

TO: Steering Committee

FROM: Student Feedback Task Force

RE: Short Term Recommendation on Student Evaluation of Teaching

DATE: November 28, 2018

Introduction

In May 2017, Steering approved the creation of the Student Feedback on Teaching Task Force to meet in the fall semester of 2017 in order to address concerns raised by the Student Government, as articulated by an email from Alex Molder on behalf of the Student Government, and to review the literature and to make recommendations for changes to the form or its administration. After the meeting on Oct. 11, 2017, the task force requested an extension to continue its work until March 2018 to effectively complete the work. The Student Government requested a review of the content and process for administering the student feedback forms for the evaluation of courses and faculty, noting student concerns with the content of the form and with the current process for administering the forms. Previously, the Steering Committee had charged CAP in November 2010 with making recommendations concerning the content of the student feedback form as well as the procedures by which the student feedback form is administered. In May 16, 2018, Steering reauthorized the Task Force to prepare a detailed preliminary recommendation suggesting specific changes to the current student feedback form and its administration. The Task Force requested an extension to continue its work until Spring 2019 to effectively complete the work.

Charge

The Student Feedback on Teaching Task Force is charged to consider what it has learned from its literature review regarding nationwide research and best practices on student feedback on teaching; the concerns raised by students as outlined in the 2017 memo; preliminary testimony received from the Faculty Senate Executive Board, from Academic Leaders, and from the Deans Council regarding faculty and administrators concerns with the current form and procedure; and its own recommendations issued on March 30, 2018. The task force is charged to prepare a detailed preliminary recommendation suggesting specific changes to the current student feedback form and its administration. In completing its recommendation, the Task Force is to issue a short-term recommendation for immediate action early in the fall as well as a longer-term recommendation later in the semester.

Background to the Recommendations

Based on the charge from the Steering Committee, the Student Feedback on Teaching Task Force was formed in Fall 2018. The Task Force members are:

MinSoo Kim-Bossard (Chair)
Cathy Liebars (Vice-chair)
Angela Capece (Faculty Representative)
Chu Kim-Prieto (Faculty Representative)
Jason Dahling (Faculty Representative)
LaMont Rouse (Center for Institutional Effectiveness)
Bryanna O'Keefe (Student Representative)
Kiana Stockwell (Student Representative)
Kristine Spike (Student Representative)

In Fall 2018, the Task Force reviewed student feedback on teaching questions used by other institutions, the current student feedback on teaching questions, and the purpose of the student feedback on teaching based on the stakeholder group testimony from the last academic year. The Task Force also met with three representatives from the IT department to inquire about making changes from the technical standpoint, including changing the platform and making modifications to the existing form. The Task Force drafted a preamble to help students understand the purpose, the use, and the anonymity of the feedback. The Task Force examined third party vendor prospects and partook in two demos.

Recommendations

The Task Force has identified some short-term recommendations that can be implemented immediately (with the appropriate approval) to increase the response rate and help provide meaningful feedback for faculty.

Following are immediate recommendations:

- Revise the preamble to the student feedback on teaching form (see Appendix A) and add the preamble in the landing page (before students start seeing the questions). Currently, the preamble is only available on the top of each page preceding the feedback questions for each course.
 - The preamble was revised to help students understand 1) the use of the form, 2) the anonymity of the collected feedback, and 3) how the instructors would not have access to the result until the grades are submitted.
- Open up the feedback form one week earlier.
- Promote the student feedback on teaching on social media.

- Promote the mobile feedback form on PAWS.
- Encourage faculty members to adapt “best practice” actionable items to improve the response rate, such as:
 - Encourage discussions about student feedback on teaching in department meetings in the spring semester.
 - Allow time in class to complete the feedback form, provide reminders, ask students to bring their devices to class, etc.
 - These “best practice” recommendations on the individual instructor level are available in a list form through Record & Registration.
- Provide the completion rates to the instructor during the feedback period so that they can encourage students to complete the form to help promote the feedback process.
- Move the student feedback on teaching under the “student center” menu on PAWS. Currently it is difficult to navigate to the feedback forms on PAWS without the email link.
- Revise the screen layout of the feedback form to make it more user friendly. The new PAWS format is more user friendly than before; however, when the screen is viewed on the computer, the form is relegated to only one side of the screen.

The Task Force has also identified additional short-term recommendations that can positively impact the response rate:

- Pilot in-person mid-semester feedback sessions with a third-party moderator in several courses.
 - Utilize the Learning Community Council to conduct a pilot study with a third-party moderator to lead a class discussion with students about their experiences in the course.
 - Promote faculty members to engage with students about the feedback collected through the mid-semester feedback.
- Provide a reward (e.g. free food) to the following school or department in a campus-wide competition:
 - School and/or department with the highest overall rate of response.
 - School and/or department with the highest improved rate of response.

Appendix A
Revised Preamble

Your opinion is important for assessing and improving the quality of our teaching at TCNJ. The feedback will help faculty improve their instruction; it will also be used in evaluating faculty for reappointment, tenure, promotion, and 5-year reviews. The evaluations are anonymous. The anonymous feedback will not be shared with the instructor until after grades have been submitted for the semester. Thank you for your time and insight.