

# SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

S. 83-56

## MEMORANDUM

To..... SENATE.

From..... SENATE COMMITTEE ON STUDENT  
EVALUATION OF FACULTY TEACHING;  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGENDA AND RULES.

Subject. REPORT - AD HOC SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
STUDENT EVALUATION OF FACULTY TEACHING,  
RECOMMENDATIONS.

Date..... 19 MAY 1983.

At the July 5, 1982 meeting of Senate consideration was given to Paper S.82-78 "Student Teaching Assessments" which had been submitted by K. Rieckhoff, including a number of recommendations. At that meeting motion was approved "That Paper S.82-78 be referred to the Senate Committee on Agenda and Rules who will prepare a recommendation with the composition and terms of reference of an Ad Hoc Senate Committee for Senate consideration."

SCAR made its recommendations to Senate at the October 4, 1982 meeting under Paper S.82-100 "Proposed Membership and Terms of Reference - Ad Hoc Senate Committee on Student Evaluation of Faculty Teaching". The report of the Ad Hoc Senate Committee on Student Evaluation of Faculty Teaching is provided herewith; the terms of reference for that Committee appear at the top of page 2 of the report. The recommendations, explanations and rationale appear in the report, and the recommendations are incorporated in the motions which follow. The earlier recommendations of the Rieckhoff memo on "Student Teaching Assessments" Paper S.82-78 are shown, with the present Committee's recommendation in the motions which follow each recommendation.

At the instructions of SCAR, designed to provide some broad general background information, a number of items referred to in the Committee's report are listed later in this communication.

- (A) K.R. Recommendation I: "Abandon any attempt to judge teaching effectiveness for the purposes of renewal, tenure, promotion, and salary review on a scale finer than the following broad categories: 'Exceptionally good', 'Acceptable', and 'Unacceptably bad'."

MOTION 1: "That Senate not accept this recommendation"

K.R. Recommendation II: "Assume in the absence of any specific information to the contrary that any instructor who demonstrably knows the subject matter of the course he/she is teaching, falls into the group classifiable as "acceptable"."

MOTION 2: "That Senate not accept this recommendation"

K.R. Recommendation III: "Accept as 'specific evidence' for other than 'acceptable' performance only the following in decreasing order of importance:

- (a) Corroborated testimony from professional colleagues both within and outside the University who have personally attended lectures, seminars, etc. of the person to be judged.
- (b) A consistent pattern of complaints by past and present students who have taken courses from the person to be judged and whose comments have been investigated and weighed according to the commentator's academic standing, experience, and general reliability (in the case of complaints, the faculty complained about must, of course, have been given the opportunity to respond. his/her responses must also be considered).

- (c) Statistical opinion surveys of alumni not enrolled as students at the time of the survey who have taken courses from the person to be judged."

MOTION 3: "That Senate not accept this recommendation"

K.R. Recommendation IV: "Prohibit as a matter of policy the use of opinion surveys administered to students still enrolled at the University for the purposes of making judgements about a faculty member's renewal, promotion, tenure, and salary review"

MOTION 4: "That Senate not accept this recommendation"

K.R. Recommendation V: "Prohibit as a matter of policy the exertion of any pressure expressed or implied on the part of academic administrators on course instructors to use student opinion surveys"

MOTION 5: "That Senate not accept this recommendation"

K.R. Recommendation VI: "Where course instructors for their own purposes and benefit wish to use student opinion surveys they are of course at liberty to do so, but the use of results of such surveys should be restricted to the instructor"

MOTION 6: "That Senate not accept this recommendation"

K.R. Recommendation VII: "Encourage students dissatisfied or exceptionally pleased with the performance of an instructor to make their complaints and/or compliments known to the chair of the department for appropriate action or (if they are too unsure of themselves) have them go to the ombudsman of the Student Society, who may act on their behalf"

MOTION 7: "That Senate accept this recommendation"

*Motion tabled by Senate 6/6/83*

- (B) The Committee recommends three possible courses for further action. The Senate Committee on Agenda and Rules gave consideration to the alternatives and recommends alternative C of the report with some amplification.

MOTION: "That Senate approve that further consideration be given by referring this matter to the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies"

Some general background information:

- 1) A copy of the Rieckhoff paper S.82-78 is provided for background information, pages 35-43.
- 2) Page 2 of the report indicates a number of items reviewed by the Committee, including the following:
  - (a) The Gates and Kennedy Report, August 1979, on "Evaluation of Teaching at SFU" - Appendix II, pages 12-30. The first paragraph of page 14 and the second paragraph of page 24 give information on the purposes of the task force.

Some general background information (continued)

2) continued

- (b) University Policy AC 2 - Appendix III, pages 31-32. The current TSSU Article is now included.
  
- (c) Draft policy concerning the evaluation of teaching - Appendix IV, pages 33-34. This draft accompanied a memorandum dated 80-12-31 from the Vice-President Academic to Deans and Chairmen and a memorandum dated 81-01-28 from the Vice-President Academic to all faculty members in advance of a Faculty Forum then scheduled for February 5, 1981.

REPORT OF THE SENATE AD-HOC COMMITTEE ON

STUDENT EVALUATION OF FACULTY TEACHING

May, 1983

Committee members:

J. M. D'Auria  
I. D. Edelmann  
R. A. Holmes  
D. L. Krebs  
A. J. Wotherspoon

## Terms of Reference

To review Senate paper S.82-78 and the concerns indicated therein, but more particularly to

(a) investigate and (b) to make recommendations to Senate on the specific recommendations of the Rieckhoff memo on "Student Teaching Assessments", addressed "To Whom It May Concern" dated April 20, 1982 and presented to Senate under S.82-78.

Note: The Committee is not charged with investigating the relative merits of various forms of assessment of teaching effectiveness in general, nor is it to try to establish conclusively what constitutes good and effective teaching at the University level. The Rieckhoff memo and recommendations are restricted to the evaluation of tenure track faculty for purposes of salary review, tenure, and promotion. They are not concerned with assessments of T.A.'s and temporary or part time teaching staff or teaching support staff, even though similar considerations may be applicable in those cases.

As a first step in its deliberations, this committee conducted a survey of all Departments and Faculties in S.F.U. in order to determine the use that is presently being made of student opinion surveys. The questionnaire that was circulated and a summary of the responses that were obtained are contained in Appendix I of this report. The results of this survey indicate that there is considerable diversity in the types of opinion surveys employed, the way in which they are administered, and the uses to which they are put. The Committee has also examined other relevant material, including the responses to Senator Rieckhoff's memo of May 10, 1982, the Gates and Kennedy report on "Evaluation of Teaching at S.F.U." (Appendix II), University policy AC 2 (Appendix III), and the "Draft Policy Concerning the Evaluation of Teaching" (Appendix IV).

