Report of the University of Minnesota Senate Ad Hoc Subcommittee on the Evaluation of Instruction

June 3, 2004

1. Executive Summary

The Senate Ad Hoc Subcommittee on the Evaluation of Instruction ("the Committee") was charged in academic year 2003-2004 by the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs (SCFA) and the Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP) to investigate issues relating to evaluation of instruction at the University of Minnesota and to make recommendations for change if needed. The Committee was asked to look at eight areas: (1) adequacy of the current course evaluation instrument, (2) who should have access to evaluation results, (3) technology for administering evaluation instruments, (4) how student rating results are used, (5) peer evaluation of instruction, (6) whether the University should provide guidance on the use of evaluation results in promotion and tenure decisions, (7) inappropriate written comments on student rating forms, and (8) whether instructors should have the opportunity to respond to student rating forms. The Committee chose not to address area 5, peer evaluation of instruction.

The Committee reviewed background material on evaluation of instruction, met with relevant stakeholders at the University, and held discussions. The main conclusions and recommendations of the Committee are:

- Evaluation of instruction is necessary for effective functioning of a university and student rating forms are an essential and effective means to evaluate instruction.

- The Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) forms and process used at the University should be retained but modified to address concerns of faculty and students. Specific recommendations appear in the main body of the report.

- Every course should be evaluated every time.

- A set of core questions should be asked on every form. The core should be supplemented by an optional suite of questions from a question bank that can be hand picked by the instructor depending on particular course needs. The department or school could choose add additional questions for all courses offered in their respective domains.

- The facilities question should be dropped from the core.

- Departments should state in writing which items on student rating forms will be used to evaluate instructors. Department heads should receive results from only those items.

- Procedures for instructors giving permission to post results from the student release questions should be simplified to promote higher release rates. Student release questions should never be used for making personnel decisions.

- The pilot program of web-based student rating forms should be continued and formally evaluated before a decision is made to proceed past the pilot stage.

- Little can be done about inappropriate comments other than instructing students and providing faculty with guidance on interpreting comments.

- Students should never be required to complete rating forms nor should students be given course incentives to complete the forms. Instructors should never know which students have completed forms.

- A single Senate policy should be written to replace the current three policies.

- A University administrative official should be assigned the task of being the single source of information about evaluation of instruction.

2. Introduction

The Senate Ad Hoc Subcommittee on the Evaluation of Instruction ("the Committee") was charged in Fall 2003 by the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs (SCFA) and the Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP) to investigate issues relating to evaluation of instruction at the University of Minnesota and to make recommendations for change if needed. The full charge to the Committee appears in Appendix A. The Committee was asked to look at eight areas: (1) adequacy of the current course evaluation instrument, (2) who should have access to evaluation results, (3) technology for applying evaluation instruments, (4) how student rating results are used, (5) peer evaluation of instruction, (6) whether the University should provide guidance on the use of evaluation results in promotion and tenure decisions, (7) inappropriate written comments on student rating forms, (8) whether instructors should have the opportunity to respond to student rating forms

Members of the Committee were Ms. Jessie Daniels (Nursing), Professor William Durfee (Mechanical Engineering, Committee Chair), Ms. Gretchen Hass (Graduate Student), Professor Darwin Hendel (Educational Policy and Administration), Mr. Scott LeBlanc (Undergraduate Student), Professor Martin Sampson (Political Science), Professor Joel Weinsheimer (English), and Associate Dean Shirley Garner (Graduate School and English).

The Committee met seven times between November, 2003 and April, 2004. The Director of the Office of Measurement Services (OMS) joined the Committee at one meeting to provide an overview of how OMS processes Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) forms. Another meeting featured a presentation by a representative from the Office of the Vice Provost for Distributed Education and Instructional Technology that is coordinating a pilot program for on-line student evaluation of teaching. Members of the Committee reviewed some of the literature on evaluation of teaching, examined how selected other colleges conduct their teaching evaluation process, interviewed faculty and administrators, interviewed an attorney from the Office of the General Counsel, and met with the Academics and Services Committee of the Minnesota Student Association.

Two things became clear immediately to the Committee. First, evaluation of instruction is a broad issue with many facets and a complete and comprehensive examination of evaluation of instruction was beyond the ability of this or any other short-term committee. Second, many members of the University community have strong opinions about evaluation of teaching, and in particular about student rating forms. This report does not speak for all members of the University community whose opinions are too diverse to capture in a single document. Rather, this report simply reflects the consensus of the eight members of the committee. Should the University Senate choose to create or revise policy related to evaluation of instruction, it should be prepared for vigorous and lively debate.

To make its task manageable, the Committee chose to not address Charge #5, practices with respect to peer evaluation of instruction. Peer evaluation is an important means of evaluation and is codified in current Senate policy on evaluation. The Committee recommends that should the Senate have continuing interest in peer evaluation a separate task force be appointed to examine this issue. The Committee further recommends that the Center for Teaching and Learning Services be brought into the discussion to capitalize on its expertise in this area.

