

September 9, 2015

Dear Colleague:

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the Ad Hoc Committee on the Evaluation of Teaching. I write to explain the reasons for forming the committee and to outline the committee's charge.

Few things are as important to achieving our mission as a University as excellence in the classroom. In 2008, Notre Dame transitioned from an in-class written course evaluation (TCE) to an on-line course and instructor evaluation (CIF) for all courses. When we adopted the CIF, we agreed that the instrument would be reviewed periodically to ensure that it continues to serve our commitment to provide a world class educational experience for our undergraduate and graduate students. Starting in the fall of 2009, the ACPEP Guidelines for the comprehensive peer evaluation of teaching were implemented for all renewal, tenure and promotion cases. We have now had sufficient experience with both assessment tools to make this an opportune time for a careful review.

The charge of the committee is to review the methods we currently use to gather student feedback, evaluate teaching, and mentor faculty. Issues to consider include but are not limited to:

- The Office of Institutional Research has drafted a guide for interpreting the CIFs. How might we integrate this draft with Kaneb Center resources to produce a more comprehensive guide to interpreting the CIFs? How can we provide clear guidance to faculty in the interpretation of error bars and other statistical information? What tools can we use to help faculty make the best use of student feedback for improving the quality of instruction?
- What might be learned about factors that potentially influence the evaluation of teaching effectiveness – both valid (e.g. class preparation and Kaneb Center training) and extraneous (e.g. demographic factors) – from studies such as the CIF regression analysis conducted by OIR?
- How might we use the narrative CIF comments in evaluation and mentoring? Should we incorporate e-portfolio review into evaluation and mentoring?
- How should we use the CIF learning goals section in evaluation and course development? How might we educate students better about the relationship between the achievement of learning goals and the quality of instruction?

- How should the CIF responses be interpreted and presented to provide the most useful information for evaluation and course development? Are the current labels and anchors on the scales the most helpful? Is comparison by decile level useful in assessing the quality of instruction? What differences between graduate and undergraduate courses should we take into account in evaluating teaching?
- Should the window for the administration of the CIF be changed? If so, why?
- Should the question asking for “time spent studying outside the classroom” be dropped, adjusted, or changed for courses of less than or more than three credits?
- How should grade distribution be interpreted? Should we provide a comparative metric against other similar courses in the division, level, or university?
- How might the ACPET Guidelines be updated or revised to reflect advances in pedagogy and changes in student learning styles? What resources can we provide to optimize classroom observation in peer-evaluations?
- In the evaluation of teaching for tenure and promotion, should we survey former students?

In considering these questions and any others the committee believes pertinent, you will likely find it useful to consult with a wide range of colleagues at Notre Dame and also with leaders and faculty at other universities, which I encourage. If I can be helpful with arranging such consultations or with the work of the committee in any other way, please let me know.

The committee will be chaired by Professor Timothy Judge, Franklin D. Schurz Professor of Management and Concurrent Professor of Psychology. For your information, attached is a list of the other committee members, along with their contact information. Tim will be contacting you shortly to make arrangements for the committee’s first meeting. It is more important to provide a thoughtful and thorough report than a rapid one, but I hope the committee will be able to complete a report of its findings, observations, and recommendations by May 15, 2016. If this is not possible, I would appreciate an update by that time on your progress to date.

Thank you again for agreeing to serve on the Ad Hoc Committee on the Evaluation of Teaching and for the important contributions you will make to the University through your service.

Yours in Notre Dame,



Thomas G. Burish

Attachment