According to present University policy (AC 2), Departmental Tenure Committees are compelled to evaluate the "teaching effectiveness" of faculty for purposes of renewal, tenure, and promotion. The central question facing this committee concerned the liabilities and benefits of one source of information about teaching effectiveness; student opinion surveys. The position advanced in the Rieckhoff memorandum is that the liabilities of student opinion surveys outweigh their benefits, and therefore, that this source of information ought

not be used by the Departmental Tenure Committees. This committee has failed to find sufficient evidence against student opinion surveys to support the recommendation that they be abandoned, providing, of course, that these instruments are properly constructed and administered, and their results interpreted in view of their limitations. All types of information about teaching effectiveness may be abused, but our investigations have found no indication that student opinion surveys have distinguished themselves in this respect at S.F.U. The Committee recommends strongly that the University obtain expert opinion on the relative merits of the various methods of assessing teaching effectiveness, and on the use and possible misuses of the information obtained from them. In the opinion of the Committee, the general issue of evaluation of teaching effectiveness at all levels is sufficiently important to warrant further investigation by Senate.

The charge to this Committee is to investigate and to make recommendations to Senate on the specific recommendations of the Rieckhoff memo; and this is what follows.

Recommendation I

"Abandon any attempt to judge teaching effectiveness for purposes of renewal, tenure, promotion, and salary review on a scale finer than the following broad categories: 'Exceptionally good', 'Acceptable', and 'Unacceptably bad'.

The Committee recommends that Senate not accept this recommendation. If this recommendation were accepted, one consequence might well be to remove teaching effectiveness as a criterion in renewal, promotion, tenure, and salary review for all Faculty except the very few who fall in the "Exceptionally good", or "Unacceptably bad" categories. Evaluation of faculty would then tend to be based on research productivity alone, which might cause faculty to invest less in teaching and more in research. Although laying no claims to psychometric

expertise, the Committee felt that a five point scale (Exceptionally Good, Above Average, Average, Below Average, Unacceptably Bad) would be more appropriate than the three point scale recommended by Rieckhoff. Note, however, that Gates and Kennedy, p.4 (Appendix II) offer a quite different suggestion.

Recommendation II

"Assume in the absence of any specific information to the contrary that any instructor who demonstrably knows the subject matter of the course he/she is teaching falls into the group classifiable as acceptable."

The Committee recommends that Senate not accept this recommendation. It cannot be assumed that an individual is an effective teacher unless there is positive evidence in support of that conclusion. Knowing a subject does not entail knowing how to teach it to others. It is not clear what is meant by the statement "who demonstrably knows the subject matter". To whose satisfaction must the faculty demonstrate this knowledge?

Recommendation III

"Accept as 'specific evidence' for other than 'acceptable' performance only the following in decreasing order of importance:

- (a) Corroborated testimony from professional colleagues both within and outside the University who have personally attended lectures, seminars, etc. of the person to be judged.
- (b) A consistent pattern of complaints by past and present students who have taken courses from the person to be judged and whose comments have been investigated and weighed according to the commentator's academic standing, experience, and general reliability (in the case of complaints, the faculty complained about must, of course, have been given the opportunity to respond, his/her responses must also be considered).
- (c) Statistical opinion surveys of alumni not enrolled as students at the time of the survey who have taken courses from the person to be judged."

The Committee recommends that Senate not accept this recommendation. The Committee does not believe that these three types of evidence are the only or most adequate types of evidence of ineffective teaching. The Committee has failed to find compelling evidence that properly designed and administered student evaluation surveys are any less adequate than the three sources of information listed above, or that "corroborated testimony" is a better source of information than consistent patterns of complaint or statistical surveys of alumni. It seems obvious that evaluators ought to search for consistent patterns across all types of information available. Corroborated testimony from colleagues and statistical opinion surveys of alumni might provide useful information. However, surveys of alumni are likely to be very expensive to administer, and the problems of non-response bias are likely to be particularly serious. The testimony of professional colleagues may also be biased.

#### Recommendation IV

"Prohibit as a matter of policy the use of opinion surveys administered to students still enrolled at the University for the purposes of making judgments about a faculty member's renewal, promotion, tenure, and salary review."

The Committee recommends that Senate not accept this recommendation, provided that the surveys are properly designed and administered. This Committee questions the practice of faculty members administering their own surveys. There is a wide diversity in the type of survey being used in the various departments of the University, and we think that it would be advisable to obtain expert assistance in the design of such questionnaires. When feasible, the committee feels that more uniformity across departments would be advantageous (however, see Gates and Kennedy p.2, for necessary cautions in this respect).

#### Recommendation V

"Prohibit as a matter of policy the exertion of any pressure expressed or implied on the part of academic administrators on course instructors to use student opinion surveys."



The Committee recommends that Senate not accept this recommendation. AC 2 requires that teaching effectiveness be evaluated, and there is no good evidence to indicate that student opinion surveys are any less valid than any other source of information.

Recommendation VI

"Where course instructors for their own purposes and benefit wish to use student opinion surveys they are of course at liberty to do so, but the use of results of such surveys should be restricted to the instructor."

The Committee recommends that Senate not accept this recommendation, since as explained previously, there is no evidence to indicate that student opinion surveys do not supply a useful (indeed, even the most useful) source of information about teaching effectiveness to those responsible for faculty renewal, promotion, tenure, and salary decisions.

Recommendation VII

"Encourage students dissatisfied or exceptionally pleased with the performance of an instructor to make their complaints and/or compliments known to the chair of the department for appropriate action of (if they are too unsure of themselves) have them go to the ombudsman of the Student Society, who may act on their behalf."

The Committee recommends that Senate accept this recommendation.

In conclusion, the Committee feels that the whole subject of teaching evaluations, not only of tenure track faculty but of T.A.'s and temporary or part time teaching staff as well is worthy of further investigation. The Committee recommends that Senate either broaden the terms of reference of the present committee, strike a new committee, or refer this matter to one of the standing committees of Senate for further consideration.

APPENDIX I

# SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

## MEMORANDUM

To..... DEPARTMENT CHAIRMAN.

From..... AD HOC SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
EVALUATION OF FACULTY TEACHING.....

Subject..... STUDENT EVALUATION OF FACULTY TEACHING.

Date..... 5 JANUARY 1983.

Recently the Senate created an Ad Hoc Committee on Student Evaluation of Faculty Teaching. The following Senators were elected as members:

A. J. Wotherspoon, Chairman  
Ad Hoc Senate Committee on Student Evaluation  
of Faculty Teaching,  
c/o Secretariat Services,  
Office of the Registrar.

