

MEMORANDUM

TO: CFA

FROM: Steering Committee

RE: Student Feedback

DATE: October 7th, 2020

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 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. Steering requested the Task Force to make additional revision to the preamble.

The Task Force forwarded five [recommendations](#) to Steering on December, 19th, 2019. While the second recommendation -- that the College contract with EvaluationKit, a third-party vendor with software compatible with Canvas -- has already been approved by the administration, the other four recommendations await consideration by CFA and testimony from the campus community.

More recently, the Campus Diversity Council, in its [Black Lives Matter Call to Action](#) (see item under “Curricular Changes”), has called for, “academic leadership [to] incorporate a mechanism into the faculty evaluation process whereby faculty are also reviewed on their ability to create an inclusive classroom.” Similarly, a number of faculty in the Psychology Department, with support from across campus, have called for, “revising course evaluations to include a question concerning the racial climate of the classroom to be implemented by fall 2021” (see [Commitment to Anti-Racist Action](#), item #12).

Charge

In keeping with the timeline below, Steering requests that CFA review the Student Feedback task force’s [recommendations](#) 1, 3, 4, and 5 (including appendices). In addition, Steering requests that CFA include questions (or statements) on the student feedback form to assess inclusivity and racial climate in the classroom. CFA should consult with the Campus Diversity Council and other campus experts on inclusivity, anti-racist praxis, and survey methodology.

Once CFA has completed this work, CFA should prepare a preliminary recommendation on Student Feedback and seek broad testimony from across the campus community, including, but not limited to: Student Government, Faculty Senate, and Staff Senate; Academic Leaders; the Council of Deans; the Campus Diversity Council; campus groups that represent BIPOC students and faculty or that deal with issues of power and oppression (e.g., Departments of African Americans Studies and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; recognized [“Culture and Community” student organizations](#)); Accessibility Resource Center; and the Office of Assessment.

Timeline

CFA should begin work immediately on the charge. CFA should prepare a preliminary recommendation by February 1st, 2021. CFA should then solicit campus testimony early in the spring 2021 semester, with the goal of making a final recommendation to Steering no later than March 29th, 2021.

Testimony Tier: Tier III

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. The completed preliminary recommendation should then be made available to the relevant stakeholder groups. Testimony should be solicited in the form of both written and oral feedback, as well as approval by the appropriate representative bodies.

Written feedback should take the form of a survey and/or email feedback. Oral feedback should take the form of public testimony at a meeting of the appropriate representative body or bodies (as identified by Steering). These meetings should be open to the general

public, and publicized so that individuals not represented by that group but interested in the issue may attend. Following that meeting, the representative body may, at its discretion, issue a formal response to the preliminary recommendation, which should be sent to the relevant council or committee as well as Steering. On the completion of a final recommendation, this response should accompany the final recommendation to Steering, and it should be considered as part of Steering's final review.

TCNJ Governance Processes

Step 1 – Steering issues a charge

If Steering considers the issue appropriate for Governance, it will generate a charge and assign it to the appropriate committee or council. The charge will include:

- A clearly defined statement of the issue;
- A specific action that the committee or council should undertake;
- A list of individuals or groups with which the committee should consult in the development of a preliminary recommendation;
- The testimony tier (see page 27) that the committee or council should use in presenting the preliminary recommendation to the campus community;
- A suggested timeline for completing the charge.

Copies of all charges will be cc'd to the presidents of the three representative bodies. This will notify them that Governance is undertaking a new charge. It will also give them the opportunity to request that the testimony tier (see page 24) of the charge be changed. If such a request is made, it must be made within one week of receiving the 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 page 27) 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 resubmit 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

Once Steering receives a final recommendation from a committee or council, it should consider whether or not the proper process has been followed. If it determines that the full process has been followed and that the recommendation is sound, it should approve the final recommendation and forward it to the provost.

If Steering decides that the process has not been followed, or that the recommendation is not sound, it should return the final recommendation to the appropriate committee or council and the charge should move back to Step 4.

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

The provost will consider the final recommendation and then accept it, accept it with minor revisions, accept it with major revisions, or reject it. In the case of acceptance, the final recommendation will either be sent to the next relevant individual for approval or will become policy, and will proceed to step 7.

If a final recommendation is rejected, or if changes are suggested, the provost will relay concerns and suggestions to Steering and the relevant committee or council chair. The steps listed under section X of this document – Governance Resolution – will then take place.

Step 7 – Steering notifies the Campus Community

Once an issue has been formally approved and has become policy, the provost will notify the faculty co-chair of the Steering Committee, who will in turn notify the campus community through the appropriate means. This may include email, a notification on the Governance website, and/or email to the presidents of the stakeholder representative bodies.

For a complete description of all steps and of the testimony tiers, see Governance Structures and Processes, 2019 Revision, pages 24-26