

Motion

The Faculty Senate recommends adoption of the new Student Evaluation of Faculty form developed by the Student Evaluation of Faculty Committee with an implementation date of fall semester 2011.

Rationale for a New Evaluation Instrument

The Student Evaluation of Faculty Committee (SEFC) has worked for the past several years to revise the student evaluation of faculty instrument. This charge came from a previous university provost after a survey of faculty revealed a number of criticisms of the current instrument. Some of the criticisms involved the unclear wording of questions, leading questions, and multiple meaning questions.

The SEFC developed the proposed new instrument over the course of several years of work. This effort included a survey to receive faculty input, the collection of representative evaluation instruments from other institutions, the study of relevant scholarly literature on the topic, and consultation with surveying experts, among other things. The result, the members of the SEFC believe, is an improved instrument. The questions are clearly worded and no longer double-barreled in nature. Thus, the students can know better what exactly they are assessing, and faculty members will have relevant information to respond to student evaluations. The comment section is larger, and the scale has been standardized. (There is, for example, no longer a four-point response option for one of the questions, as there is on the current form.) Also, a "not applicable" response option is provided in the instructor section to account for differences in pedagogy. Finally, the major sections of the instrument have been re-ordered with, first, the student questions, then course questions, and lastly instructor questions.

In the spring of 2010, the SEFC presented the new form to the Faculty Issues Committee of the Faculty Senate. The committee members' reactions were favorable, but the FI committee requested a pilot of the new instrument. After endorsement by the Faculty Senate last fall, that pilot was conducted and the SEFC has reviewed the results. The below section on methodology relays more detail about the pilot, but in general the results indicated that the responses did not skew wildly higher or lower. When a significant difference between the results on the old and new forms did occur, the results trended higher on the new form, a possible reflection of the clarity of the new questions.

The new form, if adopted, is ready to become the universal instrument beginning in the fall of 2011. No instrument can address all the concerns of various constituencies, but the committee feels that the proposed form is a significant improvement over the current evaluation instrument in multiple ways. The Faculty Issues Committee also reviewed the pilot results and decided on April 7 to submit the above motion to the Faculty Senate for consideration.

Methodology of the Pilot

The Student Evaluation of Faculty Committee pilot tested a new evaluation form in the fall of 2010. Thirty tenured faculty members representing all of the colleges participated in the pilot evaluation. Upon completion of the pilot test a matched sample of courses was selected from previous evaluation administrations. Courses were matched on course number and instructor. The two samples were compared at the college level to keep the results in the aggregate in order to protect confidentiality.

Two comparisons were made for course-related questions. For all of the comparisons, the means from pilot study were higher than the means from the previous survey administration. The twelve comparisons that were made showed a mean increase on the new form from a 0.25 to 0.76.

Two of the instructor questions were also compared. For these twelve comparisons, only three showed significant differences and for each of the differences the pilot test means were higher than the means from the previous administration. The significant mean increase ranged from 0.24 to 0.45.

Finally, the seven instructor items from the initial evaluation form were combined and compared to the combined mean from the seven instructor items on the new evaluation form. For two colleges, there was a significant difference between the two means and, in each case, the mean from the new evaluation form was higher (0.40 and 0.24).

A copy of the data analysis is available from Matt Oyos (Department of History), the chair of the SEFC.