



## University Senate TRANSMITTAL FORM

<b>Senate Document #:</b>	10-11-06
<b>PCC ID #:</b>	N/A
<b>Title:</b>	Re-evaluation of the Student Teacher Evaluations at UMD
<b>Presenter:</b>	Charles Delwiche, Chair, Senate APAS Committee
<b>Date of SEC Review:</b>	January 28, 2011
<b>Date of Senate Review:</b>	February 9, 2011
<b>Voting (highlight one):</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. On resolutions or recommendations one by one, or</li><li>2. In a single vote</li><li>3. To endorse entire report</li></ol>
<b>Statement of Issue:</b>	In September 2010, the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) charged the Academic Procedures and Standards (APAS) Committee with reviewing the implementation of the University's online course evaluation system following receipt of a proposal regarding the current process of teacher evaluations.
<b>Relevant Policy # &amp; URL:</b>	N/A
<b>Recommendation:</b>	The APAS Committee recommends that the CourseEvalUM system continue to undergo development with the guidance of a governing body that is formulated in a manner consistent with the principles of shared governance. The attached report outlines an approach to satisfying this objective. The attached report also outlines a number of specific subjects that warrant further attention, including the recommendation that more detailed consideration should be given to how CourseEvalUM could be modified to better satisfy student needs. Additionally, the committee strongly endorses the urgency for the addition of

	unit-specific questions, including course-specific and instructor-specified questions to the CourseEvalUM system.
<b>Committee Work:</b>	<p>The APAS Committee began reviewing this issue at the beginning of the Fall 2010 Semester. The APAS Committee reviewed the history of the topic in the University Senate, as well as peer institution procedures for course evaluations. Additionally, the committee researched off-campus course evaluation services and evaluated legal considerations for this issue. The committee also reviewed articles on the subject of teacher evaluations and consulted with members of the Office of Institutional Research Planning &amp; Assessment (IRPA).</p> <p>Following research and deliberation, the committee developed its report and voted in favor of forwarding it and its recommendations on December 17, 2010.</p>
<b>Alternatives:</b>	The Senate could choose not to approve the proposed recommendations of the APAS Committee and the current processes for implementing the University's course evaluation system would remain unchanged.
<b>Risks:</b>	There are no associated risks.
<b>Financial Implications:</b>	There are no related financial implications.
<b>Further Approvals Required:</b> ( <i>*Important for PCC Items</i> )	Senate Executive Committee Approval, Provost Approval

## **Academic Procedures and Standards (APAS) Committee**

### **Report on the “Re-evaluation of the Student Teacher Evaluations at UMD” Senate Document # 10-11-06**

**December 2010**

#### BACKGROUND

In December, 2005, after several years of research, deliberation, and debate, the University Senate voted to approve a set of recommendations leading to a campus-wide, online course evaluation system (See Appendix One). Following receipt of a proposal regarding the current process of teacher evaluations, the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) charged the Academic Procedures and Standards (APAS) Committee in September, 2010 with evaluating the implementation of the online course evaluation system and making an assessment of whether or not it is consistent with the Senate’s intent. Among the specific issues raised were whether under some circumstances students could learn their course grade before issuing a course evaluation, and concern that some evaluations included inappropriate or antagonistic comments. Because it has been five years since the initial approval of a web-based student course evaluation program, the SEC felt that a review of the current process was warranted. The SEC specifically asked the committee to comment on whether the current process is effective and consistent with the Senate’s deliberations on the topic, compare our process with those at our peers, to comment on whether there are any areas of concern that should be reevaluated, and to review recent research studies related to the effectiveness of this type of evaluation system.

The committee began considering this issue at its first meeting of the year, on September 3, 2010. At that meeting, APAS Committee members reviewed the background of the topic in the Senate. In October, 2010, the committee reviewed a document prepared by the Senate Office outlining peer institution procedures for course evaluations, including information from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of California, Berkeley, the University of Los Angeles, the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Rutgers University, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech). The committee also reviewed articles on the subject of teacher evaluations, including “Does Professor Quality Matter? Evidence from Random Assignment of Students to Professors,” by Scott E. Carrell of the University of California and James E. West of the US Air Force Academy, (2010); “Online Course Evaluations Task Force Report” from the University of Michigan (2007); and an article on Student Evaluation of Teaching from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1994). Additionally, at the October 19, 2010 meeting, the committee discussed findings from a meeting that the Chair of APAS held with members of the Office of Institutional Research Planning & Assessment (IRPA).

