

MEMORANDUM

TO: William Keep, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Amanda Norvell, President of the Faculty Senate
2018-19 Task Force on Student Feedback
Brooke Chlebowski, President of Student Government
Mosen Auryan, Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness
Joseph O'Brien, President of the Staff Senate
Susan Ryan, Chair Campus Diversity Council

FROM: The Steering Committee

RE: Spring 2019 Charge to The Student Feedback Task Force

DATE: April 17, 2019

Background

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 in an email from Alex Molder on behalf of the Student Government). The Task Force was asked to review the relevant literature and to make recommendations for changes to the questionnaire and/or its administration. In October 2017, the Task Force requested an extension until March 2018, so as to effectively complete its work.

On May 16, 2018, Steering reauthorized the Task Force to prepare a detailed preliminary recommendation which should suggest specific changes to the current student feedback form and its administration. The Task Force requested an extension to continue its work until Spring 2019.

On November 28, 2018, The Task Force sent Steering a memo including Short Term Recommendation on Student Evaluation of Teaching. On April 3, 2019 Steering met with representatives from the Task force. At the April 3rd meeting, the Steering Committee accepted the following recommendations from the Short Term Recommendations Memo:

The Task Force's list of "immediate recommendations" with one amendment. The Steering Committee felt that the revised preamble needs further revision. Feedback on how the preamble should be further edited were given to the Task Force representatives. The list of Immediate recommendations accepted include:

1. 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.
- 2. Open up the feedback form one week earlier.
- 3. Promote the student feedback on teaching on social media.
- 4. Promote the mobile feedback form on PAWS.
- 5. 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.
- 6. 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.
- 7. 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.
- 8. 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 also identified additional short-term recommendations. From this list, The Steering Committee accepted the recommendation that in Fall 19 a pilot of mid-semester feedback be implemented. This would be implemented on a voluntary basis for pre-tenure faculty with results only accessible to the individual faculty members who choose to participate.

- 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.

In discussion, and briefly mentioned in the Short Term Recommendation memo, the Task Force noted that they saw demonstrations from two third party vendors. The Task Force recommends purchase of a program that interfaces with Canvas. The Steering Committee supports this recommendation and asks that the Provost move forward in that purchase.

The Steering Committee also voted to reauthorize The Student Feedback Task Force with charges focusing on:

1. revision of the items included in the feedback form, specifically the revision of questions on the feedback survey to be in alignment with and reflect the College's definition of an effective teacher as outlined in the TCNJ Reappointment and Promotions Document (p. 5 of the 2017 RPD)
2. implementing campus-wide use of mid-semester feedback

Charge

1. Using the literature reviewed on best practices on student feedback on teaching, the College's definition of an effective teacher as outlined in the Reappointment and Promotions Document (p. 5 of the 2017 RPD), and information from the third-party vendor purchased, the Task Force will recommend a new set of items for the Student Feedback Form. These items should assess student satisfaction and provide formative assessment information to faculty. After identifying items for the Student Feedback Form, the Task Force should solicit preliminary testimony from the Faculty Senate Executive Board, from Academic Leaders, and from the Deans Council. By November of the Fall 19 term, the Task Force should prepare a preliminary recommendation for a revised student feedback form and send that to Steering and to CFA for feedback before proceeding with charge #4 below.
2. Because the number of faculty and course sections per semester precludes a campus-wide, in-person mid-semester procedure, the Task Force is asked to develop two pilots of mid-semester feedback in Fall 2019. The first will be a continuation of the in-person, focus group procedure for pre-tenure faculty on a volunteer basis. The Task Force is asked to develop a second pilot in Fall 2019, also implemented on a volunteer basis, for tenured faculty. This should be a Canvas survey and should be comprised of the same three open ended questions used in the in-person approach.
3. Using the information from both pilots in #2 above, and the literature reviewed on best practices on student feedback, the Task Force should identify best-practices for a developmental, mid-semester student feedback process that increases faculty-student engagement and improves the end-of-semester evaluation response rate. The Task Force should specifically consider the timing of the mid-semester feedback (e.g., before or after mid-semester evaluations).
4. Utilizing the recommended set of new items for student feedback (charge #1 above), both the mid-semester (charges #2 & 3 above) and end of term feedback forms should be piloted during the Spring 2020 term by volunteers from among the rank of full professors in courses they have taught extensively. This should be done through anonymous surveys in Canvas, or if possible, using the purchased third party vendor platform. The Task Force should work with IT to establish an end of term timeline for student feedback that will allow for the results to be available as early as possible. The Task Force should then ascertain in a manner that they see fit, if the change in form meaningfully impacts

the volunteers' average scores and response rate of the end of semester feedback. Students who participated in this pilot should also be interviewed or surveyed to ascertain if they are comfortable with the content and administration of the form.