J. M. D'Auria,  
Department of Chemistry.

I. D. Edelman,  
c/o Student Society,  
TC 321.

R. A. Holmes,  
Faculty of Business Administration.

D. L. Krebs,  
Department of Psychology.

This Committee is charged with making recommendations to Senate on a number of recommendations about student evaluation of tenure track faculty for purposes of salary review, tenure, and promotion put forward by Professor Klaus Rieckhoff some time ago.

As our first order of business, we would like to apprise ourselves of the practices that currently are in effect in the various departments of S.F.U. To this end, we would be grateful if you would take a few minutes to answer the following questions:

1. It is incumbent on all Departments to assess the teaching effectiveness of its faculty. What methods of assessing teaching effectiveness do you employ in your department?
  - a. student evaluation
  - b. informal feedback
  - c. corroborated testimony from professional colleagues, within or outside the University, who have attended lectures or seminars of the person being evaluated? (If so, do you take into account the academic standing, experience, and general reliability of commentators?)
  - d. survey the opinions of alumni
  - e. other (please explain)
2. Does your Department have a single, formal policy and procedure with regard to the student evaluation of faculty teaching, or do different instructors employ a variety of practices?

cont . . . 2

5 JANUARY 1983

3. If student evaluations are obtained in your Department:
  - a. Are they mandatory or at the option of the Professor?
    - i. If optional, what proportion of your faculty obtained them?
  - b. How are student evaluations obtained?
    - i. by the Professor in his own classes?
    - ii. by some other means? (please explain)
  - c. How often are the surveys conducted?
  - d. Do you use different means of evaluation for lecture, lab, and seminar courses?
  - e. Who has access to the results of the surveys?
    - i. the DTC?
    - ii. the Instructor of the course involved?
    - iii. all faculty?
    - iv. all students?
  - f. What uses of the surveys are made in your Department?
4. Does your Department place much value on student evaluations of faculty teaching when it assesses faculty members' teaching effectiveness for purposes of salary review, tenure and promotion?
5. Do you as Chairman feel that the surveys are a valid measure of teaching effectiveness?
  - a. Do you think they provide useful information to the DTC when evaluating faculty performance?
  - b. If you employ student evaluations in DTC deliberations, how do you construe them?
  - c. What sorts of information do you think they can provide?
  - d. In what ways do you feel that they are limited?
  - e. How much weight do you attach to them?
6. Would you please provide copies of the teaching evaluation forms used in your Department?

The Committee would welcome comments from the members of your Department on the matter of student evaluation of faculty teaching. The next meeting of the Committee will be in mid-January. Please send your answers to this questionnaire and any other comments to:

Ad Hoc Senate Committee on Faculty Teaching,  
c/o Secretariat Services,  
Office of the Registrar.

/bg

### Summary of Survey Results

- Question 1 All departments use student feedback as a means of evaluating teaching effectiveness. Twelve use informal feedback, nine use corroborated testimony from colleagues, and three surveyed alumni.
- Question 2 Thirteen departments have a single formal policy regarding the use of student opinion surveys, eight do not.
- Question 3a In eight departments, it is mandatory for at least some faculty, in three it is optional but strongly encouraged, and in ten it is completely optional.
- b In seven departments the surveys are done by the professor in his own class, while in fourteen departments it is done by other professors, students, or support staff.
- c Eleven departments do surveys every semester.
- d Three departments use different forms for lecture and seminar/lab courses, eighteen do not.
- e In all departments except M.R.M., only the instructor, the chairman, and the D.T.C. have access to the results. In M.R.M., the students also have access.
- f All departments use the results for the benefit of the instructor and the chairman, and all use them in D.T.C. deliberations, although in a few, this was at the instructors option.
- Question 4 Eighteen departments felt that the results of the surveys are valuable in evaluating teaching effectiveness, three feel that they are not.

Question 5 All except two of the departments feel that the information provided by the student evaluations is useful to the D.T.C.

- b Without exception, all departments treat the information cautiously, and as ONE part of the evaluation process.
- c Most departments feel that the information provides a general impression of student reaction to the instructor. They also provide information as to an instructors attendance, punctuality etc.
- d Most departments felt that they are limited in their use because of poor design and administration.
- e Although in two departments the student evaluations are the only way the D.T.C. uses to evaluate teaching effectiveness, most departments place about equal weight on the student evaluations as on other sources of information about teaching effectiveness. The student evaluations are seen as ONE piece of information to be used.

Please note that because of the construction of question 5, the wide variability of the answers made it very difficult to summarise. Those who wish more precise information should contact Secretariat Services or one of the committee members and ask to see the actual responses received.

EVALUATION OF TEACHING AT S.F.U.

M. GATES, S & A

P. KENNEDY, DEC

August, 1979

## EVALUATION OF TEACHING AT S.F.U.

This report has been prepared by a two-person task force (M. Gates and P.E. Kennedy) charged with recommending to the Vice-President, Academic the principles which should govern the evaluation of teaching and procedures which could be used to ensure that teaching is given appropriate weight in career progress assessments. This charge sprang from recommendation 6.03 of the University Review Committee Report which suggested that the office of the Vice-President, Academic assume responsibility for ensuring a University-wide systematic approach to the evaluation of teaching performance.

Before addressing these questions explicitly, we would like to stress that our recommendations are directed exclusively to the use of teaching evaluations for the purpose of playing a role in career progress assessments. We have ignored the more important question of the use of such evaluations for the purpose of improving teaching. Although our recommendations, if implemented, can play a positive role in this latter dimension, it is clearly the case that better methods of evaluation exist for this purpose. Although a recommendation on this matter was not solicited, we would nonetheless recommend that the Vice-President, Academic commission from the Faculty of Education a guidebook informing faculty of how they might usefully undertake evaluations designed for self-improvement.

Our recommendations and a brief rationale for each are listed below.



1. We do not believe it is feasible to structure a University-wide systematic approach to the evaluation of teaching performance in the sense that every instructor must be evaluated (for purposes of career progress assessment) according to some specified set of criteria using some specified set of instruments. There is too much variation in course characteristics and instruction modes to accomplish this in any unequivocal fashion. Furthermore, at this University there is too much antagonism on the part of both individual faculty and departments towards the centralization of such matters. An oft repeated thought in the literature relevant to the question is that evaluation imposed from above seems doomed to fail.

2. We do believe that it is feasible to structure a University-wide systematic approach to the evaluation of teaching performance in the sense that every department should be obliged to follow a set of general and flexible guidelines in evaluating an individual's teaching performance and that every individual should cooperate in this process. The intention here is that all departments be required to use certain kinds of inputs to the evaluation of teaching performance, although the precise nature of these inputs need not be identical for all departments or for all individuals within a department. Furthermore, those charged with the evaluation of teaching at the departmental level should be obliged to state explicitly the basis on which their evaluation of an individual's teaching was undertaken, so that those responsible

for reviewing the departmental decision can do so from a proper perspective.