There are at least three distinct constituencies with an interest in teaching evaluations: faculty, who can use such evaluations to improve their teaching; students, who can use them to select courses; and the administration *sensu lato*, who make use of the data for a variety of diagnostic purposes, including the Appointments, Promotion, and Tenure (APT) process. In an attempt to satisfy these distinct constituencies within the bounds established for legal reasons, the course evaluation system was divided into two distinct sets of questions, with the results being available to the public (i.e., students) or to the APT process, but not both. Answers to free-response questions are within the confidential portion of the course evaluation system used for the APT process. It is critical to understand that by law information used for employee evaluations (i.e., APT) must be kept confidential; this sharply limits the ability of course evaluations to serve these multiple constituencies.

An online course evaluation system (“CourseEvalUM”) has been developed<sup>1</sup>, and went into campus-wide use starting Fall 2007, with ongoing development since then. An advisory panel was established to help guide the development of CourseEvalUM; that panel meets twice per year and provides feedback on the implementation and development of CourseEvalUM. There are also Course Evaluation Liaisons identified in each college who provide a conduit for communication between the CourseEvalUM project and the campus community.

It is also noteworthy that since the Senate last deliberated on this matter there has been a growing popularity of off-campus course evaluation services (e.g., ourumd.com, ratemyprofessor.com). These services provide different information than CourseEvalUM, including free-response statements, but suffer from several flaws, including in many cases a lack of a requirement that a student have actually taken the course being evaluated, the self-selection of the participants which can lead to skewed results, and a lower overall participation rate than CourseEvalUM.

## EVALUATION

The APAS Committee found that the CourseEvalUM system seems to satisfy the fundamental intent of the 2005 Senate resolution. It has successfully implemented a campus-wide course evaluation system, and this system appears to be accepted and used by the multiple constituencies, although (as described in more detail below) it still lacks important features, and is not equally useful to all constituencies. The fact that an advisory committee was established to guide ongoing development of the system is extremely important. An important benefit of the CourseEvalUM system is that it has helped establish a uniform evaluation system that appears to have encouraged a number of mentoring and conferencing experiences that reinforce the importance of teaching as a central campus mission, and presumably improve teaching quality.

A combination of incentives and advertising has managed to yield an overall response rate of 63%. This is lower than the target of 70%, but a 2009 study by

IRPA found that overall evaluations were not strongly skewed by response rate<sup>2</sup>. Thus, while the response rate is lower than desired, this does not in and of itself appear to invalidate the CourseEvalUM system.

The APAS Committee acknowledged that the free-response evaluations are sometimes inappropriate, harsh, or insulting, and found anecdotal support for the assertion that some faculty decline to read them. Legal considerations prohibit selective editing of the comments, so the only practical response to this concern appears to be education and counseling of both students and faculty. The 2005 Senate report recognized the importance of outreach and education regarding the course evaluation process itself, although this does not appear to have been a major component of the implementation. This concern is probably best regarded as a part of the larger dialog on civility that is now developing on campus. It should be noted that there is a mechanism in place to permit actively threatening messages to be referred to the appropriate law enforcement bodies.

Several weaknesses in the CourseEvalUM system were noted, particularly an overall lack of flexibility, including the inability to offer instructor- or course-specific questions, and the rigid requirement for a single opening and closing date for evaluations for all classes. The restriction to a single opening and closing date is particularly problematic in Summer- and Winter- terms, as well as in certain units that use non-standard exam schedules. To some extent these limitations are a necessary byproduct of the fundamental design of CourseEvalUM, and are driven at least in part by the scale of data collection involved and the desirability of using community-standard software. Many of these concerns were already well documented, and an existing IRPA report prioritizes development of CourseEvalUM Capabilities (for example, CourseEvalUM is now offering richer statistical analysis of data than it did in its first release)<sup>1</sup>.