5. Based on charges 1-4 above and the outcome of the pilots conducted, the Task Force should write a preliminary recommendation regarding Student Feedback. This recommendation should be sent to Steering by October 2020. Steering will then charge CFA to gather Tier III testimony.

So that the revised feedback form is applicable to all faculty members, in appointing faculty to this Task Force, the Faculty Senate should be cognizant of including a) some individuals with knowledge and experience in causal inference, with knowledge of survey research methodology, and with data analysis experience and b) individuals who represent diversity in subject matter or disciplines, in course delivery platforms (e.g., online or blended formats) and in pedagogies or methodologies of teaching and learning.

The Task Force shall consist of 12 members as follows:

- 1 - Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies or designee
- 1 - Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness or designee
- 7 - faculty (at least one from each school) appointed by Faculty Senate
- 2 - students appointed by Student Government

The first meeting will be convened by the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness or designee. In keeping with the standard practice for Councils, the group should elect a chair and vice chair from among its members. Minutes of meetings should be submitted to Steering (steering@tcnj.edu). The Task Force should see fit to draw on expertise from across campus or outside to assist it with particular issues. In particular, the Task Force should be in ongoing consultation with the Center for Institutional Effectiveness, Records and Registration, and Instructional Design to ensure that any recommendations made or practices suggested can be supported by the College and sustained.

Meeting times: The Task Force will meet on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays at 1:30pm.

Timeline

The Task Force should begin working on this charge as soon as it is constituted and complete its work by submitting a Summative Preliminary Recommendation to Steering by no later than October, 2020. Upon receipt of the Summative Preliminary Recommendation, the Task Force will be dissolved and Steering will then charge CFA to review the Task Force's Summative Preliminary Recommendations and gather Tier 3 testimony. Some aspects of CFA's Final Recommendation may require negotiation and approval between the administration and the

bargaining unit. If so, this negotiation will take place after Steering accepts the Final Recommendation and forwards it to the Provost.

Testimony from Faculty and Students

Testimony Tier: 3 The issue requires a high degree of testimony from the campus community. The assigned council or committee should consult with relevant individuals and groups in developing a preliminary recommendation.

TCNJ Governance Processes

Step 1–Steering issues a charge

Step 2-Governance prepares a Preliminary Recommendation

Once the appropriate standing committee or council has received the charge, it should start by collecting data needed to make a preliminary recommendation. It should receive input from affected individuals and all relevant stakeholder groups prior to making a preliminary recommendation. For issues that have broad implications or that affect a large number of individuals, initial testimony should be solicited from the campus community at large. For some issues, sufficient initial testimony may come from input through committee membership or solicitation from targeted constituent groups. When, in the best judgment of the committee, adequate clarity of the principles contributing to the problem are known, a preliminary recommendation should be drafted and disseminated to the campus community.

Step 3–The Relevant Stakeholders provide Testimony

Once a preliminary recommendation has been completed, the standing committee or council should seek testimony from the campus community. The testimony should be gathered in accordance with the Testimony Tier (see below) assigned to the issue by Steering. For issues that require public testimony from the campus community, the chair of the standing committee or council should approach the president of the appropriate representative bodies to schedule the next available time slot at a meeting of that body. Testimony should be gathered in a way that allows stakeholders to weigh in fully on the issue. Members of the standing committee or council that wrote the preliminary recommendation should be present to hear and record the testimony.

Step 4–Governance prepares a Final Recommendation

Once the standing committee or council has received appropriate testimony, it should revise the preliminary recommendation into a final recommendation. Once the final recommendation is complete, the standing committee or council should use sound judgment to determine whether or not more public testimony is required. If, in its feedback to the original preliminary

recommendation, a stakeholder representative body requests to review an issue again, the committee or council is bound to bring it back to that body. If a full calendar year has passed since the formal announcement of the preliminary recommendation, the committee must re-submit a preliminary recommendation to the campus community. When the committee or council has completed the final recommendation, it should forward it to the Steering Committee. The final recommendation should be accompanied by a cover memo that summarizes the initial charge, how testimony was gathered and the nature of that testimony, and how the committee responded to that testimony, including a description of how the preliminary recommendation evolved as a result of testimony.

Step 5–Steering considers the Final Recommendation

Step 6–The Provost and/or President and Board consider the Final Recommendation

Step 7–Steering notifies the Campus Community Testimony

For a complete description of all steps and of the testimony tiers, see Governance Structures and Processes, 2017 Revision, pages 21–24.