

Faculty Senate Minutes
7 April 2008

Senators present: Kris Bartanen, Terry Beck, Nancy Bristow, Douglas Cannon, Robin Foster, John Hanson, Suzanne Holland, Rob Hutchinson, Leslie Saucedo, Ross Singleton, Yvonne Swinth, Yasuf Ali Word

Visitors Present: Tiffany MacBain

Chair Cannon called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm. (He noted that we would defer the diversity statement issue raised in the March 24 meeting until the next meeting.)

I. Approval of minutes of 24 March 2008.

MSP the minutes with the following changes: (1) Leslie Saucedo recommended additional changes to CAIR area, section 8 to correct the time line, and (2) the survey update should be presented as an announcement rather than as an agenda item.

II. Announcements

John Hanson reminded senators that he had sent out requests for nominations to the Senate, FSC, FAC; nominations should be emailed or campus mailed to John. Doug Cannon will first contact nominees to confirm that they accept the nomination, then Hanson will go forward with the election. Cannon added that although the FSC is not a standing committee of the faculty Senate, the Senate has conducted elections for this committee in the past.

Hanson added that the ad hoc committee on elections will present a report to the Senate at the end of the year.

III. Special Orders (none)

IV. Reports of Committee Liaisons

Leslie Saucedo reported that the Diversity Committee met after the last Senate meeting (24 March, Agenda item VIII) at which there was a lengthy discussion about the diversity statement and advisor training in diversity. Leslie read charge from Senate to the committee, which they agreed to try to work on soon.

Doug Cannon suggested that liaisons urge the standing committees to prepare their end-of-the-year reports.

Nancy Bristow noted that the ASC has been reviewing the withdrawal policy, a task with which the Senate had charged it; they seem to have reaffirmed the existing policy, but the minutes are not clear about whether there was a vote or not.

V. Course Evaluation Forms

The subcommittee on faculty evaluations presented a brief summary of the on-line survey regarding concerns about course evaluation forms (see Appendix). Suzanne Holland provided an overview of the content of the report. The survey yielded a very strong response rate. The summary report reviews main patterns in the closed and open ended questions, and the figure shows the strengths and weaknesses of the responses to the closed ended questions.

Holland observed that the written comments suggest that the problem is less about the form than it is about the culture in which the form is used. Rob Hutchinson added that people expressed concerns about how the form is being used in evaluation. Among faculty who responded, some were concerned about there being an anxious culture around their teaching. Holland noted that respondents considered ours to be a teaching obsessive culture, and also noted that the summary identifies faculty morale as a problem. The tabulation of results, was less extreme about the form than were the comments.

Robin Foster then summarized the quantitative results of the survey and requested a discussion to address which items to target for further consideration, how to organize focus groups, and how to present the results to the faculty, for example during the fall faculty conversation or another broad forum.

Nancy Bristow asked if students would be included in the focus groups or asked for their input.

Kris Bartanen noted that a lack of concern about "bias" is to be expected on a majority campus, and that we may want to conduct focus groups on that issue more specifically even if it is not a strong concern among faculty. Nancy Bristow added that the question of an instructor's cultural competence might be an issue of interest among students.

Ross Singleton remarked that there exists a constituency for team-taught, lab, and graduate courses that could get together to discuss how items on a form might better reflect those courses. Yvonne Swinth offered that an extra form might be too much for FAC, but Terry Beck noted that clinical instructors, educational supervisors, etc., might find a different form useful. Beck added that a second form for the FAC might be very helpful in that case.

Suzanne Holland posited that another piece for further discussion would be to establish interpretive criteria, because when evaluations are interpreted differently there is a lot of frustration. Yvonne Swinth noted that interpretation is typically part of one's statement, and that a big part of interpretation is the context in which it occurs.

Suzanne Holland encouraged letting the whole faculty see the results of the survey at a faculty meeting, and identifying focus groups at such a meeting. Yvonne Swinth suggested that 6-8 faculty members should be in each focus group, and that we could have separate focus groups on team-taught courses, lab courses, and on the form itself rather than having us try to pick out the issue.

Suzanne Holland asked the broader question of how we get at the culture in which the evaluations occur. Yvonne Swinth suggested that this topic could be treated in a focus group as an open question. Kris Bartanen reflected that she can think of segments of the faculty that may have particular concerns about the culture in which evaluations occur, e.g. junior faculty.

In response to a suggestion that we have the same people oversee the focus groups, Kris Bartanen offered that Randy and Heather train people to do focus groups, and that once the Senate decides on an approach, they could help coach focus group leaders.

Ross Singleton expressed some concern that the discussion began with an issue about the form, and that the concern about how the form is used takes the discussion in a new direction. He wondered whether this new issue should rise to the top of the agenda over other items that the Senate has been working on. Kris Bartanen offered a suggestion to do focus groups on particular issue related to the form, e.g., team-taught, labs, and then hold a discussion of how the form is used after the results from the higher educational research institute faculty survey are available.