3. No attempt should be made to arrive at an objective measure of teaching effectiveness since our reading of the relevant literature suggests that this is an impossible task. Evaluation of teaching is subjective and must be recognized as such; any attempt to pretend otherwise will meet with hostility. Our recommendations below focus instead on ensuring that a viable subjective procedure is established.

4. We feel that all evaluations of teaching should be based on a variety of inputs, one of which should be student input of some kind. In our view, it is just as inappropriate to evaluate teaching without student input as it is to base such evaluations solely on student input. This feeling is consistent with the relevant literature.

5. The nature of the student input is important since considerable controversy exists in the relevant literature concerning its validity (although it must be noted its reliability is accepted). In recommendation 6 below, we specify a particular form that we feel will, for most cases, be an appropriate way of effecting this input. It may well be, however, that a particular individual or a particular department may object to this type of student input. Any individual or any department should be allowed to use a different type of student input so long as they make it clear

why they feel that for the particular individual in question an alternative form of student input is appropriate.

6. We recommend that the student input take the form of a one-page student questionnaire with the following characteristics.

- a) Only four questions should be asked with appropriate spaces provided for written responses. These questions are:
  - i) What do you consider to be the weakest features of this course?
  - ii) What do you consider to be the strongest features of this course?
  - iii) What do you consider to be the weakest features of this instructor as a teacher?
  - iv) What do you consider to be the strongest features of this instructor as a teacher?

This provides student input in the form of subjective opinions with implicit criteria chosen on the basis of what the student himself or herself feels is appropriate. Only by reading through these comments will someone charged with evaluating an individual's teaching be able to utilize this input. We feel that doing this will allow those doing the evaluating to obtain a proper "feel" for the individual's teaching and allow them to better integrate this subjective information with their subjective assessment of other input.

- b) Unless a department insists, this questionnaire should contain no means whereby a numerical rating can be calculated.

Too many individuals in the University are opposed to the use of numerical ratings to make this an acceptable requirement.

- c) The questionnaire should be designed such that a carbon copy is automatically produced; instructors should be given this copy after grades have been submitted (or a transcript thereof should the class size be small).
- d) Departmental Assistants should be in charge of organizing these student surveys, ensuring that someone other than the instructor in question is responsible for its administration.
- e) The title of this questionnaire should not include the terminology "teaching evaluation," but should instead contain some less emotive term such as "student opinion on teaching." These questionnaires should always be referred to as student "input" to the teaching evaluation process and not as student "evaluations."
- f) This questionnaire should be administered near the end of the course.
- g) Student opinion should be sought via these questionnaires in all courses taught by untenured tenure-track faculty, in all courses taught by faculty expected to be considered for promotion in the near future, in all courses taught by faculty who will be up for salary review within two teaching semesters and in all courses taught by faculty for whom there may be reason to believe a change in teaching effectiveness has occurred.

7. Student input should be supplemented with a variety of additional inputs as appropriate to the individual in question.

Examples are copies of course outlines, reading lists, exams and class handouts, peer evaluation based on workshop or seminar presentations, information on supervision of graduate student research, statements from the instructor in question commenting on the student opinions as expressed in the questionnaires and corridor gossip. The individual in question should be made responsible for ensuring that all materials that he or she feels are relevant to an evaluation of his or her teaching are made available to those responsible for assessing teaching performance.

8. Those charged with evaluating teaching by using this information should ensure that they are aware of what little knowledge we do have concerning the validity of student opinion, so that subjective assessments can be made in an informed manner. For example, the relevant literature suggests that the following are true:

- a) There is a large measure of agreement between students and other observers concerning the behaviors judged to be important for effective teaching.
- b) Students are at least partially capable of distinguishing certain qualities of instruction which increase their knowledge and motivation.
- c) Students seem to be rather generous or lenient in their ratings of faculty, a phenomenon that seems to become stronger as the students become more advanced in their studies.

- d) Student variables such as sex, age, class standing, class size and grades assigned have little or no relationship to ratings of the course or the instructor.
- e) The evidence on the effect of course characteristics, such as course content, difficulty level, class size, whether the course is required or elected, year or level of the course and the time at which the course is offered is equivocal.
- f) The evidence on the effect of instructor characteristics, such as sex, age, academic rank, qualifications and degrees, experience, grading standards, knowledge of subject, knowledge of teaching, research performance, personality, popularity and ability to change in response to feedback is also equivocal.
- g) The most basic complaint about student questionnaires is that they reflect student attitudes rather than learning; although most evidence suggests that student evaluation of teaching and student learning are positively correlated, this evidence is not strong. It is conjectured though, that unless instruction is viewed by students in a positive light there are likely to be severe limitations placed on communication and learning.
- h) It is notable that the foregoing comments indicate that i) the temptingly simple notion that students give high ratings to "popular" instructors is neither supported nor rejected by empirical evidence and ii) the empirical evidence neither supports nor rejects the hypothesis that expectations of high

grades leads students to give an instructor a favourable evaluation.

i) There is a tendency among humans to remember extreme views when reviewing a mass of comments and give them more weight than their relative frequencies deserve when forming an overall assessment of the comments under review.

j) Student learning has been shown to be directly related to the amount of work an instructor has forced them to do.

9. In many departments there is currently a tendency to "explain away" evidence suggesting either "good" teaching or "bad" teaching and thus to deny teaching its proper role in the assessment process. In our opinion, it is this behavior on the part of departmental tenure committees rather than University policy or attitudes of those charged with reviewing departmental assessments that is the main cause of teaching effectiveness not being given proper weight in career assessments. Only if those charged at the departmental level with evaluating teaching are willing to treat it as an achievable task and are prepared to formulate from an informed perspective a subjective judgement based on a variety of inputs will it be possible for teaching to play its proper role in career assessment. All departments should be encouraged to adopt a positive attitude towards the subjective evaluation of teaching.

On the basis of the empirical evidence, it cannot con-

clusively be shown that student evaluations of teaching are valid in the sense that they are able to accurately discriminate among instructors on the basis of their teaching abilities. On the other hand, however, it cannot be shown that such evaluations, properly conducted, are misleading on this score. In our interpretation of this literature, the circumstances under which evaluations of this nature are misleading are connected either to the quantification of the information received, or the specificity of the information requested. We feel that the very general open-ended feedback solicited by our recommended questionnaire will avoid this problem. Unfortunately, there exists no empirical evidence on the usefulness of open-ended student evaluation of teaching; in defense of our suggestion we can only appeal to general results from other studies that indicate that on the whole students are able to properly assess instructors and our own experience which indicates that a careful reading of student comments provides valuable information about an instructor.