By dropping Charge #5, the Committee was able to turn its sights exclusively to student evaluation of teaching, and to further focus on student rating forms. The bulk of this report and all of the recommendations of the Committee concern student evaluation of teaching.

3. Background

3.1. Evaluation of instruction

Evaluation of instruction is an essential task for any university that has teaching and learning as one of its main goals. Information for evaluation can come from the instructor, course materials, students, course output and performance by students, faculty peers, and instructional consultants. Most universities, including the University of Minnesota have policy or regulations declaring that promotion, tenure and merit pay be based in some measure on teaching effectiveness. Most universities are committed, at least in principle, to continuous improvement of instruction and courses. There is a considerable literature on faculty evaluation[1] and institutions have evolved their own practices with variations customized to individual schools or departments. The Committee chose not to address the overall evaluation of faculty, nor to address in any comprehensive manner best practices for evaluation of faculty teaching performance, other than recognizing that comprehensive and effective faculty evaluation requires data from multiple sources and that student rating should not be the sole source of data for making personnel decisions.

3.2. Student rating

Student rating is by far the most common method for evaluation of courses and instructors at U.S. colleges and universities. Student rating data can be used for three purposes: (1) Evaluation of faculty for personnel decisions including promotion, tenure and salary increases. (2) Improving instruction. (3) Helping students to make informed selections about courses and instructors. All three purposes are appropriate for student rating, but no one rating system is effective for all three. At U.S. colleges and universities, student ratings are almost always used as part of making personnel decisions, are commonly used for improving instruction, and hardly ever used to help students with course selection as few institutions make these data available to students.

Because student rating is used in personnel decisions, the method tends to be treated with suspicion by faculty. Student rating has been extensively studied by evaluation professionals and there are over 1,500 literature and book references reporting on research related to student rating. There is certainly more research on student rating than any other form of faculty evaluation. With isolated exceptions, this research shows that student ratings are both reliable and valid, and are one of the best sources of information about instruction[2]. Some faculty, however, tend to give unwarranted importance to the few studies that have concluded for example that ratings can depend on instructor style of presentation (the “Dr. Fox effect”) or dress. It is curious that while faculty are rigorous when evaluating research in their own field, they are less so when it

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[1] See, for example, Arreola, RA, *Developing a Comprehensive Faculty Evaluation System, 2nd ed.*, Anker, Bolton MA, 2000.
[2] Appendix H has a brief reading list for those wishing an overview of research on student rating.

comes to student rating research because most faculty are not experts in this area. Thus many university web sites that handle student ratings, and many meta-analyses of the literature start out with a “myths of student rating” section.

Recommendation: The University should create a single web site devoted to the student rating system and that web site should have detailed information on the purpose and process of the system at the U, on the reliability and validity of student ratings, on interpreting student rating data, and on the uses and abuses of student rating data.[3] It is suggested that the Center for Teaching and Learning Services and the Office of Measurement Services collaborate to create this web site.

Comment: Currently, information on SET process and student rating data is scattered across several web sites. A single, comprehensive web site will eliminate confusion about where to find information and should increase faculty confidence in the validity of the SET system.

It is not the purpose of this report to review the literature on student rating. Members of the committee studied some of this literature and as a Committee were satisfied that if done properly, student rating data are useful, reliable, and valid for instructor evaluation, improving teaching and learning and student selection of courses. The Committee stresses, however, that student rating systems must be designed carefully and must be designed with the intended objective in mind.

4. Current practice at the University of Minnesota

4.1. University policy

Current practice for evaluation of teaching at the University of Minnesota is governed by three Senate policy documents. The Senate Policy on Evaluation of Teaching Contributions[4] was approved by the Senate in May, 1992. The key points of this policy are: (1) purpose is to facilitate evaluation of teaching for purposes of promotion and salary decisions, (2) set protocols for courses having no more than two instructors, (3) states that all faculty must have their teaching performance evaluated, (4) a student rating process must occur at least once a year for each course taught, (5) student rating forms must include a small set of common questions to enable uniformity and calculations of statistical norms, (6) evaluation of teaching must include peer review and student ratings, (7) student ratings must include written comments, (8) information used for evaluating teaching effectiveness for personnel decisions must remain confidential and access limited to the instructor and those responsible for decisions on promotion, tenure and salary adjustment, (9) five required student rating questions are specified.

The purpose of the current policy is to guide evaluation of teaching for promotion and tenure decisions and does not address other objectives for evaluation of instruction. Another point is that when a course has more than two instructors, the program is free to devise its own protocols for student evaluations.

