

To: The Faculty Senate

From: The Teaching Effectiveness Committee

Date: February 4, 1985

Subject: Recommendations for New Student Opinion Questionnaires and Procedures

Introduction

In a series of discussions during the 1983-84 academic year and the fall semester of 1984, the Teaching Effectiveness Committee has agreed that the university faculty would benefit from a short student opinion form designed specifically for the administrative evaluation of teaching. The situation which faces us at present is this: the use of data from surveys of student opinion to evaluate teaching effectiveness is mandatory, yet the current student opinion questionnaire is not designed for such a purpose.

The effects, actual and potential, of this situation are not good. There appears to be no agreement on how data on the current questionnaire should be interpreted or on which questions represent most fairly the student opinion of teaching effectiveness. Some units have chosen to use other instruments to measure student opinion. In so doing, they have reduced the integrity and reliability of university-wide data that other units should have available for comparative purposes.

For students, the complexity, length, and awkwardness of the current questionnaire is time-consuming and invites a kind of rote response ("Not another one of these!"). If we wish to take student opinion seriously--and such seems to be the intent of Appendix C--we should make it easy for students to focus their opinion on a few important questions. The current survey form produces an unfocused diffusion of opinion, a fact which further complicates any

attempt to draw valid conclusions from the resulting data for administrative purposes.

Moreover, the complexity of the current form and the way in which data are reported make it difficult for an instructor or an administrator to understand how the opinion of students in one class compares with opinion in other classes of the same kind.

In considering the evaluation of teaching, the Committee has reviewed the extensive literature on the subject and examined evaluation instruments used elsewhere.

Consequently, we are recommending a short form and some general principles for its use. We make these recommendations in full awareness of the provisions of Appendix C which mandate the use, in faculty evaluation, of data from surveys of student opinion. We believe that the form and the principles that we are recommending will promote a more objective and uniform use of student opinion data than currently prevails--and thus will provide for fair and equal treatment of faculty.

The Committee is also making available another form, designed primarily for the improvement of teaching, which instructors may use at their individual discretion.

Principles to Guide the Use of Student Opinion Data

The general principles for the use of the short form are more important than the specific questions on the form. We recommend seven such principles:

1. That student opinion of instruction be only one of the ways to evaluate teaching. Units should seek additional ways, depending on their particular needs and interests.

2. That the new form be administered in all courses at the university.

This is necessary in order to ensure the completeness and reliability of data. Units would be free, of course, to develop other instruments for use in addition to the TEC form and, in accordance with Appendix C, to use only data from those other instruments.

3. That the new form be administered every semester.

4. That data from the new form be processed in such a way that

both individual faculty and department heads know the following:

- a. The university mean and standard deviation for each statement on the form by the level of course (e.g., for all 1000-level courses surveyed in the university during the past three years).
- b. The unit mean and standard deviation for each statement by the level of course (e.g., for all 1000-level courses surveyed in the unit during the past three years).

5. That individual units request specific means and standard deviations for particular kinds of courses (e.g., for all freshman and sophomore level lecture courses designed primarily for General College students).

6. That administrative analyses of student opinion pay attention only to data that indicates a statistically high or a statistically low performance when compared to responses for similar courses.

This means that basic, satisfactory competence must be assumed whenever the student response to a statement is less than one standard deviation below the mean for similar courses in a unit.

7. That, except in the case of new faculty, administrative evaluations be based not on course-by-course or semester-by-semester data but on patterns established over the past several semesters by all the courses taught by a faculty member.

Blodsworth
base sub.
opinion on
if

A New Form for Administrative Evaluation of Teaching

The form itself includes only four questions. None is biased towards particular kinds of courses, and none asks students to pass judgment on matters (such as course content or textbooks) of which students may not be the best evaluators:

1. The instructor is reliable in such matters as meeting classes as scheduled, returning tests and assignments in a timely manner, and keeping posted office hours and appointments.

