

Motion

This is a motion from the Faculty Issues Committee:

The Faculty Senate recommends that the Student Evaluation of Faculty Committee (SEFC) be authorized to pilot a revised student evaluation instrument during Fall Semester, 2010.

Rationale

See attached letter from Matt Oyos, SEFC, to the University Provost and the College Deans.

DATE: October 12, 2010

FROM: Matt Oyos, Department of History, Student Evaluation of Faculty Committee

TO: University Provost; College Deans

SUBJECT: Fall Test of Proposed Evaluation Instrument

I am writing on behalf of the Student Evaluation of Faculty Committee (SEFC), one of Radford University's internal governance committees. As you may know, this committee has been engaged during the past several years with revising the student evaluation instrument. Last spring, the committee presented the proposed new evaluation to the Faculty Issues Committee of the Faculty Senate. That group was very supportive but wanted some assurance about the results that the new form would produce before endorsing it. It requested that the SEFC first conduct a test of the instrument. In order to carry out such a test this fall, it will be necessary to enlist the support of the faculty and key administrators, hence this memorandum. The committee welcomes any reaction you may have to the ideas outlined below and requests for your assistance with this initiative.

This past summer a subgroup of the SEFC spent time planning the best way to carry out a test of the proposed new instrument. This group consisted of myself, as chair of the SEFC; Bethany Bodo, the Director of Assessment; and Dr. Basel Saleh, of the College of Business and Economics. At one point, the group brought Dr. Nora Reilly into its discussions to take advantage of her expertise in psychometrics and surveying. The subcommittee members determined on the following approach as the most effective way to proceed.

The SEFC group discussed the best ways to conduct a test and determined that a graduated approach would be both effective and efficient. That is, a limited test of the proposed evaluation during the fall should suffice to determine whether there would be a significant deviation from the responses produced by the current form. If there is not, then the SEFC could report as much to the Faculty Issues Committee and avoid the effort and resources required for a full-blown pilot study in the spring. If there were significant deviation from past results and a spring pilot is warranted, the time devoted to the fall test would have been relatively limited.

The fall test would involve, optimally, ten classes in each college, for a total of sixty classes being evaluated. Evaluated classes would be both upper-level and lower-level. These classes would need to be ones that had been evaluated with the old instrument within the last two years so that there would be recent results from the current form with which to compare. Logistically, the most straightforward way to administer the proposed new evaluation will be to have personnel chairs follow normal procedures, except the new form would be used. After the evaluations have been processed, using the Class Climate system, the committee would compare the results with previous evaluations to see if there is a significant difference.

All results for this study would be kept confidential by the SEFC. Mean scores could be released to the Faculty Senate, but the names of faculty members or the individual classes need not be provided. This approach would allow the Faculty Senate to receive the information it needs without compromising confidentiality. Faculty members who wish to see their individual results would be allowed to receive them.

Participation in the test would be voluntary. In early October, we propose to use the faculty list.serv to announce the test, introduce the proposed new form to the entire faculty, and solicit volunteers among the tenured ranks. Although using volunteers involves the possibility that the test may not achieve ideal numbers or type of classes, we believe that asking for volunteers would give this proposal the most acceptance, for tenured faculty are more likely to feel that there would be less at stake than would untenured faculty. For faculty who agree to testing the new form in their classes we would ask that they be excused by responsible administrators from reporting the results for annual evaluations, even if a class is due for evaluation during the fall term. This approach would shield the faculty member from uncertain results, and would also encourage faculty to participate in the test run of the new instrument. If data for a class is needed for a Faculty Annual Report, the faculty member would be permitted to report the most recent results from a prior evaluation period. This consideration is another reason why only previously evaluated classes would be used for this test.

After the results of this test are administered and studied, the SEFC would discuss them with the Faculty Issues Committee and make a recommendation about the proposed new instrument and whether a more extensive pilot is needed.

Thank you for your time in considering this information. The committee would welcome your input about this initiative and how it might best be handled. If you have questions or comments, I would be delighted to answer them or have committee members meet with you. Although no evaluation form is perfect, we believed the proposed evaluation is a distinct improvement in terms of dimension, clarity, and structure.