[3] The University of Illinois (http://www.oir.uiuc.edu/dme/ices/) web site has particularly good information for faculty and administrators on student rating systems.
[4] Appendix B and available on-line at http://www.umn.edu/usenate/policies/stuevalpolicy.html

An associated set of procedures titled Protocols for Student Evaluation and Peer Review of Faculty Teaching Contributions[5] was approved by the Senate in April, 1993. This document defines a set of procedures for applying student rating forms, including specific language that must be on the rating form, the demographic information that must be collected, that forms must be administered at the start of a class period and during the final two weeks of instruction and without the instructor present, that data summaries be provided to the instructor and unit chair, and that chairs be provided with information summarizing research on the validity and reliability of student rating forms. The protocol goes on to discuss how peer evaluation of teaching should be conducted. Relevant comments from SCEP meetings are appended to the protocols. Prior to 1993, evaluation of teaching, and in particular student evaluation of teaching was done on an ad hoc basis throughout the University.

The Senate Policy titled Additional Questions for Inclusion on Student Evaluation Forms[6] was approved in February, 1998. This lists 10 additional questions for inclusion on the student rating forms. This policy grew from the desire that students have a need for information about instructors and courses to aid in course selection. For background on the need for these additional questions and how the questions evolved, one should read the report titled ”The Role of Student Opinion Data in Assisting Students in Making Course Selection Decisions”[7]. These 10 questions are known as the “Student Release Questions” and must appear on every student rating form. If faculty give their permission, the summary of responses to the 10 questions are posted on the OneStop web site for members of the University community, including students, to view.

The Regents regulation on Faculty Tenure[8] has sections that relate to evaluation of teaching. Section 7.11 states that effectiveness in teaching shall be one criterion used in awarding tenure. Section 7.12 states that each academic unit must have a document that describes the standard to be used in evaluating tenure candidates (known as the “7.12 statements”). Section 7a.1 states that goals and expectations regarding teaching must be established by each academic unit and Section 7a.2 states that academic units must evaluate each faculty member annually and that this review can be used for salary adjustment and faculty development.

There appear to be no other University policies or regulations that govern evaluation of teaching. The Committee urges that any member of the University interested in student evaluation of teaching for whatever reason study the relevant policy documents and their associated interpretations to understand current policy.

Recommendation: A new, single, comprehensive Senate policy should be written to replace the current three policies.

Comment: A single, comprehensive policy that details the purpose, procedure, and use for the student rating system will reduce confusion and minimize the need to interpret, both of which are excessive with the current policy.

[5] Appendix C and available on-line at http://www.umn.edu/usenate/policies/stuevalprotocols.html
[6] Appendix D and available on-line at http://www.umn.edu/usenate/policies/stuevalquestions.html
[7] Available on-line at http://www.umn.edu/usenate/scep/hendelpolicy.html
[8] Appendix E contains relevant excerpts, full regulations available on-line at www.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/FacultyTenure.html

Recommendation: A University administrative official should be assigned the task of being the single source of information for evaluation of instruction.

Comment: Currently, many instructors and department heads do not know who to turn to for information about and interpretation of Senate policy on evaluation of instruction. Information comes from many sources including OMS, CTLS, the Senate policy web page, and word of mouth. Because written policy is never completely clear, having a single contact would greatly facilitate the flow of information and enhance the quality of evaluation of instruction. When necessary, the administrative official should consult with the appropriate Senate committee on interpretation of policy.

Comment: The Committee recommends that the Provost, after consulting with the Senate Committee on Educational Policy, assign this task to a senior administrative official. In making this assignment, recognize that evaluation of instruction covers the undergraduate, graduate and professional schools at the University.

4.2. Student Evaluation of Teaching forms

As a result of the Senate policies, the current Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) process was put in place and administered for the first time in Fall Quarter 1993. On the Twin Cities campus, the Office of Measurement Services coordinates the distribution and processing of SET forms. The content of SET forms is dictated by the policy. Each semester, OMS collects, scans, and creates summary data for approximately 120,000 forms from approximately 5,000 course sections. Although the Senate policy does not dictate that OMS be used, because of the convenience, speed, and zero cost (central administration funds this section of OMS), practically all units on the Twin Cities campus take advantage of OMS to process student rating forms. The OMS web site[9] contains a wealth of information on evaluation policy, the SET process, and historical data for University-wide norms on the required questions.

SET questionnaires are administered, returned to department offices for logging, and then transmitted to OMS for processing. OMS scans the forms (OMS is one of the highest volume scan services in the country) and prepares appropriate summary reports of the numeric data that are transmitted to the instructor and department chair. If the instructor has granted permission, the class summary for the 10 student release items are posted on OneStop.[10] The original forms are returned to the instructor so that he or she can read the student comments.

OMS makes available several versions of SET forms, all of which contain the five required questions and the 10 student release questions[11]. The OMS web site has detailed information on each of the forms. Many instructors and some departments add their own questions as all OMS SET forms have space for custom questions.