MSP Suzanne Holland's motion that the Senate send out a special alert to faculty about the faculty survey results summary.

Nancy Bristow requested an opportunity to see the full comments before the next meeting; Robin Foster agreed to distribute to senators through Doug Cannon.

MSP a motion by Kris Bartanen to put item IX regarding service appointments forward, ahead of other agenda items.

IX. Service Appointments.

Doug Cannon opened discussion by explaining why this item has come before the Senate. He remarked that the university has a lot of service appointments, and that the Senate might consider demoting some of them.

Kris Bartanen identified the following revisions to the document: Lisa Ferrari rewrote the opening to be more friendly (in response to suggestions made in a previous Senate meeting.) The revised document includes additional groups, e.g., sustainability advisory committee.

Suzanne Holland remarked that the tone of the document is very nice, and added that it would be useful to explain in the document the process of by which faculty are appointed to committees.

One senator identified a typographical error; paragraph 2 says part "A" but should say "1".

A discussion about the various appointment categories commenced. Doug Cannon brought particular attention to the problem that the ASUPS has been without a faculty supervisor, and it has been tough finding someone willing to fill this spot. Cannon also inquired about whether the Diversity Theme Year advisor should be included. Nancy Bristow replied that the theme

year advisor assignment is a lot of work, and that the students look for a faculty liaison that is stable over the course of the year. She suggested that theme year advisor be listed under the representatives/mentor section. Suzanne Holland called for a glossary with a description of each assignment. Kris Bartanen commented that it would be possible to add such descriptions. Yusuf Word asked for an update in the effort to find an ASUPS faculty rep. Cannon replied that he hoped to find someone who would take up the assignment this spring and continue into the fall.

Suzanne Holland observed that some faculty members don't seem to follow the fallow-year rule, although it is stated on the form. Leslie Saucedo asked if the appointing committee knows who is on sabbatical; Kris Bartanen assured her that all of the relevant information is available.

MSP to call the question.

MSP to add the diversity theme year advisor to the list of service committee appointments.

Doug Cannon asked for further discussion about service and, with particular consideration of how much service work we ask of our colleagues. Suzanne Holland questioned the need for some of the student mentoring appointments, with an interest in conserving faculty energy. Kris Bartanen replied that the faculty and ASUPS bylaws specify that faculty members will have a role in these student organizations. She added that it was just last year that the Senate passed a bylaw revision to have student, staff, and faculty representative in each senate group.

Doug Cannon suggested that reducing the size of the standing committees might be a way to eliminate some service positions. Robin Foster added that each standing committee might reflect again on the appropriateness of its size in the self-assessment. Cannon welcomed additional suggestions about the appointment process to be directed to him or the Senate officers.

VI. Attendance at faculty meetings

Robin Foster reported that Kris Bartanen and Randy Nelson had prepared a faculty attendance survey that was poised to be distributed on April 6 at 7:00 am. Doug Cannon is the contact person for the survey (i.e., his name appear in the header of the email notice.) Senators agreed to send the survey as planned.

VII. Early tenure and promotion

Doug Cannon had not intended to have this item on the agenda for this week because the Senate had previously passed a motion to have PSC take up this issue in the fall.

VIII. Professional growth – standards and evidence.

Doug Cannon introduced the subject by reminding senators that the matter of standards and evidence arose to some extent from reports from FAC describing some difficulty comparing the faculty from different departments. Robin Foster reported that in a recent meeting of the PSC, they did not agree to take on this task as requested by the Senate, arguing that it was not part of their duties; that the PSC duties were to make sure that department standards were not in violation of the code/consistent with the code, but that the role of clarifying standards across departments was outside of this domain. John Hanson asked for the issue to be clarified. Suzanne Holland called for a better understanding of what constitutes professional growth, not in terms of number of publications, but what it means in a broader sense across the university. John Hanson suggested that a dramatic change may not be needed, but rather some general information about what constitutes professional growth – that the existing standard simply needs to be better explained. Kris Bartanen noted that the FAC is challenged by wanting to interpret professional growth in the context of department guidelines, but that these guidelines vary tremendously. She suggested that the PSC interprets the Code, the FAC applies it, and the faculty needs to discuss more broadly what constitutes professional growth. It was decided to continue this conversation at the next meeting.

