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Policy on Use of Teaching Dossiers in Faculty Evaluation & University-Wide Instrument for Student Evaluation of Teachers and Courses

Professor H.G. Murray, a member of the Provost's Advisory Committee on Faculty Evaluation and Development, was present to respond to questions concerning the Policy on Use of Teaching Dossiers in Faculty Evaluation & University-Wide Instrument for Student Evaluation of Teachers and Courses.

Senate accepted the following editorial changes to the Policy on Use of Teaching Dossiers in Faculty Evaluation and University Wide Instrument for Student Evaluation of Teachers and Courses (shown in italics):

The Use of Teaching Dossiers in Faculty Evaluation

- (2) full teaching dossiers be used only for decisions on faculty tenure and promotion and for teaching award nominations, and not *required* for annual performance appraisal or salary adjustments
- (3) the teaching dossier represents one component only of the total dossier considered by promotion and tenure committees

University Wide Instrument for Student Evaluation of Teachers and Courses

ADD:

- (7) *Data from Sections 3 and 5 of the Evaluation Form will be made available to the instructor and Chair and/or Dean for purposes of course improvement".*

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It was moved by G. Moran, seconded by S. Singh,

That Senate approve the Policy on Use of Teaching Dossiers in Faculty Evaluation and the University-Wide Instrument for Student Evaluation of Teachers and Courses as advanced by the Provost's Advisory Committee on Teaching and Learning (PACTL), detailed in Exhibit IV, Appendix 1 and 2 respectively, and incorporating the amendments (noted above).

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University-Wide Instrument for Student Evaluation of Teachers and Courses

Several Senators voiced concern, given that students will respond anonymously, that such responses can have a substantial effect on decisions concerning a person's career.

It was moved by A. Heard, seconded by T. Craven,

That Recommendation #2 of the University-Wide Instrument for Student Evaluation of Teachers and Courses (Exhibit IV, Appendix 2) be amended as follows (shown in *italics*):

The instructor will be absent from the classroom during the administration of the evaluation form; only signed forms will be employed in performance evaluations and in consideration of promotion and tenure.

Comments in favor of the amendment:

- Responding anonymously affords a dangerous lesson for students, since it affords the possibility of exercising power without responsibility; accountability should be a two-way street.
- The author of evidence gathered for specific decisions that affect the careers of faculty, such as tenure and promotion, should be known.
- The anonymous response opportunity could be treated by some students as a means to submit "hate" messages.
- the requirement that the form be signed could cause a decrease in student participation in the evaluation process
- Anonymity in small classes is difficult to ensure, in any case.
- As a compromise solution, the identify of the student could be provided on a perforated tear-off portion of the comments page, and would be removed before the information would be given to the instructor.

Comments opposing the amendment:

- The rationale for anonymity is that students will respond in an open, candid manner about their classroom experience.
- Anonymous student evaluation of teaching is the norm across North America.
- There is no evidence that anonymous evaluation forms skew the formal evaluation for promotion and tenure purposes
- Anonymity is for the protection of students; students feel the "threat of power" that exists between teacher and student; students feel greater vulnerability if required to sign the document.
- Valuable information for instructors and supervisors could be lost if a student chose to opt out of the evaluation process for fear of giving negative feedback in an imbalanced power situation.
- The information is supplementary and is directed only at the performance of the instructor; it will be provided only to the instructor for the purposes of teaching improvement.
- Deficiencies identified through this process could be unpleasant for the instructor to read but could result in positive changes in instructor's teaching performance.

Professor Hilborn suggested that the following words be added to the amendment: *The identity of students submitting forms shall not be divulged to the instructor.*"

This amendment to the amendment was accepted.

A motion to CLOSE DEBATE on the amendment was CARRIED by a 2/3 majority of Senate.

The amendment was CALLED and was DEFEATED.

With reference to Exhibit IV, Appendix 2, Recommendation 3, Dean Stokes expressed concern that if there are fewer than 5 respondents, analysis and reporting of data will be suppressed. Senate accepted Dr. Moran's suggestion that the sentence be amended to read: "If there are less than 5 respondents, analysis and reporting of data *as described in Section 5* will be suppressed."

It was confirmed that the use of the evaluation form will be required for all sections and all courses of undergraduate programs because it is a course and instructor evaluation instrument.

In response to concerns about the rating scale shown in Appendix 2, Professor Murray stated that much discussion occurred about the anchor points of the seven point evaluation scale. The individuals who reviewed the scale thought that "outstanding" was one step above "very good" and that the placement of "unsatisfactory" above "very poor" implied the latter level was worse than unsatisfactory.

