

Motion to form Ad Hoc Committee to Revise Teaching Evaluations

1. Motion presenter: Lisa MacFarlane on behalf of the Academic Program Committee
2. Dates of Faculty Senate Discussion: 02/22/21
3. **Motion: The Faculty Senate will form an ad hoc committee to review and recommend revisions to the current course evaluation process. The committee will include faculty representatives from each college; it will also include at least one faculty senator. The Faculty Senate will invite the Director of the CEITL, the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, and selected non-faculty members to serve on the committee. The Agenda Committee will finalize committee membership and establish both the goals and the timetable of the ad hoc committee using the Supplemental Guidance for Motion to Create an Ad Hoc committee to Revise Teaching Evaluations (See Appendix below) shared by the APC.**
4. **Senate action: The motion passed with 57 in favor, 1 opposed, and no abstentions.**

Appendix - Supplemental Guidance for Motion to Create an Ad Hoc committee to Revise Teaching Evaluations

The material here is to provide guidance to the Committee, and consists of the following:

1. The 2107 Report on Teaching Evaluations;
2. Guidance as to the composition of the committee;
3. Guidance as to the timing of the work;
4. Recommendations and questions to consider in the revision (these are not intended to be narrowly prescriptive; rather, they constitute a set of concerns and questions that will need to be addressed).

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1. The 2107 Report on Teaching Evaluations can be found here:
https://www.unh.edu/sites/default/files/departments/faculty_senate/faculty_senate_agenda_05_01_17_ap_p8-2_tesc_report_1_0.pdf

2. Guidance as to the composition of the committee:

We recommend two circles of the committee: a larger and representative group that includes faculty, administrators, and students; and a smaller working group drawn from their ranks. The smaller group, composed primarily of faculty, is tasked with designing both the instrument and the process. The larger group reviews drafts, ensuring that the overall goals of the surveys are appropriately prioritized and met. The smaller group will present a report with a recommendation for both instrument and process to the Faculty Senate, which will vote on whether to accept and implement the report.

The larger committee will consist of the following:

- Faculty who collectively overlap to represent each of the 7 degree-granting colleges, different classifications of instructors, different kinds of accreditation needs, experience in all modalities.
- (Among those faculty should be a learning scientist or developmental/cultural psychologist in addition to Catherine Overson; a Senate rep; those active in equity and inclusion efforts at the university; those active in their college's formal initiatives; someone experienced in the promotion and tenure process)
- An undergraduate and a graduate student (note that graduate student teaching assistants would be covered by this motion)
- A representative from CEITL—Catherine Overson or her designee
- A representative responsible for NECHE accreditation--Barbara White or her designee
- A dean or a chair from a large department; or an associate dean
- The Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs or her designee
- The Chief Diversity Officer or her designee
- The Director of Academic Technology or her designee

The smaller committee will consist of the following:

- 5-6 faculty
- Among those faculty should be a learning scientist or developmental/cultural psychologist in addition to Catherine Overson; a Senate rep; someone active in equity and inclusion efforts at the university and/or active in their college's formal initiatives; someone experienced in the promotion and tenure process
- Representative from CEITL
- An administrator

Note: the committee should be sure to consult with any and all constituencies who may be affected or have specialized expertise. This might include, for example, colleagues in Student Affairs.

3. Guidance as to the timing of the work

- APC presents motion to Senate beginning of February
- Senate leadership creates and charges ad hoc committee beginning of March
- Ad hoc committee provides a progress report to the Faculty Senate before the summer break; this will allow for consultation and feedback, and is intended to promote efficient discussion in the fall.
- The Ad hoc committee will work through the summer months, consulting with Senate leadership and administration as needed.
- The ad hoc committee will present its report to Senate Agenda Committee in late summer or early fall, with the goal of bringing it to the full Senate in the early fall or 2021.
- The Senate would debate and vote on the report. If it is approved, implementation would begin immediately so as to be in place in either fall 2021 or spring 2022.

4. Recommendations to consider in the revision (these are not intended to be narrowly prescriptive; rather, they constitute a set of concerns and questions that should be addressed).

- **What is the purpose of these surveys? To do what for whom and how?**

The course surveys are primarily for individual faculty members. They serve three purposes: to allow a faculty member to reflect upon and improve their teaching; to provide a faculty member with an opportunity to engage with students about their learning; and as a prompt for conversation in the peer review process.

The surveys also are for students. They again serve three purposes: as the most formal and systematic way for students to think and have a voice about—in their own words-- course instruction (for example, to praise especially effective teaching or to offer suggestions); as a device to encourage students' metacognitive learning, both in an individual course and more broadly; and as practice for the soft skills of providing effective feedback.

Finally, the surveys have a supporting role in decisions about appointment, promotion, and tenure, within the context of a fulsome, sophisticated, and holistic peer review process. However, they are not intended to provide a single metric for the evaluation of an individual faculty member or as the definitive measure of effectiveness of course in meeting learning objectives.

Note: the administration is responsible for ensuring the overall quality of courses and the curriculum; while not the only metric for assessing that, the course surveys can provide relevant information. Specifically, programs, departments, and colleges should be able to aggregate some information from the surveys so as to capture longitudinally the success of the curriculum.

- **What are the principles behind the surveys and the overall aspirations?**

a) Currently, the numerically-driven SET's create the governing assumptions for how faculty are evaluated for appointment, promotion, and tenure. This is not in keeping with current research or best practices. Moreover, they systemically reinforce and conceal implicit bias which adversely affects faculty of color, women, and younger faculty. Finally, if the purpose of the SET is to provide students with a voice, a numerically-driven survey with predetermined questions limits the students' ability to speak for themselves.

Instead, the evaluation of teaching should be holistic, multi-faceted, and include primarily peer review, including the examination of course documents, class visits, assessment of assignments and grading, attention to student learning outcomes, and instructor narratives describing teaching philosophies and approach. Student voices are an essential part of that holistic review, and students should be surveyed ever semester; they provide important context and information but are not determinative. For that reason, the Senate-approved 2017 Report recommended that this particular portion of a holistic evaluation more accurately be called surveys so as to distinguish them from the larger process.

b) Given the above, The Report also recommended that as the most common mechanism by which student voices are heard, the surveys should foreground open-ended responses to open-ended questions: in short, that the surveys should be narrative, and quantitative responses limited to a secondary role. Critically, the surveys should be designed to limit bias as much as possible; and those reading the surveys should be aware of and trained in accounting for that.

- c) We include the following as items the committee should consider as part of their overall report:
- Should surveys be issued twice in the term, both early (like the current MAP) and at the end?
 - When are the optimal times for surveys to be sent out, and how much flexibility is there in the timing?
 - We have had declining response rates for several years. We strongly recommend that UNH consider following the lead of other universities in requiring students to fill out course surveys before they can access their grades or identify another effective strategy to increase participation.
 - Although not narrowly a part of this charge, we note that a revitalized system of course surveys can support student success by reinforcing the ways in which students can become active, self-aware partners in their learning. We recommend the ad hoc committee consider how course surveys become a more intentional part of the educational ecosystem. Three thoughts:
 - New students should take a one-credit course on learning (see the Cognitive Toolbox).
 - Students should also be trained in how to respond to surveys. Providing thoughtful feedback to colleagues in the workplace is a useful skill; we can provide students with some skill and experience in this area.
 - We provide department chairs, associate deans, deans, and other administrators with appropriate professional development in the use of qualitative data.
 - Should clinical and internship site faculty be brought under the same system?
 - What is the best balance between common questions and those that might vary by discipline, modality, venue, and program?