

Minutes
Curriculum & Instruction Committee
April 14, 2011

Present: Bielat, Furtado, Shapiro, Young, Saperstein
Absent with Notice: Feathers, Austin, Browne, Hoogland, Moseley, Vlasopolos, Retish
Absent: Bosch, Golebiowski, Ku
Guests: Laura Woodward, Director of Testing & Assessment, Kristi Verbeke, Assistant
Director, Office for Teaching and Learning, Hamid Siddiqui, Testing & Assessment
Research Assistant, and Timothy Spannaus, Program Coordinator, Instructional
Technology

Move to approve amended minutes from March 24, 2011 by Saperstein, seconded by Young.

There were three issues discussed at the April 14 meeting: The Retention Report, SETs and the Graduate Compact.

1. Retention Report

The Committee considered Shapiro's comments to the Committee's *Report on the Retention Plan* dated April 7, 2011. Furtado reiterated issue regarding encouraging enrollment of 15 credit hours. Shapiro stated the idea behind the 15 hours is that everything we can do to appropriately advise to reduce time to graduation. The Committee agreed to revise the *Report on the Retention Plan* to incorporate and acknowledge the additional information provided by Shapiro relating to the Retention Plan, and submit the revised *Report on the Retention Plan* to the Policy Committee.

The following comments were submitted by Browne via e-mail with regards to this discussion prior to the meeting:

Browne: As for the retention issue, I continue to believe that it is putting the cart before the horse to concentrate exclusively on retention -- setting goals, spending money, etc. -- divorced from the question of admissions. I have no sense of whether our retention numbers are too low or too high, because I don't know if we are admitting the right students. Devoting a substantial amount of faculty and administrator time to keep students who lack the background or capacity for college-level work would be affirmatively harmful to the University.

2. SETs

Laura Woodward presented on SET scores, return rates, and also discussed a vendor option for evaluation administration by Campus Labs. The SET presentation was based on WSU data. Committee members posed several questions regarding the significance of relationships between variables and their interpretation. Generally, response rates from online SET's are much lower than paper. It was pointed out by Spannaus that this is

common across campuses across the US. It was also noted during the discussion the current form of the SET assumes a traditional classroom. This form needs to be revised to be relevant to online and blended courses. It was noted the SET score is the only evaluation of teaching. It was generally agreed by attendees that P&T Committees don't look at response rates. Question was posed by Saperstein regarding the scatter plots, which under SET guidelines are supposed to be distributed to faculty. It was noted by Siddiqui that Scatter Plots go to the OTL, and they cannot be produced until all the data from all students is processed. Scatter Plots are produced for college, university and departments. Another question was posed regarding the distribution of written responses for courses with low SET return rates. Siddiqui stated the written responses are submitted to faculty no matter how many were submitted (few or many). The Committee recommended to Woodward and Siddiqui that the Scatter Plots be distributed as stated in the Understanding Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) at WSU.

It was noted that this would require additional staff time in an already understaffed office. This led to discussion of Campus Labs, a vendor that provided evaluation management. Woodward noted that Campus Labs is a product of the company formerly known as Student Voice, with which WSU has a relationship. One of the issues Woodward discussed with Committee members was Confidentiality vs. Anonymity. We are required to keep responses confidential, but the Campus Labs system also provides for monitoring of student response rates, and allows for reminders to be sent regarding completion. It also allows access to responses in real time. According to our policy, SETs are a voluntary process. Right now, the system can identify students who did not respond, but the office does do this. It was noted by Committee that in online courses, perhaps triggering the SET earlier than usual might increase response rates. It was noted by Woodward and Siddiqui that faculty can ask the testing office to provide the SET early. Cost for Campus Labs would be approximately \$20,000 for "basic" service regarding SET management. It was noted that this might be less cost than hiring an additional person to provide services such as creating the Scatter Plots discussed earlier.

There were several concerns voiced regarding outsourcing the SETs. It was expressed that Campus Labs needs to be reviewed thoroughly so that we can look determine if this can address some of the issues, such as creating scatter plots, delivering through our systems, ease of use for faculty, differences between confidentiality vs. anonymity, their data security, who owns the data, etc. It was also noted in general, there needs to be an evaluation of the usefulness of the SETs for evaluating teaching. It was also noted we should not rush into an agreement with a vendor if the SETs themselves needed to be reviewed. It was agreed by the Committee that we would send a recommendation to Policy Committee to convene a 2N Committee to review the SETs, the online evaluation problem, the vendor question, etc.

The following 2 comments regarding SETs were received via e-mail prior to the meeting:

Browne: As for the SET issue, I have some reservations about using an on-line form, as there are reasons to be concerned about its representativeness. At least with the in-class forms, you know that the responding student was at least present on that day, whereas

online forms can be filled out by people who seldom, if ever, come to class. Also, it can be "gamed" in ways that the in-class form can't. If a student has a grudge against a professor, he can recruit a bunch of students in his dorm who have the same professor to give the professor a bad evaluation. I'm not sure if there is any discussion of it this go-round, but in prior years there has been discussion about "incentives" for providing evaluations -- e.g., win an iPod -- which may cause undesired results. Finally, perhaps in other parts of the University it would not be a problem, but I imagine that law students would be caused some anxiety by the notion that the professor can tell whether they have filled out an evaluation.

Vlasopolos: When it comes to implementing new ways of collecting SETs, I think we should be mindful of the budgetary constraints and go for the most effective AND cheapest option. I'd appreciate if you conveyed my views on the matter to the committee. While \$20,000 may seem very little, that's a secretary's salary for a year, shameful as that is, and we're likely to lose personnel in the newest budget cuts, so I'd proceed with extreme caution about new toys. Badgering students to write evaluations is not something I want to engage in, for that matter. I would find it unsavory and somewhat unethical.

3. Faculty-Student Compact

The Committee continued its discussion about the Compact. Overall the document looks good. Looks pretty flexible for different constituencies.

Some specific examples of "no-no"s with the admonition that "this is not exclusive" would help with clarity for all parties.

Saperstein noted it might be useful to have a historical paragraph to start with to help understand why this document was created. So we can say guideline are an attempt to prevent from happening.

Submitted by: Veronica Bielat