4.3. SET process and use of student rating data across the University

An informal survey of selected courses, departments, and colleges at the University revealed a variety of practices related to student evaluation of instruction. By and large, most units adhere to current Senate policy, although the Committee heard isolated

[9] http://www.ucs.umn.edu/oms/setuser.html
[10] http://www1.umn.edu/tc/onestop/course-eval/
[11] SET forms C and D, the two most often used, are posted at http://www.eval.umn.edu/set.html

reports of protocol irregularities such as the instructor being present when forms were being completed, forms being completed at the end of a class period, or forms being completed with three weeks to go during the semester. Some units require that a set of supplemental core questions be added to every SET form used in department courses. Other units supplement SET forms with custom questionnaires that are processed within the department.

As expected, faculty use SET data to improve their teaching, particularly those who have added custom questions to the SET forms or who supplement standard SET forms with their own. Most units use SET numeric data as part of their promotion and tenure review process, although it is uncertain how many pay attention to cautionary notes provided by OMS with the SET data on numeric precision, the need to look at longitudinal data, and not making SET data the sole source of information for personnel decisions.

Recommendation: Every course with a University course number should be evaluated through a student rating process every time it is offered.

Comment: Current Senate policy dictates courses be rated by students once each year. Student ratings are sufficiently important that they should occur every time a course is offered.

Comment: The every course every time policy should apply to courses taught by faculty, by teaching assistants, by lecturers. If the course is offered, it is evaluated.

Comment: There may be special courses with a University course number where student rating is not appropriate, for example graduate thesis credit courses. The Senate should be reasonable in applying the every course every time policy, yet at the same time should not permit arbitrary exceptions. For example, an instructor who doesn't believe student ratings are valid should not be allowed to opt out of the every course every time policy.

Comment: The every course every time policy may need examination for courses with fewer than five students as this raises particular concerns about student anonymity and validity of data.

Comment: There should be further discussion on evaluation requirements for courses with multiple instructors. For example, if an instructor gives three lectures, should he or she be evaluated? How about instructors who give just one lecture?

Comment: Instructors should be encouraged to adopt a mid-semester course evaluation process so that the course can be improved as it is delivered. OMS has a mid-semester form used by many instructors. The Committee does not recommend that mid-semester evaluations be required.

There is a wide range of practice in the use of the comment data from SET forms. Some departments capture the comments for use in personnel decisions, others do not. Some departments allow faculty to select and include representative comments in their promotion and tenure teaching dossiers, others include every comment. Still others include none of the comment data in the evaluation.

In recognition that a broad range of practices exist and is healthy, the Committee was not in favor of policy that regulated how evaluation of teaching should be conducted in individual departments beyond the current policy of requiring that data from student rating and peer evaluation be used. The Committee did feel that department heads and personnel review committees should be informed about best practices in the use of such data for making personnel decisions. For example, judgments about instructors based entirely on score average are particularly problematic.

Recommendation: Department heads and tenure and promotion review committees should be provided with comprehensive information on the interpretation and use of student rating data in making personnel decisions, and information on practices of peer evaluation of instruction. A working group should be appointed to create this information which should be available to the entire University community through a web site.

The current SET process was created for single instructor, lecture style courses and works reasonably well in that context. For other types of courses, the current SET process is problematic. For example, clinical courses in the Academic Health Center have multiple instructors who teach for one or two weeks and then a different instructor takes over. Each week, seminar courses have different guest speakers, often non-University instructors, all coordinated by a University instructor. Some courses invite a guest lecturer for one or two sessions. Laboratory courses often have a mix of faculty members, teaching assistants and lab technicians for the instructor staff. Design courses often have multiple teams each with their own advisor. On-line courses often have no time where the entire class is physically present in one room. The Committee did not develop specific recommendations for policy and procedures for each type of course but did recognize that the evaluation process must be sufficiently flexible to accommodate every type of course taught at the University.

Recommendation: SET procedures be developed that can accommodate all of the types of courses offered at the University, but that these procedures be in line with the other recommendations offered in this report.

Comment: Developing a suite of procedures will require close cooperation with OMS to create protocol that is appropriate without undue burden on faculty, administrators, and data processing staff. Consideration should be given to how the data from these procedures is displayed in summary reports, particularly for courses with multiple instructors.

Additional recommendations on procedures appear in Section 10.

4.4. Analysis of historical SET data

The University owns a large database of SET results that goes back more than ten years. This presents an extraordinary opportunity to assess both the process that the University has developed to evaluate instruction and to assess instruction at the University itself. For example, questions about validity and reliability of the items used on the current SET form could be answered easily through standard analysis methods. Despite calls from many members of the University community over the years to do something with this valuable data, nothing has happened.

Recommendation: Resources be allocated by the University to conduct a comprehensive research study of historic SET data. The study should be directed by a member of the University community with expertise in program evaluation and carried out by OMS.