Professor Coulter suggested the following editorial revisions in order to invite students to make positive and constructive criticism: the title for Section 4 of the Instructor and Course Evaluation to be amended to read: "Section 4 - Supplementary Comments *for* the Instructor", and the first sentence to be amended to read: "Please use the space below to provide supplementary written comments *for* the instructor." Dr. Moran accepted these suggestions as friendly amendments.

In addition, Senate accepted as a friendly amendment to the University-Wide Instrument for Student Evaluation of Teachers and Courses the insertion of the words "in full" in question 1 of Section 1, i.e.: "Percentage of classes attended *in full* in this course."

The Provost was asked how PACTL will evaluate the outcome of using the evaluation form and if it was intended that the form be evaluated and adjustments be made as deemed appropriate. He agreed that PACTL review the form in a year and report back to Senate. Professor Murray observed that there are many statistical analysis procedures that can be employed to evaluate the form.

Asked about the evaluation procedure of team-taught courses, Dr. Moran said that team-taught courses are evaluated by using similar forms, particularly in the Faculties of Medicine and Science. Commenting on the specificity of each question and its applicability to all courses, Dr. Moran stated that the questions are widely applicable; however, there is an option for the student to indicate that the question is not applicable.

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Motion to Postpone

Professor Baer observed that the University-Wide Instrument for Student Evaluation of Teachers and Courses and the Policy on use of Teaching Dossiers in Faculty Evaluation will affect the way in which merit assessments will be made, which in turn will affect the way in which faculty salaries are settled. He argued that it is important that a consultative process involving faculty and the Faculty Association occur with regard to the policy and instrument. It was therefore moved by D. Baer, seconded by P. Gaudet,

That discussion on the motion be postponed to the Senate meeting of October 22, 1996.

Comments in favor of the motion to postpone definitely:

- Faculty have been involved in end-of-term activities and a number of initiatives, such as mergers of faculties, are occurring simultaneously.
- Implemented details of the proposal will affect the way in which departments have operated for many years, including the use of comments as part of the evaluative process.
- There is a difference between a consultative process during the construction of a document, and that which solicits responses about a completed document.

Comments against the motion to postpone definitely:

- The Provost's Advisory Committee on Teaching and Learning (PACTL), which has representatives from every faculty, provided opportunity for feedback and consultation, including the Faculty Association; this consultation has been ongoing for one year.
- The Faculty Association has had working drafts of the documents for two months and has not responded.
- Departments or faculties can supplement the common evaluation form with their own procedures.

It was clarified that the motion to postpone definitely covered both documents (the Policy on Use of Teaching Dossiers in Faculty Evaluation and the University-Wide Instrument for Student Evaluation of Teachers and Courses).

The motion to postpone definitely was CALLED, resulted in a tie vote, and was declared DEFEATED.

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Teaching Dossiers

Asked what effective date is recommended concerning the use of the full teaching dossiers for decisions on faculty tenure and promotion, Dr. Moran advised that the required elements of the dossier are relatively straight forward and most are present in the current teaching dossier content form. Dr. Harris stated that it is hoped that by September 1997 the policy will be the standard operating procedure.

Professor Cass referred to Recommendation 2 of Appendix 1, Exhibit IV, which states that full teaching dossiers will be used only for decisions on faculty tenure and promotion and for teaching award nominations and not for annual performance appraisal or salary adjustments. He asked what can be used if dossiers cannot be used. Dr. Moran said that feedback received suggests that it would be too onerous to put together as complete dossier as desired for every annual review; therefore the requirement that it be used for an annual review was not imposed but left to the individual faculty to construct the basis of their annual review process.

With reference to Exhibit IV, Appendix 1, Page 2, Professor Coulter stated that limiting the length of course outlines to a maximum of 5 pages in the UWO Teaching Dossier could be considered an infringement of academic freedom. She contended that special circumstances in different faculties lead to long and short course outlines, depending on the nature of the course. Professor Murray stated that PACTL was concerned about keeping the teaching dossiers to a manageable length and therefore placed a limit on the number of pages available for course outlines. Dr. Harris confirmed that the intent of the page limitation is to ensure that the teaching materials supplied in the dossiers for review receive a fair assessment. She stated that it is not PACTL's intent to impose anything in terms of what faculty do in their class and the kind of course outlines constructed for that purpose. In the case of longer course outlines, certain aspects could be highlighted for the review committee's attention.

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The main motion was called and CARRIED.

D. Baer requested that his opposition be recorded in the Minutes.