1 2 3 4 5
Lowest Highest

2. The instructor has made the goals of the course clear and utilizes assignments and activities that are relevant to those goals.

1 2 3 4 5
Lowest Highest

3. The instructor has created an atmosphere of respect, fairness, and helpfulness.

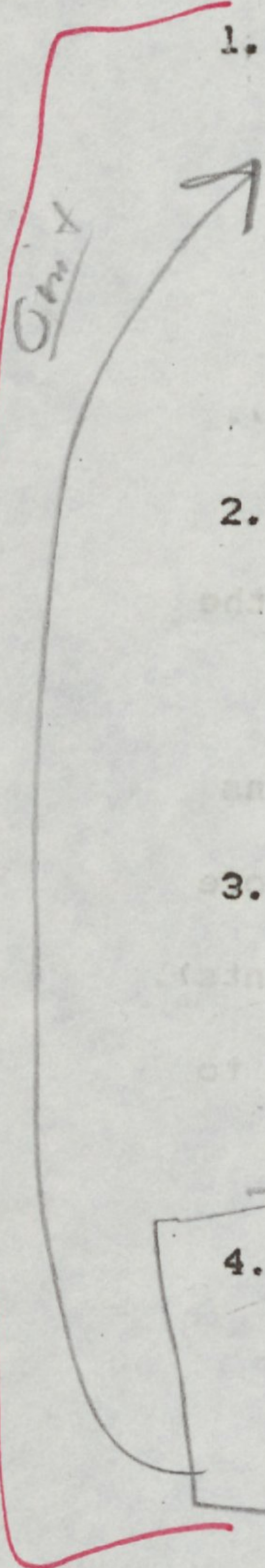
1 2 3 4 5
Lowest Highest

4. Overall, the instructor is effective in teaching this course.

1 2 3 4 5
Lowest Highest

Form for Improvement of Teaching

In addition to the new short form, designed specifically for the purpose of administrative evaluation of teaching, the Teaching Effectiveness Committee will make available the following form, to be used at the discretion of individual instructors. Results will be sent to the individual faculty members.



Approved

The items on this form are as follows:

1. The instructor's speech is clear and audible.
2. The instructor's presentations cause me to think about this subject.
3. The instructor provides the opportunity to ask questions.
4. The instructor presents course content so that I can understand it.
5. The instructor is prepared for class.
6. The instructor shows interest in my learning.
7. The instructor provides useful feedback on student progress (identifying strengths and weaknesses).
8. The instructor is available to give me help outside of class.
9. The assignments contribute to my understanding of the subject.
10. The course requirements (projects, papers, exams, etc.) have been explained clearly.
11. The methods (papers, tests, projects, etc.) for evaluating my work are reasonable.
12. The course is well organized.
13. The course objectives are clear.
14. The goals of the course are being achieved.
15. I am more competent in this subject as a result of this course.
- 16.-25. Optional questions provided by the instructor.

Relationship to Provisions in Appendix C

It is important to understand these recommendations in the context of provisions in Appendix C. The following points should be emphasized:

- of
- o The recommendations stress the need for units to develop additional means of evaluating teaching beyond the use of the student opinion questionnaire. To help meet this need, the Teaching Effectiveness

renew

require to be done so have competency

Committee will compile a file, available for review in the Faculty Senate Office, containing information on other means of evaluation now in effect in various academic units.

- o Although all units will be required to administer the four-question form (in order that comparative data will be complete), units may adopt other student opinion questionnaires for use in faculty evaluation, provided that they obtain the Chancellor's approval. The Chancellor's approval is specified in section III of Appendix C.
- o When data from student opinion questionnaires are used, they are to be used in a way that is statistically sound. Note that the recommendations above (in principles 4 through 7) call for such use. Principle 7, which indicates that evaluations should be based whenever possible on patterns established over several semesters, is especially important.

The ultimate effects of these recommendations, we believe, will be more accurate data, less chance for capricious or arbitrary judgment, clearer understanding of student opinion, and improved faculty morale.