5. SET Questions

5.1. Core questions

The current core of five required SET questions are:

1. How would you rate the instructor’s overall teaching ability?
2. How would you rate the instructor’s knowledge of the subject matter?
3. How would you rate the instructor’s respect and concern for students?
4. How much would you say you learned in this course?
5. How would you rate the physical environment in which you take this class, especially the classroom facilities, including your ability to see, hear, concentrate, and participate?

Each question is scored on a one to seven scale with verbal anchors at the ends and the mid-point.

Experts recommend that a few global items be used for evaluation of faculty. Although the few items do not indicate why a faculty member received high or low scores, they are a useful summary of that faculty member’s teaching effectiveness. A small number of global items that apply to all courses can be used for comparison across the university, for tracking an instructor or course through time, or for comparing multiple sections of a course. To be useful for improvement of instruction, the core must be supplemented with a comprehensive set of additional diagnostic questions that are likely to vary from course to course depending on what the instructor wishes to learn about their teaching.

Recommendation: A set of core questions should be used to evaluate every section of every course every time it is taught and that the purpose of this core be primarily for evaluation of instructors.

Questions 1 and 4 are similar to questions used at other universities and to those recommended by experts for use in a core.

Question 2 has always returned the highest summary score when data are pooled across the University which attests to the quality of our instructors. An argument could be made that data from this question is therefore meaningless. After discussion, the Committee concluded that Question 2 had merit because: (1) it can be useful for evaluating Teaching Assistants whose mastery of subject matter may vary more than professors, and (2) it can be helpful in flagging those few instructors who really do not know or do not show that they know the material.

Question 3 was debated by the Committee which came to the conclusion that it should be kept because: (1) it makes an important statement that the University cares about how instructors treat students, (2) it can be helpful in flagging those few instructors who do not respect their students, (3) by looking at demographic subgroups such as gender and minority status, instructors or departments can investigate whether all students are being treated equally.

Recommendation: Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 be retained in the set of core questions required for every course.

Comment: The wording of Question 4 is not ideal for courses taught by multiple instructors. For these courses, Questions 1-3 would generally be administered for every instructor as well as for the course coordinator, Question 4 could then be interpreted as either what was learned from one instructor or what was learned for the whole course. The Committee suggests that the wording of Question 4 not change across course types but that instructors, through the instructions to students, can interpret the question in a manner that makes most sense for that particular course. The Committee also suggests that OMS works with a group of faculty members to create a new SET form that is appropriate for multi instructor courses.

Comment: The verbal anchor points for Question 4 should be changed. Perhaps Question 4 could be reworded so that it has the same anchors as the other required questions. Or, perhaps retain same wording with anchors similar to "not very much", "a reasonable amount", and "a lot".

Comment: Keeping the wording of Questions 1 through 4 the same means that data can continue to be compared back to 1993.

Question 5 has two purposes. Faculty had requested that a question about facilities be placed in the core because they felt that the scores on the other questions would be affected depending on where the class was taught. (The "I'm teaching in a lousy room so my scores are going to be lower" effect). The second purpose of Question 5 was to call attention to the generally poor conditions present in many of the University classrooms at the time. After some discussion, the Committee felt that neither of these reasons were sufficient to place a facilities question in the core. The research on student rating is silent on whether the quality of the room impacts teaching scores. It is somewhat out of place to have a seemingly random correlation question as part of a core set which otherwise concentrates on the instructor and the course. If an instructor felt that where the course was taught affected the score, he or she could certainly bring that up in their response to the student evaluations. The instructor is likely to be an equally good judge of facilities as the student.

While surveying students to measure the quality of teaching facilities is a valid activity for the University to conduct, it seems out of place on a survey designed primarily to evaluate faculty and to improve instruction. If the intent is to find out information about specific classrooms, the current survey is flawed because it does not ask for the room number. Placing a facility question in the core is highly problematic for courses that are delivered on-line, for laboratory or clinical courses that use a variety of facilities, and for courses where a good deal of time is spent doing fieldwork.

For these reasons the Committee felt that questions about facilities were not suited to the core but rather should be included in a bank of optional questions that individual instructors or departments could include on rating forms.

Recommendation: Question 5 should be dropped from the set of core questions.

Comment: Questions about facilities could be included in a bank of optional questions that individual instructors could choose to include on their SET form.

Comment: If Question 5 is retained either as a required or optional question, the phrase “ability to see, hear, concentrate” should be dropped as it may be interpreted by students to be asking about their abilities or disabilities.

Comment: If Question 5 is retained either as a required or optional question, the data should be linked to specific building and room numbers and the summary data by room number should be provided to the Office of Classroom Management (OCM) to help guide decisions on facilities resource allocation. OCM has used the aggregate data in the past to argue for additional classroom resources. Because the physical environment is an important part of learning, Question 5 provides valuable data that is part of being accountable to students to make sure tuition dollars are spent wisely.