An important concern is whether or not CourseEvalUM is serving all of its varied constituencies well. Some faculty prefer the older system, and the committee found that some departments/units use dual systems including a combination of CourseEvalUM and paper evaluations. For that reason, evaluation of faculty perceptions regarding the CourseEvalUM process may also provide valuable insights to the CourseEvalUM Advisory Group. At the same time, some students appear to prefer the off-campus services.

One of the most important recommendations of the 2005 report was that online course evaluations be only one of several measures of teaching used for APT and related purposes. Student evaluations of teachers should be (and at Maryland typically are) only one part of a comprehensive teaching dossier for APT purposes. However, the fact that the current APT manual has an explicit statement that all dossiers must contain data from CourseEvalUM may have had the unintended effect of placing greater emphasis on online course evaluations by students than on other measures of teaching effectiveness. The CourseEvalUM system has provided a valuable university-wide measure of student perception of teaching, but because of

the complexities involved in interpreting such data, teaching dossiers should never consist solely of CourseEvalUM data. This is particularly important given the fact that it can be difficult to interpret data from student evaluations. Indeed, under some circumstances student evaluations can be inversely correlated with learning outcomes (E.g., Carrell and West, *op. cit.*).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The APAS Committee recommends that the CourseEvalUM system continue to undergo development with the guidance of a governing body that is formulated in a manner consistent with the principles of shared governance. One obvious approach would be to modify the existing CourseEvalUM Advisory Group to satisfy this objective. Because the CourseEvalUM system has the potential to have a powerful influence on many central aspects of campus life, careful attention should be given to how the governing body is appointed, and provisions should be made to ensure that its mandate (and the implementation of CourseEvalUM in general) supports shared governance.

Several specific subjects warrant further attention: first, more detailed consideration should be given to how CourseEvalUM could be modified to better satisfy student needs. Second, the University should give priority to the imperative to educate students on the importance of civility in course evaluations and to counsel instructors on how to interpret and make effective use of the information in student evaluations. One logical approach would be to ask the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) to develop and promulgate appropriate materials and activities. And third, care should be taken to ensure that APT dossiers always include diverse documentation of teaching effectiveness, and never rely solely on CourseEvalUM data.

Finally, the committee strongly endorsed the urgency of unit-specific questions, including course-specific and instructor-specified questions. These are acknowledged as development goals on the IRPA CourseEvalUM web page, and Department-specific questions are close to implementation, but finer-grained specificity is given much lower priority in the most recent prioritization developed by the Advisory Group. The APAS Committee felt that course- and instructor- level questions would greatly increase the utility of CourseEvalUM to instructors.

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.irpa.umd.edu/Assessment/crs\\_eval.shtml](https://www.irpa.umd.edu/Assessment/crs_eval.shtml)

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.irpa.umd.edu/Assessment/CourseEvalUM/ReferencedFiles/responsive\\_score\\_fall09\\_report.pdf](https://www.irpa.umd.edu/Assessment/CourseEvalUM/ReferencedFiles/responsive_score_fall09_report.pdf)

## Attachments

Appendix One: Background on Teaching Evaluation topic in University Senate

Appendix Two: Charge and Proposal from Senate Executive Committee

Appendix Three: Advisory Group priorities for development

## Appendix One

### **Summary of History on the Topic of Course Evaluations in the University Senate:**

In July 2002, The Educational Affairs Committee was charged with reviewing a proposal from Lilly-CTE Fellows to establish a University policy on the evaluation of teaching (Senate Doc #01-02-63). Senate Chair Kent Cartwright sent a memo to John Pease, Chair of the Educational Affairs Committee, asking the committee whether it would like to examine the proposal in depth or forward it to a joint task force of the Senate & Academic Affairs for further study. The memo detailed specific issues and questions that should be considered, and the proposal from Lilly-CTE was attached.

In November 2002, the Educational Affairs Committee responded to the SEC, stating that it had decided not to make a formal recommendation regarding the Lilly-CTE proposal for the Establishment of a University Policy on the Evaluation of Teaching. It suggested that a Task Force be created to look into this issue further.

