

## MEMO

To: Dr. Pauline Nugent, Chair, Faculty Senate  
From: Dr. Tom Margavio, Chair, Sub-committee on Teaching Evaluation Review  
part of the Academic Relations Committee

RE: Recommendations for “Best Practices for Teaching Evaluations”

The sub-committee consisted of the following members:

- Dr. Tom Margavio, Chair, COBA
- Dr. Margaret Weaver, COAL
- Dr. Cindy Wilson, COE
- Dr. Gigi Saunders, CNAS

The committee met on the following dates: September 26, 2008; October 24, 2008; December 5, 2008; February 24 and 26, 2009. Each committee member separately reviewed the departmental student evaluation forms for three colleges with each college’s forms being reviewed twice. Our committee found commonalities present in student evaluations across campus, suggesting agreed-upon characteristics of effective teaching.

### BEST PRACTICES FOR TEACHING EVALUATIONS

In general, we found that each department has a student evaluation form. Students complete these evaluation forms based on their perceptions of the instructor, instruction and course. The content of the questions on the student evaluation forms did suggest many commonalities.

Other observations:

- There is tremendous variability in the evaluation instruments across colleges and within some colleges.
- Few of the instruments use the same language to evaluate similar dimensions/items.
- Few of the instruments use the same number of questions.
- Several of the instruments had numerous questions that appeared to address the same item.
- Questions on some instruments did not evaluate the individual faculty member’s performance.
- Several of the departments did not appear to provide departmental averages or data for cross comparisons.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee recommends the following as “best practices” for each college/department:

**1. Colleges should have a set of common college-wide evaluation items. Departments should ensure that the language within their instruments connects to these college-wide items.** This relationship should be made available to and discussed among faculty members in that college. For example, we envision a document being generated by each college showing and explaining the relationship between college-wide evaluation items and departmental items. See example below indicating various wording but the common connections.

<u>College-wide Assessment Item</u>	<u>Departmental Item</u>	<u>Description of Rationale</u>
I. Course objectives ... at the beginning of the semester.	A- Instructor helped me achieve course objectives.	This question pre-supposes that course objectives were specified and our dept. considers it a fair measure of “clearly and adequately” presenting.
	<b>B- Assignments were co-ordinated with objectives.</b>	For course requirements to be “clearly presented” students need to perceive

2. Course grading is fair ...	<p>C- Exams were returned promptly.</p> <p><b>B- Assignments were coordinated with objectives.</b></p>	<p>that assignments relate to objectives.</p> <p>Returning exams promptly is considered by our dept. to contribute to student perceptions of “grading is fair”.</p> <p>For grading to be considered “consistent with course objectives”, students must perceive that assignments relate closely to objectives.</p>
8. The instructor is an effective teacher.	<p>D-Instructor encouraged student involvement.</p> <p>E-Instructor made good use of examples.</p> <p>F-I would recommend this instructor to other students.</p>	<p>Our dept. believes each of these are attributes of an effective teacher.</p>
OTHER ITEMS ON EVALUATIONS	<p>G- The level of this class was appropriate.</p> <p>H- This class was worthwhile.</p>	<p>This question was requested to be placed in evaluations.</p> <p>Department head requested this question.</p>

**2. Identify a uniform Likert scale for some common evaluation items within a college.** For example, all colleges could use a 1-5 scale with 5 being the highest. This may aid in making merit rating decisions across the college in the future.

**3. Consider the course structure when reviewing the student evaluations.** Courses typically vary in structure (size of class, location, delivery system, type such as general education vs. major course) and may skew the students’ perceptions of the course and instructor. These factors should be weighed accordingly.

**4. Include online, hybrid, or other uniquely delivered courses in the same regular departmental evaluation process, using they same or similar instrument.** While additional questions may be added for specialized courses, the evaluation and process should be contained within the department/college. Currently, the online evaluation is being conducted outside the colleges and departments by the Outreach Department.

**5. Seek qualitative data within the evaluation instrument.** Offering an open-ended question or a place for comments is strongly urged. This will provide additional opportunities for feedback with less structure and constraints.

**6. Limit the weight of the evaluations in the comprehensive look at faculty performance.** Student evaluations of faculty must not be the sole determination for teaching effectiveness. According to the Faculty Senate Handbook, 4.2.1.3 Documenting Teaching Effectiveness, “student teaching evaluations can only be used for a maximum of 50% of the weight of evaluation in this area. Departments can refine these suggestions as appropriate for specific disciplines and a faculty member’s specific job assignment.”