Comment: If Question 5 is retained, variants should be developed for classes that use multiple rooms, for field study class, for on-line classes, and for other classes that differ from the lecture-in-one-room format.

Good psychometric survey practice requires that each point on a numeric scale have verbal anchors. The current SET form has anchors on the end points and the middle.

Recommendation: All questions on SET forms should have verbal anchors on each numeric data point.

Comment: The specific verbal anchors to use should be developed in consultation with a survey expert.

Comment: Strictly speaking, additional verbal anchors will mean that survey data from the time period after implementation should be compared to pre-implementation survey with caution.

5.2. Question bank

For purposes of improving teaching, it is important to ask a set of diagnostic questions that supplement those in the core. Each course and each instructor may have different needs making it impossible to dictate a standard set of diagnostic questions. SET form D-SR attempts to do this with a set of 22 additional items related to course improvement, but these items are somewhat arbitrary and do not apply in all situations.

A better method would be to retain a large database of questions from which instructors may pick and chose the ones most relevant to their own situation and own needs. The questions can be categorized by intent (e.g. instructor contributions, instructor attitude towards students, assignments, written material, grading, student outcomes) or by course type (on-line, clinical, laboratory, team taught, seminar). Although the question bank would be large, common combination of questions could be recommended for particular course types or particular teaching improvement needs. The intent of this system would be to allow wide flexibility in how instructors and departments choose to conduct their improvement of teaching process.

Departments could add their own core of questions required for all courses taught in their department. These questions could be used for personnel evaluation, for improvement of teaching, or for both.

The question bank method is used by the University of Illinois[12] and the University of Iowa[13]. Arreola lists a large catalog of questions and points to additional sources of validated questions[14].

The procedures for handling selection of questions from a bank and creating semi-custom questionnaires will require considerable effort and resources to develop. Modern technology, including web-based forms creation, makes this task much more manageable than ten years ago. Logistics should not be the barrier preventing the implementation of a question bank process.

Recommendation: A question bank method should be implemented for the SET process. The questions would be supplemental to the core questions, would be selected by the instructor, and would be used primarily for improving teaching. Because the supplemental questions from the question bank are to be used for improving teaching, summary results should go to the instructor only.

Comment: A working group, including staff from CTLS, should develop the question bank. Design and implementation of the question bank procedure should be handled by OMS in collaboration with the working group.

Comment: The question bank process should be designed to minimize the effort required by faculty to create custom SET forms, otherwise few faculty will use it.

Comment: Use of supplemental questions from the question bank is optional .

Comment: As with the current SET forms, provision should be made for instructors, should they choose, to add a reasonable number of custom questions that are not included in the bank.

Comment: Departments or schools should be free to require questions from the bank or from other sources to be required on all forms used in their area. These “Department Core” or “School Core” questions could be used either for evaluation of instructors or for improving teaching, courses or programs. If for the former, than summary results should go to the department. If for the latter, summary results should go to the instructor only if the results are to be used by the instructor, or to curriculum committees if the results are to be used for program improvements.

5.3. Student comments

Open-ended comments are helpful for explaining numerical ratings and for suggestions about aspects of the course that are not captured in standard questions. Comments are

[12] http://www.oir.uiuc.edu/dme/ices/
[13] http://www.uiowa.edu/~examserv/acepool.html
[14] Arreola, RA, *Developing a Comprehensive Faculty Evaluation System, 2nd ed.*, Anker, Bolton MA, 2000. Chapter 14 is a catalog of student rating items and Chapter 15 reviews commercially available student rating forms.

generally only useful for teaching improvement as few administrators have the time to review every comment from every survey form.

While current policy does not mention comments directly, the current SET forms contain a single space for comments labeled, “Please comment on this course and the instruction you received.” Comments may be somewhat richer if students were given a bit more direction, for example by splitting into a “what went well” and “what needs improving” format. The risk of having too many required open-ended comment sections is that students will be overwhelmed by the amount of work needed to complete the survey and will end up completing none of the sections.

Recommendation: All student rating forms should have spaces for two open-ended comments, and with the comments being course rather than instructor directed. The labels for the comments should be, “Describe things about the course that you found helpful”, and “What suggestions do you have for improving the course?”[15]

Comment: By directing comments towards the course, students should be less likely to make inappropriate or personal comments about the instructor.

Comment: Faculty and departments should be free to add additional open-ended questions to the required form, but these should be in addition to rather than replace the required comments.

Comment: Because the practice of using student comments for personnel decisions varies across the University, the Committee feels each department or school should develop its own practice as to how comment data is used, but the practice should be communicated to faculty.

