

## Minutes

### Committee on Academic Quality

December 11, 2008

Attending: Bill Goffe, Sue Camp, Webe Kadima, John McDonald, Jean Chambers, Steve Abraham, John Huonker, Pat Pacitti, and Rick Back.

After introductions, the minutes from October 30 were approved. Then the current status of recent initiatives were described: Pictures in Banner (still waiting for a meeting), Adjunct Orientation (a document was finalized), and a Campus-Wide Discussion on Teaching (John Kane of CELT has plans in this regard).

Next we briefly discussed a document on "Student Behavior, Motivations, and Expectations." Mehran Nojan is to give a COLT talk next semester and members will try to attend it. Along these lines, Sue will forward to the committee a recommendation for a similar (identical?) document along these lines from the Retention Task Force.

Next there was extensive discussion on a campus-wide evaluation instrument. Here are some of the highlights (mostly in order)

- Jean described a student run survey from 1999 and one from Brown. She later added that it could be done on-line.
- John M. pointed out that Plattsburgh did away with theirs; he wonders why. He added that research has found a gender bias in their evaluation of instructors, so they would need to be used carefully. One based on pedagogy, not student perceptions, seems more desirable.
- Jean responded that they can be used for basic elements, like do instructors come to class on time; Sue agreed and added it can detect those who don't prepare for class.
- Many then pointed out that many students use RateMyProfessor.com.
- Rick suggested that for some students, there may not be much course choice.
- Steve added that such instruments go beyond student use to use by the instructor and for DSI and the like.
- Jean then pointed out that biases have to be dealt with, while John H. wondered if such instruments produce objective measures, and John M. preferred to be evaluated by his peers.

- Jean replied that student evaluations can expose bad teachers, but Rick wondered what to do when this is discovered? John M. suggested that we take a look at the chapter in McKeachie's "Teaching Tips," while Bill suggested a look at IDEA.
- Both John H. and Steve worried about a "halo effect" where one bad class evaluation has a disproportionate impact on an instructor's reputation.
- The discussion briefly drifted to other issues, and then Bill asked how to get faculty buy-in of a campus-wide instrument.
- Webe suggested two factors: protect students from bad instructors and to allow faculty to pursue excellence
- Jean added that students can judge some elements of an instructor's responsibilities, but Rick felt faculty self-evaluation is superior. He favored faculty making up their own and feels that it would be hard sell for a campus-wide instrument.
- Webe added that she learned more from her own mid-term evaluations than from end of the semester evaluation. Rick wondered how evaluations are carried out in the departments; if the administration favored it, it would be hard to get faculty buy-in. Also, how would they be used?
- Steve replied that UUP would likely play a role.
- Jean replied that we all have contractual responsibilities to meet.
- Steve suggest that they are easier to accept in the specific versus the abstract, so perhaps we should try to come up with one.

The meeting then adjourned.

Submitted by Bill Goffe