In our opinion, student input should be viewed as information that can be useful to those charged with assessing teaching. Although it is possible that this information could be misleading, we feel that the nature of our recommended questionnaire and the ability of a well-informed and concerned group of assessors to view that information in its proper perspective should ensure that this information plays a useful role in the teaching assessment process.



References

The literature in the area of student evaluation of teaching is considerable. Our task was eased by the existence of several survey articles of which the following we found to be most useful.

- Frey, P. (1978) "A Two-Dimensional Analysis of Student Ratings of Instruction," Research in Higher Education 9, 69-91.
- Knapper, C. et al (1977) If Teaching Is Important ... The Evaluation of Instruction in Higher Education Clarke, Irwin & Co., Toronto (A CAUT Monograph).
- Kulik J. and W. McKeachie (1975) "The Evaluation of Teachers in Higher Education," chapter 7 in F. Kerlinger (ed.) Review of Research in Education Peacock Publishers, Itasca, Ill.
- Murray, H. (1973) A Guide to Teaching Evaluation Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, Toronto.
- Sheehan, D. (1975) "On the Invalidity of Student Ratings for Administrative Personnel Decisions" Journal of Higher Education 46, 687-700.

In addition to a review of the teaching evaluation literature, this report draws extensively on responses to a short questionnaire and interviews conducted by the task force to elicit information and opinions concerning the actual practice of teaching evaluation at S.F.U. The questionnaire, presented below, was sent to all chairmen and was also

administered orally to selected Deans and resource people. Only ten chairmen responded to the questionnaire although follow-up reminders were sent. Apparently a combination of the extended strike and delegation of the task were responsible for the low return rate.

### EVALUATION OF TEACHING

Dan Birch has asked us to recommend "the principles which should govern the evaluation of teaching and procedures which could be used to ensure that teaching is given appropriate weight in career progress assessments." We would appreciate your advice on the following questions, in consultation with your DTC or other faculty members if appropriate.

1. What teaching evaluation procedures are currently employed in your department? What are their advantages/drawbacks? (Please attach copy if formal instrument is used.)
2. What role do you consider student evaluation of teaching should play in overall assessment?
3. What responsibility should be placed on individual faculty members to provide documentation for teaching assessment?
4. Should there be a "University-wide systematic approach to the evaluation of teaching performance?" (Recommendation 6.03 of the URC Report)? If so, what should the components be?
5. Would it be useful to initiate follow-up monitoring of student evaluation of teaching in your department? (after graduation mail surveys etc.)
6. What documentation of teaching performance should be considered optimal/minimal in assessment?
7. In general, do you consider that teaching (at all levels) is given sufficient weight relative to other faculty responsibilities?

In summary, the responses indicated:

1. Most of the departments surveyed currently employ some kind of teaching evaluation procedure, administered some of the time by some faculty. In other words, practices vary considerably both across and within departments. Use of a standardized departmental instrument is normally highly recommended, but seldom compulsory. In some departments teaching evaluation procedures are left up to the individual professor. In others student unions are completely responsible for generating anti-calendars. In general, it seems that junior faculty are more prone to employ a formal evaluation procedure with regularity, while senior faculty are less interested. Other notable variations across departments are whether course evaluations are automatically submitted to the chairmen; whether evaluations are administered by the professor, TA's, DA's or colleagues; the length of the questionnaire; the proportion devoted to course rather than teacher evaluation; whether the questionnaire is designed for numerical rating; the amount of background data requested and whether or not the questionnaire contains a precise statement concerning the purpose of the survey.

Most respondents appear to be reasonably satisfied with their departmental instruments. The main advantages perceived are ease of application and tailoring to individual departmental requirements. Disadvantages are selective employment by professors (both in administration and in submission of DTC materials), limited comparability across departments and

across faculties, variability in the diagnostic value of the questions themselves and in return rates from students. Over the past year some departments or individual faculty have suspended their normal evaluation procedures as a result of the Student Society questionnaire effort. However, it seems likely that former procedures will be reinstated due to the delay in processing the student data.

2. Most respondents consider that student evaluation of teaching should play some role in overall assessment, but that it should be neither overemphasized nor constitute the only measure. The main disagreement is to how important this role should be. Some feel that student assessment should be considered very seriously as one aspect of evaluating faculty teaching performance. Others believe that student evaluations are of doubtful value unless they are clearly very bad or very good. Many are concerned that students lack the competence to evaluate the course itself and teaching performance. In addition, there are suspicions that students are likely to reward or punish the professor in evaluations, based on mid-term grades etc., thus encouraging the professor to modify his/her standards and expectations. Some doubts were also expressed concerning DTC use of evaluation materials in terms of manipulating the data to provide the desired interpretation. Several respondents consider that student evaluations currently loom larger than they should in overall teaching assessment in the absence of other systematic feedback, and that corridor gossip may in fact convey a more

accurate picture of a faculty member's teaching effectiveness despite the obvious danger of relying heavily on this source of information.

Unfortunately, there does not appear to be any real consensus amongst faculty as to what constitutes good teaching, either as an ideal goal or in relation to normal job performance. Consequently, there seems to be a considerable variation in attitudes concerning the evaluation of teaching in general, as well as over the role of student assessment in particular.

3. Opinions vary considerably concerning the amount of responsibility that individual faculty members should assume for providing documentation for teaching assessment. While some respondents believe that the faculty member should be totally responsible for providing teaching evaluations, others consider that collection of data on teaching should be the responsibility of the department as a whole. One respondent suggested that departmental Curriculum Committees would serve as an appropriate mechanism for compiling teaching effectiveness assessments "otherwise the results may reflect differential powers of persuasion or surveying skills of individual faculty".

It is evident that opinions concerning the amount of responsibility that should be borne by faculty in the provision of teaching assessment material, are strongly correlated to attitudes concerning administration of compulsory, standardized instruments. In departments where such instruments are not employed routinely, the only consensus appears to be that it is

up to the individual faculty to submit something about his/her teaching to protect his/her own interests if nothing else.

4. The opinions of respondents are most sharply divided on the question of whether or not there should be a University-wide systematic approach to the evaluation of teaching performance. The advocates of a University-wide questionnaire consider it to be the fairest and most practical solution to the problem of assessment, in order to give more credit to good teaching and to improve the performance of others. These respondents generally feel that the University has not given sufficient emphasis to teaching through evaluation processes for the purpose of promotion, tenure and salary adjustment, and that insufficient support for the promotion of teaching has been provided by senior administration. The remainder of the respondents clearly consider University-wide systematic approaches to teaching evaluation to be inappropriate, usually because they believe that departments have specific requirements that reflect particular teaching modes, and that a universally applicable instrument implies a level of validity which would be difficult to substantiate without years of monitoring. One respondent suggests that faculty refresher training programs would be more appropriate if the goal were to improve university teaching, "if the aim is to reward good teaching, it may be argued that good teaching is its own reward".