6. *Access to data from student rating forms*

Because student rating forms have three purposes: evaluation of instructors, improvement of teaching, and guidance to help in course selection; three groups can make a legitimate case that they should have access to the data from student rating forms. Instructors need to see the results if they are to improve their teaching or if they are to respond to personnel decisions that are based on the data. Administrators, including department heads and deans, and merit, tenure and promotion review committees need access to the data to make informed decisions about instructors. Department curriculum and program committees need access to the data to improve courses and programs. Students need access to the data if the data is intended to help students select courses and instructors. For any of these purposes student rating data should not and rarely is the sole source of information.

Access to data from student rating forms is impacted by University policy and State of Minnesota Laws. The Senate Policy on Evaluation of Teaching Contribution makes it clear that information collected for personnel decisions must remain confidential to be shared only with the instructor being reviewed and with those responsible for making or contributing to the personnel decisions.

[15] These two suggestions come from Recommendation 25 in the paper on evaluation by Cashin. Cashin, WE, *Student Ratings of Teaching: Recommendations for Use”*, IDEA Paper No. 22, 1990. Available on-line at http://idea.ksu.edu/resources/Papers.html.

The following paragraphs of the report were developed after consulting with the Office of the General Counsel.

Minnesota state law weighs in through Section 13.43 of the Minnesota Statutes. Chapter 13 of the Statutes is titled “Government Data Practices” and Section 13.43 covers personnel data.[16] Personnel data is defined as any data on an individual collected because that individual is employed by the state. The statute goes on to define what constitutes public data which anyone can access. Teaching performance is not included in the definition of public data. Use of personnel data is covered under Chapter 1205 of the Minnesota Rules titled “Data Practices”, and specifically Rule 1205.0400 titled “Access to Private Data”[17] which states that private data should be made available only to the employee and to “individuals within the entity whose work assignments reasonably require access”.

Minnesota regulations therefore prohibit data which is used for personnel decisions from being released to students without the permission of the instructor. The rule is clear and is not subject to a different interpretation. At the same time, Minnesota regulations make clear that any information from student rating forms or other sources that would be useful for personnel decision can be made available to those persons and committees responsible for making or contributing to those decisions.

All data from the student rating forms must be made available to the instructor, and the instructor is free to release that information to whomever he or she chooses. This practice is currently followed by all units at the University. Units vary, however, in what data is automatically made available to department heads and to promotion and tenure review committees. Because the core questions are to be used for evaluation of faculty, summary data from those questions should be made available to department heads who in turn can release them to tenure and promotion or other committees charged with reviewing faculty performance. This is the current practice followed by OMS when it process student rating forms.

Recommendation: Only results from those questions that will be used to evaluate faculty performance should be made available to department heads. Data from questions that are to be used only for improving teaching should not be released to department heads. Data from questions that are to be used for program improvements may be released to department heads and curriculum committees. Each department or school should be free to set local standards for access to data from student rating forms.

Comment: Departments or schools can decide whether open-ended student comments will be used for evaluating instructors. If so, those comments can be made available to department heads.

Comment: This recommendation means that data flow from student rating forms will vary from department to department

[16] On-line at http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/statutes.asp. Appendix F has relevant excerpts
[17] On-line at http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/statutes.asp. Appendix G has relevant excerpts

Recommendation: Departments should develop and make available to their instructors a written policy that defines which data from student rating forms will be used for personnel decisions and which data will be made available to department heads and committees charged with reviewing instructor performance and which data will be made available to curriculum committees for improving courses and programs.

Recommendation: Faculty should always be allowed to respond to student rating results when those results are used for performance evaluation.

7. *Use of student rating data by students for course and instructor selection*

Students have an interest in making informed decisions about courses based on data from a number of sources, including student rating of courses and instructions. Current practice at the University is that instructors have the option of making the results of the 10 student release questions available to students through OneStop. The report cited in Footnote 7 should be consulted for background information on providing students with information to make informed choices and the origin of the ten student release questions and the faculty release process.

Releasing student rating results to students is an old question that periodically surfaces at this and other universities. In 1997 a bill was introduced in the Minnesota state legislature to amend Minnesota Statutes to exclude student evaluation of teaching from the definition of private data. The bill died in committee partially because of the new voluntary release process under consideration at the time by university committees.

Independent web sites such as RateMyProfessors.com have popped up to satisfy student need for information, but generally are crippled by tiny response rates leading to highly biased data. There is nothing to prevent the Minnesota Student Association from creating its own independent system of course evaluation, although the magnitude of work required to develop a comprehensive evaluation system makes this an unlikely event.

The current voluntary system of release at the University largely does not work. According to OMS less than 10% of courses have data on the web. There are two reasons for this. First, faculty are largely unaware that the release option is available, or if they are aware, faculty do not know what the process is for release. Currently, every semester OMS sends one copy of the release form in paper version to each department along with the package of summary results for the department. Some departments copy and circulate the form to all faculty, other departments are barely aware of the form's existence. The Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and the Chair of the Senate Committee on Education Policy email the release form to all instructors of 1xxx-5xxx courses, yet like many bulk emails this one tends to be ignored.

