

April 26th 2021 Minutes

Faculty Standards Committee of the University Senate

Monday, April 26, 2021 (2:00 – 3:30 PM, WebEx)

Committee charge:

This committee shall continuously review University policies and practices relating to tenure, academic freedom, workloads, rank and promotion, remuneration, retirement, and other matters affecting the faculty and shall propose any desirable expression of Senate opinion on these matters, including proposals to the Trustees for modifications in their rules and regulations on these matters.

Following members were in attendance:

Lisa Holle, Chair, Pharmacy Practice
Dan Burkey, Engineering
Vicki Magley, Psychological Sciences
Betsy McCoach, Neag
Linda Pescatello, Kinesiology
Paula Philbrick, EEB, Waterbury Campus
Sam Dorman, USG Representative
Kathleen Holgerson, Women's Center
Martina Rosenberg, CETL
Jeffrey Shoulson, Senior Vice Provost, Ex-Officio member
Spencer Sonnenburg, Graduate Student
Preston Britner, Human Development & Family Sciences

Guest: Lloyd Blanchard, OIRE

1. Old Business

a. BOT Distinguished Professor Process Review

- i. Betsy reported on the recommendations of the working group (draft report attached). Committee agreed with the group's recommendations with a few minor recommended revisions, including 1) revising 1a to instead of saying "*should* include at least one representative from each school/college" that we state "recommend" to allow for situations where no representative from a college or school is identified/agrees to participate; and 2) recommend students serve 1 year terms in 1.f.
- ii. Next steps
 1. Revise draft document
 2. FSC and JEDI committee approval sought
 3. Once approved by both committees; submit to Provost's office as our recommendations and post on FSC's website with meeting agendas/minutes

2. April 5th, 2021 Minutes approved
3. SET+ Working Group Update
 - a. Martina Rosenberg provided an update from the working group (report attached) and sought advice from committee on next steps
 - b. Guest, Lloyd Blanchard from OIRE, provided perspective that SETs are reasonably valid; has been validated by faculty in past; yet are known to have both gender and racial bias. Recommendations are that SETs alone not be used for high stake purposes (such as PTR) but rather used for feedback and thus need more formative evaluations at department level. Providing more guidance on best practices to departments on formative evaluations could be useful.
 - c. Discussion ensued among committee with the following themes
 - i. SET Plus – wording implies that additional teaching evaluations are emphasizing SETs as the primary evaluation. Recommend systematically removing this belief and emphasizing and supporting departments to be successful in other teaching evaluation methods. These other forms of teaching evaluations are difficult to operationalize; consider what can be done to incentivize or reward departments who are successfully doing this.
 - ii. Letters from Provost’s office commending faculty for high SET scores or encouraging further development for low SET scores should be eliminated. These continue to emphasize SET as best teaching evaluation tool and not recognizing the bias, small changes in median scores having much meaning etc. Provost’s office is considering no longer sending such letters but recommend Deans consider such practice. Committee recommended that neither Provost or Deans continue letters.
 - iii. SET – currently use of only 2 questions on survey rather than entire survey information. Recommend that we consider using all or none of survey information and also considering asking students what did they learn. Future of Learning committee (ongoing this semester) is recommending adjustments and supplements to SET survey that would be attentive to different teaching modalities; recommendations are forthcoming. Students may not complete surveys as they don’t see changes that results from their responses.
 - iv. Poor SET response rates – currently approximately 40% with online SET whereas paper versions in past had 90-100%. With low participation, the validity of the results continues to be diminished. In past years, FSC was told that we cannot require completion of SETs – consider what the reason is and if true. Other universities can require with release of grades or incentivize such as obtain grades 1 week early upon SET completion.
 - v. SET biases – in past FSC provided guidance on how to consider the bias with SETs and best practices for guidance. Recommend continue to have this and communicate with all departments
 - d. Next steps
 - i. Vice Provost Jeffrey Shoulson is meeting with Martina Rosenberg and

others later this week to discuss the survey results from Department heads about their SET+ practices. Lisa and Martina will touch base and come up with plan for next steps

