

Minutes
Joint Committee on Student Evaluation of Courses and Teachings
September 22, 2011

In attendance: Vanessa Cano (Staff), John Choonoo (Guest), Linda Friedman, Gary Hentzi, Denyse Ramkaran (Guest), Dennis Slavin (Chair), Leslie Sutton-Smith, Carlos Tonche, Ashok Vora (Guest), Stanley Wine, Phyllis Zadra (Guest)

Adoption of the Agenda:

Moved by Sutton-Smith, seconded by Zadra, and adopted.

Chair's Report:

Dennis Slavin reviewed the committee's charge and last spring's discussions. The committee will convene more frequently this year, with the next meeting planned for October. Brooklyn College's Associate Provost, Jerry Mirotznik, has agreed to speak at the next meeting about his college's recent implementation of online student evaluations.

Action Items:

- i) Committee unanimously agrees that Slavin shall continue to serve as chair.
- ii) Slavin moves to limit the questions on the survey to issues that are truly open to discussion; that is, not to include questions about whether to move the evaluations online—a move that is inevitable. The motion carries.

Discussion Items:

- i) Logistics and potential issues of converting the evaluations to an online format and the proposed "reward" for participation

Sutton-Smith: The BOSS/eSIMS as it currently exists allows students to see their grades immediately after they are posted. We need to investigate whether BOSS could potentially withhold grades until a set date unless the online evaluation is completed. (Administrators would continue to have access to grades as soon as they are submitted.) Unfortunately, with energies focused on the CUNY First project, requests to modify BOSS are generally being denied.

Hentzi: the withholding of grades until the evaluation is completed may backfire, as students may rush through and give no thought to their responses to access grades sooner.

- ii) Eliminating the "opt-out" possibility for faculty in posting evaluation results

Currently only about half of faculty members consent to having their evaluation results made public. Consensus of the committee is that all results should be posted online. Opposition to this change is expected (and will be surveyed), but might not be as great if written comments continue to be for the instructor only.

Friedman: Brooklyn College's model uses a portal that is accessible only to students, professors, and administrators of the college—unlike Baruch's system, which is open to the world. A similar model could encourage professors to allow results to be shared.

Vora: Written comments are not usually used by the P&B to decide tenure and reappointment; therefore comments should remain private to avoid unnecessary conflict with the unions.

iii) Suggestions for revising draft survey

The purpose of the survey should be clear and stated at the top of the survey.

Suggestions for new questions:

Sutton Smith: How many times have you filled out a course evaluation?

Zadra: Use question #3 from the faculty survey as a replacement for questions #4 and #5 on the student version. Also, revise the instructions for the written comment section of the evaluation: students need to be made aware that their comments are most helpful if they provide constructive feedback.

Vora: enlist the assistance of student organizations in distributing the survey.