MSP to adjourn the meeting at 5:35 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Robin Foster

A. Response Rate:

Total 141/230 (61%)
Additional Comments 77/141 respondents

B. Demographics of Responding Faculty:

<u>Disciplinary Area</u>	
Business	2.0%
Visual and Performing Arts	7.1%
Humanities	35.5%
Sciences	24.8%
Social Sciences	22.7%
Graduate Programs	7.8%
<u>Use of the Form</u>	
Assess own courses	98.6%
Own courses, non-evaluation years	70.2%
Evaluate colleagues	80.9%
Evaluate new colleagues & adjunct	38.3%
As member of FAC	14.9%
<u>Type of courses instructed</u>	
Lecture/discussion	95.7%
Seminar	71.6%
Laboratory	29.8%
Field/practicum	9.9%
Team-taught	38.3%
Studio	5.0%
Music/ensembles	1.4
Activity	5.0%

C. Summary Points

Close Ended Questions (items 4-24 on the survey asked faculty to respond to a stated concern on a scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree")

- 1) *Overall Satisfaction.* Although faculty are more satisfied than dissatisfied with the present form and system, there is still room for improvement.
- 2) *Repetition.* There is widespread agreement that the content of the form is repetitious in places and limits the concepts to which students respond.
 - Qualitative remarks corroborate and clarify this result. Some comments identified organization and enthusiasm as being over-measured on the form.
- 3) *Non-standard courses.* Among those who teach labs and team-taught courses, there is strong agreement that the current form is not well-suited for evaluating these non-standard courses, as well as some graduate courses.
- 4) *Qualitative and quantitative items.* Faculty like the combination of, and the alternating format of, the quantitative and qualitative items. The faculty is reluctant to establish standards for comparison.
- 5) *Purpose of the Evaluation.* There is agreement that the form should be clearer in specifying whether its purpose is a course or an instructor evaluation. Comments in the open-ended questions related to this issue included:
 - We should help students discern between the two, both in the instructions and in the way the items are phrased.
 - If it is to be an instructor evaluation, we should also remind students to keep it professional (i.e., explicit instructions not to make inappropriate or harassing remarks). One respondent suggested making students more accountable for what they write (by signing the form) so that they can't anonymously trash an instructor.

- Others commented that students should receive better instruction, in general, about the purpose and use of the form.
- 6) *Student performance.* A good majority of faculty would like to have the student's anticipated course grade, or some other measure of student performance, included on the form. (Suggestions in the open-ended question include asking students how many classes they missed or asking students how many hours a week they devote to the class).
 - 7) *Cultural biases.* Faculty did not feel that the questions contained gender, ethnic or other biases, and did not support the idea of including a question about the instructor's cultural competency.
 - 8) *Form length.* About half of the faculty who responded thought that the form was too long; the other half were indifferent or thought that the length was good.

Open-Ended Question (item #25 asked faculty to express any additional concerns about the form)

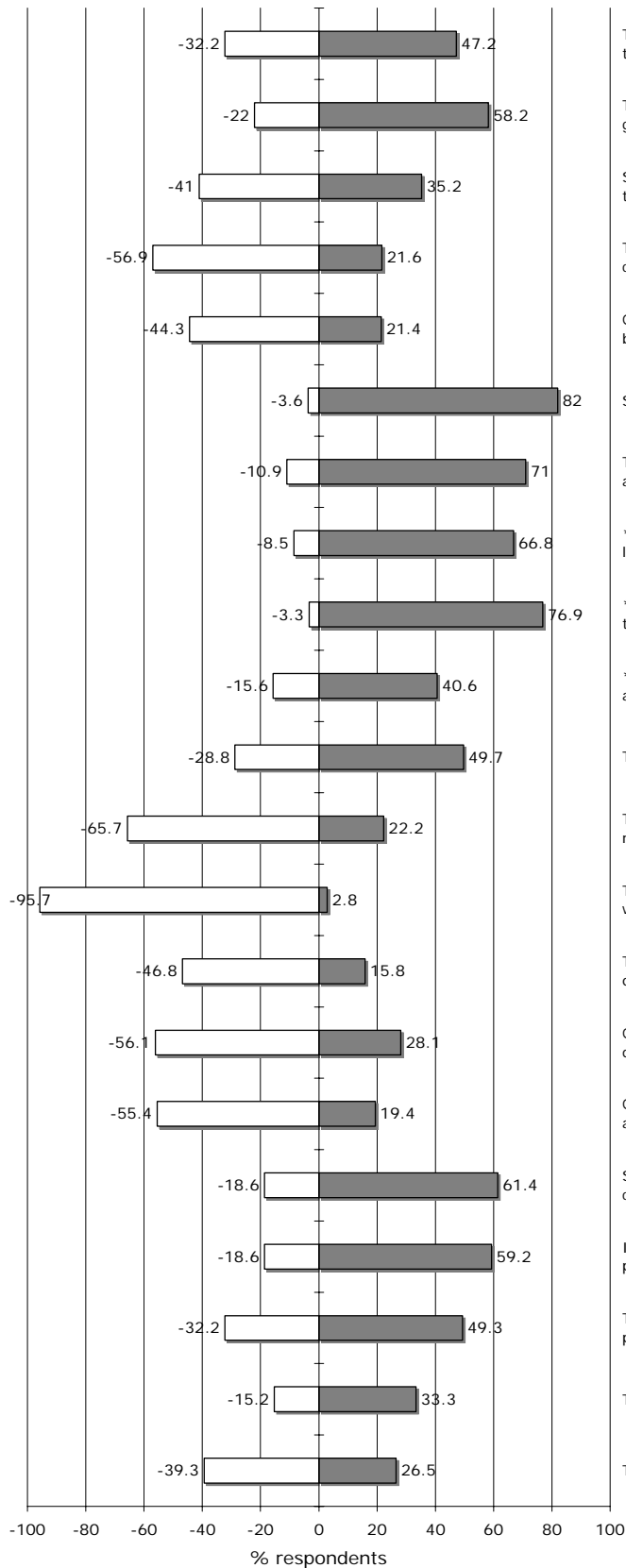
NOTE: Faculty who responded to item #25 (additional concerns) were significantly less satisfied (one tailed t-test, $p=.035$) with the form, as measured by the response to item #4 (overall satisfaction).