- ii. Lisa to identify the previous guidance FSC had for interpretation of SET
- iii. Await recommendations from Future of Learning committee and others on campus to help guide next year's' discussions

4. New Business

a. 2021-2022 topics/item generation

- i. New Distinguished Professor titles – continue this work
 - 1. Provost Titles Faculty Alignment with Strategic Initiatives working group update/discussion
 - 2. Titles used for Recruiting
- ii. Received by email
 - 1. Consideration of guaranteed or tenure track employment for non-tenure track/CIRE employees – Dan Burkey

5. Announcements

- a. Annual Report submitted – report attached
- b. PTR Forum – CIRE - On Friday, May 21st, 2021 from 1:00pm-3:00pm via WebEx
- c. Emeritus By-Law Revision update - BOT meeting April 28th
- d. Working Groups
 - COACHE Survey - awaiting Provost's office release of data
 - Faculty Equity Retention workgroup – finalizing work by end of semester
 - Civility Workgroup – no update
 - Future of Learning Committee – finalizing reports by end of month

Update from FSC Working Group on Teaching Evaluation April 10, 2021

Updated communication from the Provost's office on SETs has clarified:

- The current SET will continue, although improvements could be considered;
- There is a desire to balance the SETs importance with other evaluations;
- The Provost's office is seeking to provide guidance on these other evaluation types (i.e. SET+)

After some deliberation the working group concluded that within these new constraints the working group should perhaps focus on providing the Provost's office with guidance on best practices in other options for evaluation and how to message departments and programs on their effective use as a significant complement to the existing SET.

Leadership recognizes the critical importance of robust guidance on SET+ for programs in developing effective, intentional, and discipline-specific means for evaluating and improving teaching. We agree with this sentiment, and it is aligned with the group's previously proposed suggestion of 3 *equally weighted* components: some form of student feedback focused on learning context, some form of peer review relevant to teaching context and modality, and instructor reflections based on those or other evidence (including setting goals for the next evaluation period).

We do believe that improvements *beyond* the previous recommendations of this group can be achieved in the following ways:

1. Acknowledge the connection to PTR process. Amend the [Senate recommendations on SET](#) interpretation from 2011 to include considerations of sensitive topics that might impact student satisfaction ratings. Assure that PTR committees are familiar with these recommendations.
2. Consider establishing a clear responsibility for SET+ or evaluations beyond SET with a defined group at the department or program level (e.g. PTR committee, UG Education Committee) – lack of clear responsibility for evaluation impedes its meaningful implementation.
3. Provide clear guidance as to what departmental and UConn-wide PTR committees *should look for*; i.e. what is/is not counting as SET+ and assure that PTR committees are familiar with these guidelines.
4. Preserve and encourage a program's autonomy by providing a "curated list" of activities that programs can choose from to add more structure than already exists.
Note: a [list](#) on the CETL website was previously purposefully not elaborated on, as the goal was to engage departments in a *dialog* about the process and the means rather than prompting something whipped up without much discussion about teaching goals, knowledge about implementation or process.
5. Strengthen the developmental focus on evaluative processes with consideration to time of assessment and support within units. Shift from assuming that instructors are insufficient teachers until proven otherwise to a "*in dubio pro reo*" approach.

We also **strongly** advocate for another look at the validation of the current SET form. Ten years of additional and more comprehensive data should be informative to determine if the results obtained in the single semester pilot are still generalizable, reflect the current context (such as increased emphasis on online modalities), and remain valid and reliable despite changed response rates.

Analysis of the available current SET data might prompt:

- Adjustment of cutoffs for automatic report exclusions due to low response rates;
- Examination on the utility of question items for developmental purposes;
- Replacement of the overall SET rankings with student perceptions on their learning in a course in alignment with LTE efforts;
- Reevaluation of larger efforts to reimagine evaluation of teaching excellence, i.e. more traction for a recommended reform in alignment with national trends in peer and aspirant programs.

Our group appreciates input from the FSC and leadership to effectively redirect our efforts in support of equitable and meaningful teaching evaluation at UConn. As of right now, we suggest that further dialog with the Provost's office on their intentions regarding SET and SET+ is needed before the FSC invests further time and effort in developing recommendations, guidance, or materials.