On January 14, 2003, the SEC reviewed the memo from the Educational Affairs Committee and voted to develop a proposal for a Task Force.

The Joint Task Force on Course Evaluations and Teaching was appointed by the Office of the Provost and the University Senate. The Task Force was charged during in the spring of 2003.

The Task Force met during the summer and fall of 2003. It presented an interim report in February 2004. One of the recommendations from this report became a resolution for a university-wide requirement for student evaluations in all undergraduate and graduate courses.

The University Senate passed the resolution on May 3, 2004, mandating a university-wide requirement for student evaluations in all undergraduate and graduate courses. Senate Doc 02-03-39 stated “we recommend that there be a university-wide requirement for student evaluations in all undergraduate and graduate courses.”

Following the passage of the resolution, the SEC updated the original charge to the Task Force in September 2004. The Task Force sent a draft response to the updated charge and a draft of their final report to the SEC for its meeting on January 19, 2005 (draft report dated January 12, 2005). The draft report detailed a set of six recommendations calling for, in part, a university-wide course evaluation system (web-based), a set of universal evaluation questions, and that a portion of the evaluation results be made public to the students. On January 19, 2005, the SEC met to review the response from the Task Force to the updated charge and draft report.

The Task Force compiled its Final Report in April 2005. This report contained seven recommendations on how the academic community could enhance its capabilities to assess and improve curriculum and instruction. The Task Force members unanimously agreed that a university-wide course evaluation requirement and system should be adopted.

The SEC met on September 13, 2005, and approved a consultation between Senate Chair Berlin and the Task Force to draw certain recommendations from the final report to be presented as actionable items to the Senate, along with a report from Provost Destler on implementation.

The SEC met on November 1st and voted to invite the Chair of the Task Force to the next meeting, along with the lawyer who had been advising them.

The Task Force presented its report and recommendations to the SEC on November 15, 2005. The SEC decided that Chair Berlin would work with the Task Force to revise the language of its recommendations.

The Task Force presented a revised document to the SEC on November 29, 2005. The SEC voted to approve the Task Force's document for the December Senate agenda.

On December 12, 2005, the Chair of the Task Force, Dennis Kivlinghan, presented the actionable recommendations (Recommendations for the Implementation of Web-based Student Course Evaluations, Senate Doc #02-03-39). He explained that the nine recommendations were principles for implementing web-based course evaluations. The recommendations would be implemented through the Provost's Office.

Chair Berlin sent a memo to President Mote on December 15, 2005, stating that the Senate had approved the Recommendations for the Implementation of Web-based Student Course Evaluations.

President Mote accepted the recommendations on December 21, 2005. He stated that there remain significant issues for full implementation, both in timing and in framing the questions, and gave suggestions for how to move forward.

Chair Berlin reported to the SEC about Dr. Mote's letter at the SEC meeting on January 24, 2006. Berlin noted that the Provost had formed an implementation committee. VP Jeff Huskamp presented an informational summary of technology issues relating to the implementation of web-based student evaluations to the SEC on February 28, 2006.

Sharon La Voy Chaired the Provost's Student Course Evaluation Implementation Committee and she presented the committee's university-wide questions for online student evaluations at an SEC meeting on March 14, 2006. The questions had been reviewed by the Council of Deans. The SEC made changes, and La Voy presented a final set of questions on April 11, 2006. The SEC voted to place the questions on the April 24<sup>th</sup> Senate agenda as an informational item.

The Provost and the Implementation Committee presented the questions for the web-based evaluation instrument. The Provost explained that the Senate would not be asked to approve the questions but to provide feedback. He confirmed that responses to the set of questions for APT would not be made public. The Provost emphasized that he would require a 75% participation rate before results for a course would be published. He explained that the new system would be fully implemented in the fall of 2007.