- 1) Many of the comments address the idea that the form, itself, is not the problem, but rather how the form is used by the department and FAC. Some faculty admitted that they have learned to teach to the form. Comments suggested that dissatisfaction with the form may be connected to broader anxiety/concerns about the tenure and evaluation process. Such comments also seemed indicative of a faculty morale problem.
 - A strong but small group say that the forms play too much a role in the evaluation process, and that UPS is out of step with other institutions in this regard.
 - Others remark that no form is perfect, and that our current form is satisfactory when used as a component of the evaluation process.
 - Some assert that those who evaluate the faculty member can "read" any form, positive or otherwise, in the way they would like to read it. One suggests that we develop and use a set of written principles for interpretation.
- 2) A large number of remarks deal with student misunderstanding or abuse of the form; there are also a number of comments that deal with a student's inability to gauge certain topics. Suggestions include:
 - collecting student info so as to contextualize the remark (e.g., expected grade, the amount of effort they contributed to the course)
 - discourage or prohibit personalized remarks on the form.
 - clarifying the purpose and use in the instructions to students.
- 3) Some observe that the questions on the form create an expectation among students that: they should be motivated and entertained by the professor; that everyone has a valid point of view (even those who are unprepared, and that every point of view is as valid as every other; that learning should be comfortable and fun. Organization and enthusiasm were noted as over-measured on the form, whereas the form omits issues of learning, creativity, and how the course shaped the student's world-view. Some comments also noted that the form does not recognize the value in the kind of teaching that prioritizes having students question their values and given assumptions, and in which making students uncomfortable is part of the learning process.
- 4) A number of people comment on the absurdity of not crunching the numbers (which might reflect the larger problem of not having a basis for which to interpret the evaluations.) Several comments asked for greater clarity about what the numbers mean.
- 5) There is strong sentiment that the faculty does not want to move to electronic administration of the form.

D. Next Steps

- 1) Identify issues to target for further study.
- 2) Focus groups: which issues require further input from faculty to further clarify the issues of concern and to seek suggestions for improvements on the form? How should focus groups be formed?
- 3) Would the issues surfaced make a good topic for Fall Faculty Conversation?

□ disagree/strongly disagree ■ agree/strongly agree



The current evaluation form is an effective assessment tool for evaluating faculty teaching.

The evaluation form should include information about a student's anticipated course grade.

Students should not be asked to assess whether professors are knowledgeable in their subject areas.

The form should allow students to assess whether the professor is culturally competent to teach a diverse range of students.

Questions, as worded on the evaluation form, carry racial/ethnic, gender, or other biases.

Some questions or evaluation themes are repeated in different sections of the form.

The questions on the form lead students only to address particular themes in their answers.

*The questions on the form do not target issues relevant to the evaluation of laboratory courses.

*The questions on the form do not target issues relevant to the assessment of team taught courses and instructors.

*The questions on the form do not target issues relevant to the assessment of applied music courses and ensembles.

The evaluation form is too long.

The evaluation form should collect qualitative (written) information alone (no numerical measures).

The evaluation form should collect quantitative (numerical) information alone (no written responses.)

The form should present all the quantitative questions together and all the qualitative questions together, rather than alternating them.

Quantitative (numerical) information on the form should be used to create department and university norms for comparison.

Qualitative (written) information on the form should be used to create department and university norms for comparison.

Students are unclear about whether they are to evaluate the instructor or the course.

Instructions on the form should be more explicit in discouraging personal/potentially harassing comments against an instructor.

The dual use of the form for both course evaluation and course feedback is problematic.

The evaluation form should not be printed in triplicate.

The evaluation form should be electronic.

NOTE: "Neither agree nor disagree" responses are excluded from the bars.

* These percentages are based on a subgroup of respondents.