5. Most respondents agree that follow-up monitoring of student evaluation of teaching, such as mail surveys of graduands,

might well prove useful in reducing the biases of in-class evaluations. Some departments are experimenting with such monitoring at present, but it is too soon for conclusive results. The main concern is that such procedures might prove too cumbersome and expensive relative to the benefits derived, at least as a routine device. In addition, problems based on low return rates, distorted samples etc., all damage the validity of the exercise. One respondent is firmly convinced about the futility of follow-up monitoring, in that "the average student will remember no more about the average teacher than the average teacher remembers about the average student".

In general, however, there is support for follow-up evaluations, particularly at the program and course evaluation level, although the exercise is not felt to be worth the effort for routine merit assessments.

6. The consensus from this survey is that a minimal amount of documentation should be required for assessment of teaching performance. However, there is no agreement as to what this minimal amount should be. Some feel that this should be left to the discretion of the department chairman relating to the situation of individual faculty in the department. Others consider that the results of some form of departmentally-administered survey of students currently enrolled in courses constitute the minimum. Still others leave it up to the individual faculty member to submit all information he/she deems relevant, such as course outlines, examinations, theses

supervised, reading lists etc. Most consider that additional information on teaching, beyond student evaluations, is desirable.

7. The respondents are again divided as to whether or not teaching is given sufficient weight relative to other faculty responsibilities. On the positive side, the respondents were satisfied that teaching is given considerable emphasis, at least in their own departments. On the negative side, it was felt that despite the formal guidelines relating to renewal, promotion, tenure and salary review, publication appears to be definitely emphasized at the expense of teaching. As one respondent expressed this problem:

"In writing, teaching is given sufficient weight. In practice, it is not. In practice, good research is allowed to 'make up for' poor teaching, but good teaching is not allowed to 'make up for' weak research."

To be sure, communication of personal research experience through teaching is one of the prime distinctions between university and college education. However, as we are all aware, communication at the freshman level requires totally different skills from those employed in writing a paper for a refereed academic journal. Furthermore, since we all enter university teaching as virtually untrained amateurs, it would be unfortunate indeed if the University did not employ every means at its disposal to promote and assess excellence in teaching on a level commensurate with its dedication to research.



APPENDIX III

Current University policy concerning the evaluation of teaching is as follows:

1. Faculty

Appendix II to Policy AC 2 (Renewal, Tenure, and Promotion) includes the following statement:

"2.1 Teaching Effectiveness

Success as a teacher, however measured or assessed, is the paramount criterion for evaluation. Generation of enthusiasm in students, dedicated involvement within one's discipline, openness to innovation and the capacity for a broad approach to one's subject matter are all important aspects of teaching effectiveness."

2. TSSU Bargaining Unit Employees

A copy of Article XVII of the Collective Agreement between the University and TSSU is shown below.

Article XVII: Employment Evaluation

- A. An employee may be evaluated at least once during any semester in which she/he is employed. An employee may request that an evaluation of her/his performance be undertaken during a semester and an evaluation will be made provided such a request is received by the Department Chairman at least one month before classes end in that semester.
- B. Evaluation shall be made on the performance of the duties assigned to the employee.
- C. Evaluation may include assessment of the employee's performance by the students assigned to the employee, and by the person to whom the employee is responsible and/or such other person(s) as may be designated by the Chairman.
- D. A copy of the evaluation shall be forwarded to the employee and she/he shall be permitted to add relevant comments on the evaluation to her/his employment file.
- E. Departments that do not currently have formal systems of evaluation of the work performance of bargaining unit employees shall be encouraged by the University to initiate and maintain such systems.
- F. The design, administration and interpretation of such evaluations falls within the area of management's rights and responsibilities.

ARTICLE XVII Employment Evaluation - Revised as follows December 1982:

Article XVII: Employment Evaluation

- A. An employee must be evaluated at least once during any semester in which she/he is employed. The evaluative criteria shall be made clear to the employee upon commencement of duties.
- B. Except in cases of gross misconduct related to the employee's suitability for employment, evaluation must be made only on the employee's qualifications and performance of assigned duties and responsibilities.
- C. Evaluation may include assessment of the employee's performance by the students assigned to the employee. Each employee shall be assessed on an individual assessment form. Evaluation may also include assessment by the person to whom the employee is responsible and/or such other person(s) as may be designated by the Chairman.
- D. Each department shall prepare student assessment forms suited to its own use, with the consultation of the Departmental Shop Steward, or other Union Representative. A copy of the form must be forwarded to the Union Office.
- E. The purpose and importance of student assessments must be stated explicitly on the form.
- F. There shall be no alteration of the employee's completed student assessment forms or the summary prepared therefrom, by any persons granted access to them.
- G. Access to all original student assessment forms and all summaries of those forms shall be guaranteed to each person evaluated therein. The original completed forms shall be withheld from the person evaluated only until submission of final grades is completed. Access to original student assessment forms shall be available to the individual for a period of three (3) semesters following the semester in which the assessment was made.
- H. A copy of the department's evaluation shall be forwarded to the person evaluated by the end of the first week of classes of the following semester. The evaluation shall not normally be considered part of the file until she/he has had reasonable opportunity to discuss the evaluation with her/his supervisor and add comments to the file. This shall not preclude the use of the evaluation for rehiring in the semester immediately following the evaluation.
- I. Whenever reasonably possible, supervisors shall bring serious or continuing problems to an employee's attention before formally citing such problems in evaluations, or using them in any proceedings against the employee.
- J. The design, administration and interpretation of such evaluations falls within the area of management's rights and responsibilities.

APPENDIX IV

DRAFT POLICY CONCERNING THE  
EVALUATION OF TEACHING

1. Teaching includes instruction in regular courses, reading courses, and the supervision of graduate students. The purpose of evaluating teaching is two-fold: to assist faculty members in improving the quality of their teaching and to provide information for use in evaluating the performance of faculty members.
2. The evaluation of faculty members' teaching is an important responsibility of departments and appropriate procedures are to be developed and used.
3. A variety of types of information should be used in evaluating teaching. Sources of this information include students, course materials, direct observation, and statements from faculty members concerning their own teaching.
4. A course survey questionnaire or other suitable information concerning student opinion will be one of the sources of information used in evaluating teaching.
5. Department Chairmen will ensure that full information is provided to faculty members concerning the evaluation of their teaching. Appropriate standards of confidentiality will be maintained.
6. Department Chairmen are responsible for providing information on the process and outcome of the evaluation of teaching for use in the review processes required under Policies AC 2 and AC 22.
7. The Office of the Vice-President, Academic will provide information and advice to departments wishing to improve their teaching evaluation procedures.
8. The University will provide assistance to faculty members who wish to improve the quality of their teaching.

