



To: Provost, Sam Gingerich
University of Alaska Anchorage

Fr: Kimberly Swiantek,
UAA Governance Office

Re: IDEA evaluations for courses with enrollments of 10 or fewer students

On November 6, 2015 the Faculty Senate moved to approve that for courses with enrollments of 10 or fewer students, IDEA evaluations not be provided.

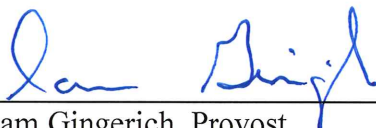
The clarifying statement, which was requested on October 2, 2015 as part of the original motion, has been included with this memo as a supporting document.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Provost

Approved Disapproved

Comments:



Sam Gingerich, Provost

11/15/2015

Date

Chancellor

Approved Disapproved

Comments:



Tom Case, Chancellor

19 Nov 2015

Date

October 27, 2015

TO: Tara Smith, President
Faculty Senate

FROM: Sam Gingerich

SUBJECT: Role of Student Surveys in Evaluation Processes

Discussions about the use of the IDEA instrument as the tool that is used to survey students here at UAA continue. The institution recently transitioned to an online administration of this instrument and this has led to some unintended consequences. In the past year the administrative work to support the administration of this survey has grown to consume approximately three-quarters of an FTE primarily because some very time consuming practices have developed. Regardless, IT and Faculty Services remain committed to supporting the administration of the IDEA surveys.

In 2013 the Faculty Senate enacted a recommendation that the IDEA survey not be used for courses with enrollment of 10 students or less unless requested by the instructor. This is a common decision that ties back to the questionable significance of the survey if there are few students who respond. In fact, this is supported by the following statement on the IDEA website, "The average of these rating provides a good indication of how successfully objectives were reached, especially if at least 10 students provided ratings and if at least 75% of enrollees responded."

However, it appears that faculty, and especially faculty who are not tenured, full professors, are asking that surveys be done on all courses, probably to make sure these are available for committee review as they undergo tenure, post-tenure or promotion reviews. Unfortunately, it is these requests that have led to the time-consuming practices that require the staff administering IDEA to manually change processes. While we have been and continue to work with IT, to date few if any fixes have been found. Further, these requests are made with full knowledge that the results have very limited if any useful information other than providing proof that the survey was done.

The Senate is once again visiting this topic and I have been asked to provide an overview of my understanding of the requirements. To frame this, I did review all guiding documents including both the UNAC and the UAFT CBA's, Regent's policy, and UAA's faculty Evaluation Guidelines. The following sections frame the issue.

Regent's Policy

2. effectiveness in teaching, demonstrated by such things as: evaluation by peers; **reaction of students as determined by surveys and classroom and laboratory observations**; development of improved teaching materials and processes; development of new courses; advising of students; assessments of student achievement; and participation in necessary and routine duties that support classroom performance (P04.04.050. Evaluation of Faculty)

UNAC CBA

Summarized teaching evaluations for the years under review, where applicable (Section 9.2)

UAFT CBA

Summarized student evaluations for each course for the years under review, where applicable. (Section 6.1.1)

Faculty Evaluation Guidelines

4. Section III: File sections that describe and document high-quality and significant scholarly achievements in each of the relevant areas of responsibility of teaching, academic research or creative activity, and professional and university service.
 - a. Within the teaching section of the file, candidates are required to include:
 - i. All student evaluations from the previous six years (or for all years of service if candidate has been in faculty rank fewer than 6 years),

There is a clear requirement that faculty continuously gather and demonstrate that they consider student evaluations of instruction. However, it appears to me that the practice here at UAA has swung to a focus on the application of the IDEA survey in every course to demonstrate unequivocally that this requirement is met rather than on the requirement that faculty demonstrate that they gather and consider student opinions.

The CBA's both qualify the requirement with the phrase, "where applicable." So while the expectation is established that student evaluations will be done for every class, it is apparent that this should reflect limits that do exist. One other note. The CBA's both refer to summarized evaluations but the FEG's flip this and require all student evaluations. I think this may be another area where lack of clarity in the language used may be adding to the confusion.

From my read of these materials and from my understanding of the evaluation processes that are at the core here, I believe there is ample room to consider the role of student evaluations within these processes. I offer the following points:

- Faculty, as they fulfill their instructional responsibilities, must routinely provide students in all classes opportunities to engage in formative and summative assessments.
- Faculty must demonstrate that they use these assessments to enhance and improve their skills as teachers.
- Summative assessments, such as the IDEA survey, are helpful tools in those cases where the summary results are statistically meaningful. However, in those cases where the results are simply a tally of responses, the benefit is probably not worth the cost.
- A suite of summative and formative classroom assessments should be established that can be used to supplement or to supplant IDEA.
- Specific limits on the requirements for the use of IDEA should be established.
- Specific expectations for the use of other approved assessment strategies should be established.
- These should be included in UAA's Faculty Evaluation Guidelines

If this is in line with the interests of the Senate, I will support planning and implementation work as needed.

I will be glad to discuss this with you or with the senate at your convenience.