academic credit. Further, courses that are approved for an experiential learning designation are forwarded to the Courses and Curriculum Committee and then the Faculty Senate, which has the final say.

Considering the above, we believe that throughout its history, the UofSC Experience Extended Transcript, and the supporting BTCM initiative has adhered closely to the spirit of faculty governance, even though the impetus came from the Provost's Office rather than being routed through the Faculty Senate.

Administrative responsibility for Experiential Learning on campus. The ad hoc committee unanimously agreed that all aspects of experiential learning, when designated as such, fall under the authority of the Faculty Senate. According to ACAF 2.03, "Creation and Revision of Academic Courses": "The faculty of the university has legislative authority over matters pertaining to the curriculum at the institution where they serve. Faculty governance bodies at each institution shall review all requests to create, **revise**, or eliminate graduate and undergraduate courses to ensure that all offerings meet the academic expectations of the University" (Procedures, section A). To designate courses as "experiential learning opportunities" involves **revising** the course's bulletin description, and so many of the activities of the ELO Committee fall directly under the Faculty Senate's legislative authority. However, some aspects of the committee's work are less directly impactful on the curriculum. In general, we believe that faculty should be intimately involved with all matters relating to courses and the academic curriculum, but perhaps less so with other experiential learning opportunities, and that this general principle should continue to inform the composition and work of the committee, as it has to date.

Recommendations for designating and reporting Experiential Learning Engagements in the UofSC Experience Extended Transcript. The ad hoc committee unanimously agreed that the program has been successful so far and our most important recommendation is to "do no harm." To this end, we suggest:

1. **Codifying and preserving the current structure of the ELO Committee.** We believe that the current structure of the ELO Committee is appropriate, and that its responsibilities should be explained in a formal university policy and approved through normal channels, as described in UNIV 1.00, "Policy on Policies: Development and Oversight of University Policies," section B2. The policy should follow the standard policy template, providing an outline the **Purpose** of the policy, provide **Definitions** of key terms that relate to experiential learning, a **Policy Statement** providing a concise statement of the policy's purpose, as well as a description of higher-level **Procedures** that designate the responsibilities and primary actions of the committee, leaving more detailed procedures to the USC Connect website.

The ad hoc committee came to quick agreement about a few general principles that, we believe, should guide the policy regarding the ELO Committee. We believe the committee itself should remain small and nimble. Because the members need to work closely together both with each other and with administrative partners around campus on a weekly and sometimes daily basis, it is appropriate that members of the committee be selected by the Chair, and it is appropriate for the Chair to be selected by the Provost.

We discussed the possibility of folding the ELO's responsibilities into those of the Courses and Curriculum Committee, but we immediately rejected the idea as impractical. We do not believe that the activities of the ELO Committee should be guided by the procedures described in ACAF 2.03, Procedures, section C, "Faculty Governance," which describes how course actions are approved along a channel from unit chair, through deans, through the Faculty Senate. We believe that the ELO committee must be composed of faculty leaders dedicated to and experienced in experiential learning who are able and willing to work closely with faculty and other stakeholders throughout each academic year, and we believe the procedures of the committee should reflect this need.

2. **Providing checks and balances.** Although we believe the program is successful and its structure is appropriate, and although we believe the potential for harm is quite low, we also believe that checks and balances should be instituted to guard against potential abuse or incursion on faculty authority over the curriculum.
 - a. We recommend that Faculty Senate assert "veto power" over the membership of the ELO Committee. The Provost's Office should nominate the ELO Committee Chair and the Chair should in turn nominate the other members of the Committee. Those nominations should be subject to a confirmation vote by the Faculty Senate. The Faculty Senate should coordinate with the Provost's Office and with the Director of USC Connect and Associate Vice President for Planning, Assessment, and Innovation to develop procedures for soliciting nominations.
 - b. We recommend that a Faculty Senator sit on the ELO Committee as an ex-officio member, and that the senator's primary responsibility should be to report the Committee's activities to the Faculty Senate, either per semester or annually.

All members of the committee except Toby Jenkins, who did not participate, have read and approved this letter. By submitting this report and these recommendations to you, we have completed the charge given to the ad hoc committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Gavin", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Gavin