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

S. 82-78

MEMORANDUM

To SENATE

From SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGENDA AND RULES

Subject STUDENT TEACHING ASSESSMENTS

Date JUNE 17, 1982

The following motion from K. E. Rieckhoff was received by the Senate Committee on Agenda and Rules for discussion at Senate.

MOTION:

"That the Senate of Simon Fraser University goes on record as endorsing the recommendations I to VII regarding assessments of teaching effectiveness as stated in the memo of April 20th, 1982 by K. E. Rieckhoff on the subject of "Student Teaching Assessments" and requests the administration to implement these recommendations as a matter of policy"

Senator Rieckhoff's memorandum of April 20, 1982 is attached.

MEMORANDUM

To..... "TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN"

From..... Dr. K. F. Rieckhoff  
Professor of Physics  
Member of S.F.U. Senate  
Member of S.F.U. Board of  
Governors

Subjed..... "Student Teaching Assessments"

Date..... April 20, 1982

A recent memo by a department chairman to his faculty and lab. instructors regarding "STUDENT TEACHING ASSESSMENTS" prompts me into action. The use and particularly the misuse of such assessments has been a longstanding concern of mine. Only the mature and wise attitude regarding such assessments in my own department, i.e. to leave it up to individual instructors to decide on their use and to take them only "cum grano salis" rather than as true measures of teaching effectiveness, has prevented me from going public with my concerns. I am beginning to realize that as a responsible member of the Senate and of the Board of Governors I cannot continue in the luxury of such a parochial attitude. Elsewhere in the university academic careers are endangered, promoted, or efforts misdirected on the basis of the widespread and gross misuse of information of questionable real value to anyone with the possible exception of the affected instructor. How seriously such assessments are taken by academic administrators is exemplified by the following quote from the memo referred to above: "This perspective on teaching effectiveness is an important one and it is expected that all faculty and instructors will ensure that students have an opportunity to assess their teaching."

I shall address myself briefly to a number of questions in the hope of provoking thought, examination and discussion among my colleagues, within the Faculty Association, among the senior academic administrators, and perhaps even within the Senate and the Board and their appropriate committees with a view to corrective action to eliminate this serious threat to our academic integrity. The questions are the following.

- 1) Why do I consider the present practice to be deplorable and a threat to our academic integrity?
- 2) How did the present practice evolve and why is it widely tolerated by so many faculty members and academic administrators?
- 3) What measures can and should be taken to eliminate the misuse and abuse of student teaching assessments.?

1) Most academic departments at S.F.U. use student teaching assessments in an attempt to measure the teaching effectiveness of their instructional staff. Often, as exemplified by the memo quoted above, considerable pressure is put on faculty to cooperate in the practice for "...all classes, large and small." The instruments, (i.e. questionnaires) used for this purpose vary in sophistication and some have had the benefit of social science methodological expertise in their design. Usually the student is asked to rate on a numerical scale a number of aspects of both the course itself and the instructor and/or teaching assistant. The questions can range from integrated judgments on the part of the student about the course such as: "Would you recommend this course..." to specifics such as: "On a scale of 1 to 5 rate the helpfulness, preparation, approachability, etc. of the instructor." Besides such attempts at "objective" ratings, frequently general and specific open ended comments are solicited. Only rarely, if ever, is the student asked to identify his/her own base of judgment, i.e. his/her age, academic goal, academic background and standing etc.

The return rate on these questionnaires while not always 100% is usually quite high. The results are made available to the instructors and provide in most departments one of the most important, and often only, pieces of information which are used by academic administrators, as well as departmental and university tenure committees, when applicable, to judge the professional performance of faculty in their role as teachers. These judgments are used for purposes of renewal, tenure, promotion and merit assessment in salary considerations.

In the light of the assumption that by and large students will be conscientious and honest in filling out these forms (an assumption I am prepared to accept as reasonable in the light of my personal knowledge of and experience with students over many years) to what may one object? There would be nothing to criticize if these surveys were used by instructors as information on student opinion. The objection arises out of the misuse made by assuming a unique relationship between student opinion as expressed in such surveys and teaching effectiveness and/or teacher quality. Such an assumption is purely based on faith and cannot be backed up by any evidence except in extreme cases of poor performance and downright irresponsibility on the part of the teacher.

In the first place there are no agreed upon criteria by which teaching effectiveness at the university level can be assessed. At this time there exists no scholarly consensus outside a few rather obvious desirable and a similar number of obviously undesirable characteristics of an "effective teacher". Even on some of those, exceptions to the rule can often be found except for the one rule that an effective teacher must know and understand the subject matter that he/she is teaching. But leaving aside the absence of a consensus on what constitutes "effective teaching", there is a further absence of consensus as to what extent student surveys are valid tools to measure anything (even if there were an agreement on what constitutes teaching effectiveness). Studies have been made and I have read myself some of the original literature in the field. All that can be said at this time is that these studies are controversial and that no consensus has emerged.

This state of affairs is not really surprising. In the first instance, a student's evaluation will be strongly influenced by his/her past experience with teachers and by his/her expectations regarding a particular course. If his/her previous exposure to teachers has led him/her to expect very little, then merely competent and conscientious teaching will appear "good" and "very good" to him/her. In the second place, student populations are not homogeneous and their differences extend to likes and dislikes and differential responses regarding particular modes of learning and teaching. The importance of these factors to the student evaluation is exemplified by evaluations in which a particular teacher in a particular course was rated by some students as "exceptionally good", by others as "exceptionally bad". These are not imaginary situations. They occur all the time and I am aware of at least one instance where such a dichotomy was further explored in an open-ended questionnaire, where the reason for the assessment was asked for, and identical reasons were given for these divergent judgments, i.e. what appeared to some students to be an exceptionally good aspect of the course was considered by others in a totally different way. In some disciplines ideological compatibility between student and instructor has been shown to be an important factor influencing assessments.

