

Wayne State University
Academic Senate
Minutes of the Curriculum & Instruction Committee
February 16, 2010

Present: K. Feathers, W. Brusilow, A. Furtado, A. Saperstein, E. Young, A. Vlasopolos, H. Shapiro, S. Baskin

Absent with Notice: A. Cobbs, J. Moseley, B. Watten, C. Collins, R. Reynolds.

Absent: T. Austin, V. Bielat, V. Dallas, J. Ku, A. Retish.

The agenda was approved with the addition of one item - possible environmental oath.

A copy of the draft recommendation to the Policy Committee was handed out and revised by the group. During the revision, several things related to evaluation of teaching were discussed. H. Shapiro indicated that he had some material that might be helpful to the committee looking at teaching evaluations. He also suggested that evaluation might serve multiple purposes, for example, student reflection as well as improvement of teaching. K. Feathers described a local college that uses portfolios in undergraduate teacher education in that way, having students write reflections on each year of instruction and including in their reflection discussion of how the college supported or did not support their learning.

Rate Your Professor was discussed as an alternative teaching rating, and S. Baskin indicated that students do use that but that they recognize it may be biased because of who submits ratings. A. Saperstein pointed out that faculty or administration needs for evaluation are different from students' needs. Rating for faculty is to improve teaching but students do not really have a use for the ratings. Perhaps a better rating would be to ask alumni who influenced them the most while they were students and why. A. Vlasopolos raised the issue of transparency-students do not put their names on their evaluations, but faculty have their names on grades given to students.

A. Furtado pointed out the low response rates on electronic SETs, but S. Baskin added that students can also rush through paper SETs. H. Shapiro suggested that we need to have a campus-wide conversation to change the perspective of the evaluation and to help students understand their importance. A suggestion was made and approved that we add to the draft recommendation that the ad hoc committee work with the Student Senate in considering the issue of teacher evaluation.

W. Brusilow indicated that students cannot really evaluate teaching and that is it unfair to faculty to have evaluations to compare them with others. A. Vlasopolos indicated that her sense of how she is doing as a teacher is better informed by how well students do on course assignments and exams than by student comments on the student evaluation. Students have their grades on student assignments to inform them about their learning. A. Saperstein agreed that we should be focused on improvement of teaching and not rating of teaching. H. Shapiro shared four questions to have students answer:

- What did you do to be successful in this class?
- What might you do to be more successful?
- What did the instructor do to help you be successful in this class?
- What might the instructor do to be more helpful?

H. Shapiro also suggested that the Provost's Office could provide assistance to the ad hoc committee as it considers this issue.

K. Feathers will revise the draft based on suggestions and send to the CIC.

A. Saperstein raised the possibility of having students take an oath to protect the environment as part of their graduation ceremony. S. Baskin responded that the graduation program is already quite full. The group felt that this oath would not be meaningful.