

Annual Report of the University Senate Faculty Standards Committee

- ***April 2018***
- ***Submitted by Mark A. Boyer, Chair, 2017-2018***

The FSC had four items of business this year, with one of them dominating much of the year's deliberations.

#1: Review and Evaluation of the SETs

In Spring 2017, the SEC charged the FSC with reviewing the existing Student Evaluations of Teaching (SETs) and potentially recommending changes to them. These deliberations took place during Fall 2017 and Winter 2018. The draft of this report was reviewed at the February and March 2018 FSC meetings and further through email deliberations with the hope of moving the discussion to the SEC and full Senate by April 2018.

Expert Consultations: Summary of Discussions

- September 2017 – Dr. Lloyd Blanchard (Director of OIRE) provided the FSC with a variety of analyses of the SETs, including information regarding bias in such measures.
 - In particular, Dr. Blanchard argued that the current UConn SET is no more or less biased than other instruments. He did state that research (and provided supporting research) has shown that many/most instruments contain some degree of bias against people of color. There is also some evidence that female instructors fare worse than their male counterparts.
- November 2017 – Dr. Peter Diplock (director of CETL) and AAUP representatives (Profs. Tom Bontly and Tom Peters) were invited to attend the FSC meeting. Dr. Diplock discussed the various forms of course evaluation that are available through CETL and beyond. AAUP representatives discussed issues related to the current contract and the UConn AAUP views on the current SET.
- December 2017 – Dr. Betsy McCoach (EPSY) attended the FSC meeting and spoke about Likert scaling as it relates to the SET among other issues regarding the SETs.
- **Items for recommended for review to the full Senate:**
 - Overall Summary statement: Prof. McCoach, in particular, and our other guest consultants “validated” the existing measure. Their views bolstered the sense that this is a good, if not a perfect, instrument. But then, as Dr. Blanchard discussed, there aren't any perfect measures.
 - ***Proposals for Change to the Current Instrument*** – these would be implemented with review by the FSC/SEC in collaboration with OIRE, if approved by the full Senate.
 - **#1 – Report the Median and Mean for all response items.**
 - This would help faculty better understand the results of the items.
 - **#2 - Amend ordering of the questions as reported to instructors to make summary and/or independent items stand out.**
 - This is specifically in response to confusion in interpreting Item #14 on the SET (“What is your overall rating of the instructor’s teaching?” with

scale Poor to Excellent across 5 scale points). Item #14 is widely interpreted (wrongly) as a composite indicator of Items #1-13. It is not and in fact has a different scale (than the “Disagree strongly to Agree strongly” along 5 scale points that applies in #1-13). Thus, moving this from placement at the end of the first 13 items will help avoid misinterpretation. Item #14 is also the indicator that has been the central score used in the “Provost’s good/bad teaching letters.”

- There was also discussion of perhaps reporting the percentage of respondents on #14 who respond with Good, Very Good, Excellent. No decision was reached on this idea.
- Please note that OIRE has already reorganized some of the SET format:
 - Questions 14 (overall instructor rating) and 22 (overall course rating) are already highlighted differently and the different scale is noted.
 - Broken-down results are displayed after the first page to allow more finely tuned understanding of the aggregate results.
- **#3 – In Item #19, change “textbook” to “course materials.”**
 - Many courses at the university do not use a textbook.
- **#4 – In collaboration with OIRE, revise some items for more appropriate use with on-line courses.**
 - This will likely take further study, as some of the items in questions could be interpreted for use in both contexts. But some faculty argue that they are not appropriate for on-line classes (like Item #2 – “The Instructor was well-prepared for class.”)
- **#5 – Keep the 5 point Likert scale rather than changing to a 7-point scale.**
 - This is based on the comments from Prof. McCoach that moving to a 7-point scale wouldn’t gain us much benefit relative to the existing scale.
- **#6 – The FSC reaffirms its stand the SETs should not be the only method used to evaluate an instructor’s teaching.**
- Lastly, there was extensive discussion about the return rate. There is a sense that the University should investigate incentive systems for increasing the return rate.

#2 – Changes to the 3rd/4th Year PTR Process – several members of the FSC volunteered to work with representatives from the Provost’s Office and AAUP to review potential changes to the mid-track tenure-track review process. There

#3 – Review of the Academic Integrity Process - several members of the FSC volunteered to work with representatives from the Graduate School, Scholastic Standards and others to review the academic integrity documents and process.

#4 – Recusals and the Potential for Double-Voting in the PTR Process – after some discussion at our March meeting, the FSC agreed that anyone participating in the PTR process at a “lower”

level should recuse themselves from the process at higher levels (college, FRB or C3). This was discussed at the behest of the Provost's Office.