

[In these minutes: Vice Chair Election, Student Release Questions]

STUDENT SENATE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (SSCC) MINUTES

OCTOBER 25, 2007

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate the Administration, or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Alicia Smith (acting chair), Neal Brown, Kris Schwebler.

ABSENT: Jeni Kiewatt.

1. ELECTION OF 2007-08 SSCC/STUDENT SENATE VICE CHAIR

Kris Schwebler was elected SSCC/Student Senate Vice Chair.

2. DISCUSSION OF STUDENT RELEASE QUESTIONS

Professor Cathrine Wambach, Chair of the Educational Policy Committee (SCEP), joined the meeting to discuss the student release questions. She said that there are two parts to the evaluation form, the student release questions and the questioned used by the faculty and department heads for feedback, promotion and tenure decisions, and salary increases. Both are mandated by a Senate policy.

She said that the student release questions were revised first since the old questions were clunky and uninformative. The revised questioned were piloted in spring 2006 and then approved by SCEP. The students have been waiting for the faculty to revise their questions. Now that these are almost to complete, the total form includes a lengthy set of questions. The student side has seven categories with 17 questions, while the faculty side has just six questions.

When the form, with both new faculty and student questions, was piloted students expressed concern that the form was too long, the questions were repetitious, and the rating scale from the front did not match the back side.

She then proposed that the student release questions be changed. David Langley from the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) worked with the faculty on their questions and then recommended a set of four questions for the student side since some of the current student questions can be answered from the course guide.

Another option instead of releasing a set of responses to questions is compiling a list of 'exceptional faculty' who score in the top third on the core faculty questions. Faculty would still need to agree to being on this list.

Professor Wambach said that there are pros and cons to each possibility. The cons of the student release questions is that they supply limited information since only ten percent of faculty consent to the release and that faculty need to agree to the release before they see the results. For the 'exceptional faculty' list, the pro is that over fifty percent participate at SCHOOL while the con is that there is less potential for information on poor classes to be released.

She said that the committee will need to decide which option they prefer:

1. Keep the student release with a adjustments
2. Approve the Langley questions
3. Discard the student release questions and adopt the 'exceptional faculty' list

Members then made the following comments:

- Students do not take much time to complete evaluations so shorter might be better
- Students use what resources are available and if the University does not provide feedback then students talk to other students or use rateyourprofessor.com
- An official University system is best
- Can four questions provide enough information to help a student choose a class?
- Evaluations can rate a course or the professor
- Students need to be told the purpose of evaluations and that they are used
- Faculty should not give evaluations at finals but during the last few weeks of class

Professor Wambach said that evaluations can make it hard to tell if a student is responding to a faculty or teaching assistant. Cultural differences can also lead to lower ratings for some instructors. However, faculty receive written comments from at least half of the students in most classes.

She said that on-line evaluations usually have a poor response rate, except in the AHC which has tied release of the final grade to completion of the evaluation.

The committee then discussed the following amendment to the questions:

- Current questions four and five should be rephrased to read the same – "I would recommend this instructor to other students" and "I would recommend this course to other students"
- Responses from question one are hard to estimate
- Questions seven would influence a student's decision to take a class
- Question on returning assignments should be included
- Scales should be consistent between both sides of the survey
- Course readings is a big concern for students
- Question six should be revised to include 1) 'making effective use of readings,' 2) 'creates worthwhile assignments,' 3) 'readings connect to lectures,' and 4) 'grading methods are fair and reasonable'

The revised questions are:

1. I put significant effort into learning the subject matter from this course.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Somewhat Agree

Somewhat Disagree

Disagree
 Strongly Disagree
 Not Applicable

2. Compared to other courses at this level, the amount I have learned in this course is
 less.
 about the same.
 more.
 I have not taken other courses at this level.

3. Compared to other courses at this level, the difficulty of this course is
 less.
 about the same.
 more.
 I have not taken other courses at this level.

4. I would recommend this course to other students.
 Yes
 No

5. I would recommend this instructor to other students.
 Yes
 No

6. Please rate your instructor in terms of the following characteristics.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
A. Is approachable							
B. Is enthusiastic about course content							
C. Returns assignments in a timely fashion							
D. Is prepared for class							
E. Presents material clearly							
F. Provides constructive feedback							
G. Encourages critical thinking							
H. Has grading methods that are fair and reasonable							
I. Makes effective use							

of course readings							
J. Creates worthwhile assignments							

Professor Wambach said that the faculty questions will be presented to the Faculty Senate in November or February for approval. Once the student questions are approved, they can be presented to SCEP for final approval. All questions need to be finalized by March so that new forms can be printed for spring semester. She suggested that the students work with David Langley on the phrasing of questions.

3. CAMPUS UPDATES

Neal Brown noted that the Crookston Student Association has its recycling bin evaluations. An informative session on the proposed smoking ban will be held tonight, to be following by a forum.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

With no further business, Alicia Smith thanked all members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Becky Hippert
University Senate