

TO: Steering Committee
FROM: Student Feedback Task Force
RE: Preliminary Recommendation
DATE: 12/19/19

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. 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 until Spring 2019 to effectively complete the work.

During the 2018-2019 academic year, 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 three demos.

On April 3, 2019, representatives from the Task Force met with the Steering Committee to discuss the work the Task Force had done and the request to form a new Task Force with the task of revising the items included in the feedback form. The Steering Committee issued a new charge for The Student Feedback Task Force which focused on revision of the items included in the feedback form and campus-wide use of mid-semester feedback. The Steering Committee supported the recommendation made by the Task Force to purchase a product by a third party vendor that interfaces with Canvas. The Steering requested the Task Force to make additional revision to the preamble.

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.

Background to the Recommendations

Based on the charge from the Steering Committee, the Student Feedback on Teaching Task Force was reformed in Fall 2019. The current Task Force members are:

Jason Dahling (Vice-chair)
Cathy Liebars (Chair)
LaMont Rouse (Center for Institutional Effectiveness)
Linda Mayger (School of Education)
Valerian Anderson (Office of Instructional Design)
Gabriella Barth (student representative)
Jason Alejandro (School of Arts and Communication)
Dolores Dzubaty (School of Nursing)
Richard Baker (School of Business)
Anthony Lau (School of Engineering)
Lakshmi Gurram (student representative)

Based on the work of the task force in the previous two years and using the Reappointment and Promotions Document (p. 5 of the 2017 RPD), the task force worked on revising the questions on the student feedback form. Testimony on the revised document was solicited from the Academic Leaders, the Deans' Council, and the Faculty Senate Executive Board. Based on feedback received, the task force revised the document further.

In addition, although we could not pilot an in-person mid-semester feedback process without negotiating with the union, the task force did implement an online mid-semester feedback process through Canvas with full professor volunteers. We received 13 faculty volunteers with 320 students and received 154 student responses, which includes those who chose to opt out. This represents a 48% response rate, which is similar to the college's end-of-semester response rate. Courses in which faculty incentivized the students to respond (for example, with extra credit) received much higher response rates. About half of the responding students provided their email address for a follow-up survey. Students and faculty who had participated in the mid-semester feedback process were later sent a survey about their experience. Unfortunately, the task force received a very small number of responses to the follow-up survey.

Recommendations

1. After comparing the current student feedback form to the Reappointment and Promotions Document (p. 5 of the 2017 RPD), consulting the University of Berkeley Center for Teaching and Learning course evaluations question bank, and seeking testimony from the groups named above, the task force recommends the revised student feedback form included in Appendix A.
2. The task force continues to urge the college to move forward with the implementation of a third party vendor, specifically Evaluation Kit, in order to increase the response rate of the end-of-semester feedback process. In addition, Evaluation Kit will provide easier reporting and the ability to validate the revised instrument.

3. The task force recommends that it be required for faculty to give students at least ten minutes of class time to complete the end-of-semester feedback forms. We recommend that this be done at the beginning or middle of a class period.
4. The task force recommends that faculty be encouraged to solicit mid-semester feedback in some format early in the semester but after at least one major graded assessment. A possible set of questions is included in Appendix B. If Evaluation Kit is adopted, this would be the recommended format.
5. The task force was charged with implementing a pilot of in-person mid-semester feedback and we were not able to complete this. We recommend this be negotiated with the union so a pilot can be implemented in the spring.

Appendix A

Revised Student Feedback Instructions and Questions

Your opinion is important for assessing and improving the quality of our teaching at TCNJ. The feedback will be available to faculty to assist in their instruction. For example, faculty members have used the feedback to make specific changes to their courses, such as readings and teaching strategies. Many faculty members have shared that they highly value the written comments. Your feedback will also be used in their reappointment, tenure, promotion, and 5-year reviews. The evaluations will remain anonymous and will not be shared with the instructor until after grades have been submitted for the semester. Thank you for your time and insight.

Note that the option of N/A should be selected in the case that a question does not apply in your specific course.

Open-ended Questions

1. What aspects of the instructor's behaviors and practices have been most helpful to your learning in this course?
2. What aspects of the instructor's behaviors and practices have inhibited your learning in this course?

Instructor Behaviors: These questions pertain to practices of your instructor.

My instructor...

1. Presented course content in an organized manner.
2. Encouraged student questions and participation.
3. Was respectful of differing viewpoints expressed by students.
4. Provided clear, constructive feedback.
5. Returned assignments in a timely manner.
6. Clearly explained the goals and requirements of this course.
7. Encouraged and motivated me to do my best in this course.
8. Helped develop my ability to think critically about the subject.
9. Provided equitable opportunity for me to succeed.
10. Was responsive to student needs and concerns.
11. Used methods for evaluating student work that were transparent.

Course Experience: These questions pertain to the course overall.

1. I acquired skills and/or knowledge in this course.
2. My level of interest in the subject matter prior to taking the course was...
3. My level of interest in the subject matter after taking the course is...
4. Please note the average number of hours per week doing work for this course outside of class...

Please use additional space to clarify any of your responses, or your overall impressions of the course or instructor.

Appendix B

Recommended Questions for Mid-Semester Feedback

- What helps your learning in this course?
- What hinders your learning in this course?
- What suggestions do you have to improve your learning in this course?