But the problem of validity, reliability, and meaning of these opinion surveys is compounded by the fact that the results are considered, interpreted, and used - I prefer to say "misused" - by our so-called "peers", i.e. people who, with some notable exceptions, have absolutely no professional knowledge regarding



appropriate social science methodology and its possible ramifications. Thus the "data", which are suspect in the first place, are interpreted and used in ways that in themselves leave a lot to be desired. Specifically we find divergences in interpretation which depend not only on the methodological sophistication of individuals but also on their personal idiosyncracies and even prejudices. As examples let me cite the use of ratings averaged over a class without much regard to the distribution, the use of one extreme part of a bimodal distribution to justify a personal prejudice either in favour or against a colleague, the arbitrary weighting and discounting of specific aspects of a rating etc. All in all one can only say that, under the appearance of objectivity in assessment, arbitrary judgments are in fact made and rationalized. Such practices should really not be condoned in an institution that purports to value scholarship and intellectual integrity. That is probably the reason that many years ago the CAUT explicitly cautioned the academic community regarding the use of student opinion surveys. It specifically recommended against their use for the purposes of tenure, promotion, and other career decisions and suggested restricting their use to feedback to the instructor.

2) In the light of the massive indictment given under 1) one may legitimately wonder how, given the validity of this indictment, the practice evolved and has become so widely accepted. I believe the answer to be a mutually reinforcing complex of historical, political and psychological reasons.

History placed the founding of S.F.U. into a period of legitimate concern about the seriousness of the commitment of academics to their teaching responsibilities particularly in the U.S.A. academic establishment. Thus one of the earliest announced intentions of S.F.U. was to take undergraduate teaching most seriously and assure its quality.

Politically, this period was also the time in which "student-power" became an important concept in universities and legitimate as well as merely ideologically oriented demands were raised and responded to by increasing student participation in all levels of university governance. The willingness to listen

to the student and give consideration to his opinion became a public "motherhood" issue. This led to almost totally uncritical acceptance of a variety of concepts that tended to abolish, as presumably "undemocratic" or "elitist" discrimination on the basis of differential knowledge. These trends together with the absence of clear alternatives that could be characterized as "objective" teaching assessments led to the acceptance of student opinion surveys as the dominant tool for such assessments.

The psychological factor abetting such acceptance will be familiar to everybody who has access to unfiltered student opinion: By and large students are exceptionally kind and generous in their assessments of faculty teaching. Being aware of their limited knowledge and information base, they tend to give the benefit of the doubt to their teachers, rating faculty of merely average professional competence and normal care and conscientiousness as "good" or even "very good", acknowledging normal courtesies shown to them as if they were almost unheard of kindnesses, and judging even professors who treat them with disdain and who are sloppy and unreliable as "o.k." or average. Of course, there are a fair number of students who never experienced truly competent teachers and are thus unduly impressed by what they find at S.F.U.. Their assessments, will err far more frequently in ways that favour and flatter us than the other way around. Furthermore, there exist a number of effective ways in which career-conscious instructors can manipulate students to achieve favourable ratings to the detriment of true learning: generosity in giving grades is only one of the cruder and more obvious ways to do this.

The combination of these factors leads to the general acquiescence of faculty, since the practice rarely hurts them and is frequently to their advantage. Academic administrators naturally love a system about which faculty rarely complain, which gives them the opportunity to point out how students opinion is treasured and used, and allows them to be seen by the public in a demonstrable way as guardian of the teaching quality of the institution.

With a situation in which students, faculty, and administration conspire to fool themselves, each other and the public by the maintenance of a pleasant set of illusions (not necessarily identical illusions for the various groups) why would anyone wish a change in this state of affairs? I shall leave it to you to decide on that question.

3) Having adressed myself to the above questions, I already hear the reply: "student questionnaires may have their faults but they are the best tools we have for teaching assessment and lacking better ones we must continue to use them." My answer and the recommendations arising from it have two aspects: It would be honest to acknowledge the deficiencies in the first place and in the second place, given the extent of the deficiencies, it would be preferable not to use any teaching assessment even if nothing else could be substituted. But there are ways in which we can avoid intellectual fraud and yet use student input to make sufficient, albeit admittedly subjective, judgments with respect to a rough assessment of teaching effectiveness.

Here then are my recommendations:

- I) Abandon any attempt to judge teaching effectiveness for purposes of renewal, promotion, tenure, and salary review on a scale that is finer than the following broad categories. "Exceptionally good", "acceptable", and "unacceptably bad".
- II) Assume in the absence of any specific evidence to the contrary that any instructor, who demonstrably knows the subject matter of the course he/she is teaching, falls into the group classifiable as "acceptable".
- III) Accept as "specific evidence" for other than "acceptable" performance only the following in decreasing order of importance:
  - i) Corroborated testimony from professional colleagues both within and outside the university who have personally attended lectures, seminars etc. of the person to be judged.
  - ii) A consistent pattern of compliments or complaints by past and present students who have taken courses from the person to be judged and whose comments have been investigated and weighed according to the commentators academic standing, experience, and general reliability. (In the case of complaints, the faculty complained about must, of course, have been given the opportunity to respond and his/her responses must also be considered).
- III) Statistical opinion surveys of alumni not enrolled as students at the time of the survey who have taken courses from the person to be judged.

- IV) Prohibit as a matter of policy the use of opinion surveys administered to students still enrolled at the university for purposes of making judgments about a faculty members renewal, promotion, tenure and salary review.
- V) Prohibit as a matter of policy the exertion of any pressure expressed or implied on the part of academic administrators on course instructors to use student opinion surveys.
- VI) Where course instructors for their own purposes and benefit wish to use student opinion surveys they are of course at liberty to do so, but the use of results of such surveys should be restricted to the instructor.
- VII) Encourage students dissatisfied or exceptionally pleased with the performance of an instructor to make their complaints and/or compliments known to the chair of a department for appropriate action or (if they are too unsure of themselves) have them go to the ombuds-person of the Student Society who may then act in their behalf.

Concluding remarks:

I am aware that I am attacking something that will be perceived by some as "a sacred cow", which, however, to me appears to be merely a myth. I urge the reader to take the time to read the above carefully, to consider it as free of emotion as is possible, to discuss the merits of my remarks with others, and, ultimately, to respond in concrete fashion to my recommendations. Your considered opinion will be of interest to me and should be of interest to our senior academic administrators. Let's hear from you.

Sincerely,

  
Dr. K.E. Rieckhoff

KER/mib

Current University policy concerning the evaluation of teaching is as follows:

1. Faculty

Appendix II to Policy AC 2 (Renewal, Tenure, and Promotion) includes the following statement:

"2.1 Teaching Effectiveness

Success as a teacher, however measured or assessed, is the paramount criterion for evaluation. Generation of enthusiasm in students, dedicated involvement within one's discipline, openness to innovation and the capacity for a broad approach to one's subject matter are all important aspects of teaching effectiveness."

2. TSSU Bargaining Unit Employees

A copy of Article XVII of the Collective Agreement between the University and TSSU is shown below.

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