Prepared by the Senate Office – August 25, 2010





## University Senate CHARGE

<b>Date:</b>	September 1, 2010
<b>To:</b>	Charles Delwiche Chair, Academic Procedures & Standards Committee
<b>From:</b>	Linda Mabbs Chair, University Senate
<b>Subject:</b>	Evaluation of the Student Teacher Evaluations at UMD
<b>Senate Document #:</b>	10-11-06
<b>Deadline:</b>	December 1, 2010

The Senate Executive Committee (SEC) requests that the Academic Procedures & Standards (APAS) Committee review the attached proposal regarding the Student Teacher Evaluations at the University.

On December 12, 2005, the Senate approved the proposal entitled, Recommendations for the Implementation of Web-based Student Course Evaluations (Senate Doc #02-03-39). President Mote accepted these recommendations on December 21, 2005. The Provost's Student Course Evaluation Implementation Committee later implemented these recommendations. A complete overview of the timeline related to this proposal and supporting documentation are attached.

Because it has been five years since the initial approval of the proposal, the SEC feels that a review of the current process is warranted. Therefore, we ask that the APAS Committee review the implementation and current practice of student teacher evaluations.

Specifically, we ask that you:

1. Comment on whether the current process is effective and consistent with the Senate's deliberations.
2. Compare our existing practice to those at our peer institutions.
3. Comment on whether there are any areas of concern that should be reevaluated.
4. Review recent research studies related to the effectiveness of this type of evaluation system.

We ask that you submit your report and recommendations to the Senate Office no later than December 1, 2010. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Reka Montfort in the Senate Office, extension 5-5804.



## University Senate PROPOSAL FORM

<b>Name:</b>	Denny Gulick
<b>Date:</b>	July 28, 2010
<b>Title of Proposal:</b>	Re-evaluation of the Student Teacher Evaluations at UMD
<b>Phone Number:</b>	301 405 5157
<b>Email Address:</b>	dng@math.umd.edu
<b>Campus Address:</b>	Dept of Math, Univ of MD
<b>Unit/Department/College:</b>	Mathematics, CMPS
<b>Constituency (faculty, staff, undergraduate, graduate):</b>	faculty
<b>Description of issue/concern/policy in question:</b>	<p>There are a number of features of student teacher evaluations that are antagonistic and demeaning to faculty:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students write anonymously, frequently with purposefully hurtful comments, sometimes with sexual comments.</li> <li>2. Students are allowed to see class grade distributions, enhancing grade inflation.</li> <li>3. In SS of 2010, students in some courses were allowed to fill out evaluations after grades were posted; in other courses students could not fill out evaluations until 3 weeks after completion of the courses.</li> <li>4. Faculty increasingly refuse to look at the evaluations because of improper comments.</li> </ol>
<b>Description of action/changes you would like to see implemented and why:</b>	The current evaluation process and timeline should be reviewed and revised to ensure that it is a constructive exercise for both the students and the faculty.
<b>Suggestions for how your proposal could be put into practice:</b>	Have a Senate committee review the entire set of procedures for the student teacher evaluations, and report back to the Senate by a given deadline.
<b>Additional Information:</b>	

## Appendix Three

### CourseEvalUM Priority Development Items

*Office of Institutional Research Planning & Assessment (IRPA)*

*Developed Fall 2010 with Advisory Group Feedback and in Consultation with OIT*

The following items were ranked in order of priority need based on technical requirements as well as feedback from the colleges through the Course Evaluation Advisory Group.

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Item</b>
1	Upgrade Sakai and course evaluation software
2	Automate collection to reporting programming
3	Automate and develop user interface for process that loads SIS-based Oracle table data into Sakai
4	Develop user interface for Sakai/course evaluation tool for access to hierarchy functionality
5	TA items/reporting
6	APT compilation report
7	Move data from the transactional system to current warehouse with specified views
8	Governing feature to cap maximum number of items in an evaluation
9	Department level items and reporting
10	Affiliate small sections of large lectures to the system
11	Affiliate cross-listed courses to the system
12	Evaluate winter courses
13	Evaluate non-standard end fall and spring courses closer to their end dates
14	Address reporting access needs more fully
15	Add features to college and dept-level reporting
16	Instructor level items/reporting
17	Evaluate 3- & 8- summer courses near end dates
18	Lab and studio section items/reporting
19	Prefix, group, program items/reporting