Second, faculty faced with the choice often choose not to release the questions because they don't want to make data that could be used for personnel decisions public. Others choose not to release because they believe student ratings to be neither valid nor reliable. Still others won't release unless all faculty release.

The 1997 report cited in Footnote 7, noted that by far the most important information used by students to make course selection is detailed information about the course itself including workload, exams, reading lists, and other information normally found on a good syllabus. By Senate policy, all courses are required to have a syllabus. The explosion of the web and the increase of courses using WebCT and courses with their own web site means that students have access to much more information about courses than they did in 1997. The availability of this information can reduce the need to depend on information from other sources including student rating forms.

Recommendation: To help students in making informed course selection, all courses are encouraged to create a web site that at a minimum has a syllabus posted.

Comment: Students make decisions on courses well before the semester begins. For new or significantly revised courses, it is unreasonable to expect faculty to have details of the course available at registration time. For continuing courses, however, students can find out a lot about a course by looking at the syllabus and other materials from the prior year. For courses with web sites hosted on department servers, the information from the last offering of the course typically is active for students to view. For courses on WebCT, access is more challenging because WebCT course information is only available to students enrolled in the course and WebCT course information typically is reset each semester. The Committee would encourage developing some kind of web-based information system that would make syllabi and other information from prior offerings of a courses made available to all students.

The Committee felt strongly that students have a legitimate interest in having some data from student rating forms available to them for course selection. There are two ways this could happen.

First, the current voluntary release system could be maintained, but changes made so that more faculty participate.

Recommendation: Each semester, an appropriate University administrator should send an email to every instructor who is receiving data from a course evaluation with a request to make the release questions available to students. The permission to release would be made by making a check box selection (or other simple method) on a secure web site maintained by OMS. The email would arrive just after the instructor receives the evaluation results.

Comment: Reminders each semester coupled with a very easy method to grant permission should increase the number of instructors who chose to release their data.

Recommendation: The course release information should be cataloged by course along with instructor and should have a link at the entry for the course in the on-line Course Guide

Comment: This will make it easier for students to find information about a course

Recommendation: The current set of 10 student release questions should be modified. First, the category title should be changed from “student release” to “Questions to help students make informed course selections” or some such term that makes the intent of the questions clear. Second, the set of questions should be reviewed and possibly modified to fit the specific purpose of course selection. Whenever possible, questions should refer to the course rather than to the instructor.

Comment: Developing new questions should be done in collaboration with the Academics and Services Committee of the Minnesota Student Association.

Comment: When questions are directed towards the course, more instructors are likely to permit their release.

Recommendation: Student release questions should never be used by the department for personnel decisions.

Although not stated as a recommendation, the Committee wondered how to establish a campus culture where faculty would release the data as a matter of course and that non release would be more the exception than the norm.

A second option for the Senate would be to make the results of student release questions automatically available to students without needing instructor permission. For this policy a new set of student release questions would be needed.

The Office of the General Counsel advised the Committee that this option could occur within Minnesota regulations under the following conditions: (1) the questions would be used solely for the purpose of student course selection and not used for instructor evaluation, (2) the results of the questions would not go to Department heads or to any committee or person charged with making decisions about personnel or providing input to those decisions, (3) the questions refer to the course and not the instructor.

The Committee was reluctant to make this a recommendation, but offers the option to the Senate for discussion. Should the Senate choose to proceed down this path, the new student rating questions for release should be developed in collaboration with the Academics and Services Committee of the Minnesota Student Association and should be reviewed by the Office of the General Counsel[18].

8. Web-based student rating forms

Web-based student rating forms will likely be the norm at some time in the future. There are many advantages to electronic forms including ease of entering, processing and distributing data, the complete anonymity of the student, the ability to transmit comment data, the ability of the student to complete the form any place any time, and the simplicity of creating custom rating forms tailored to the needs of a particular course. Research shows that open-ended comments on web-based forms tend to be more thoughtful and that rating data on web-based forms tends to correlate with ratings on paper-based forms.

The Vice Provost for Distributed Education and Instructional Technology is currently running a project to pilot web-based student rating. One reason for the pilot was the discovery that several units were developing on-line web forms on their own, but with

[18] At the time this report was created, Attorney Tracy Smith was the expert on Data Practices in the Office of the General Counsel.

limited attention being paid to maintaining security and student anonymity. The pilot started in Spring 2003 with three units participating for a total of 220 sections. The response rate was 63% compared to 74% for the 5013 sections completing paper forms. In Fall 2003 352 sections participated in the on-line pilot with a response rate of 60% compared to 74% for the 5095 sections completing paper forms. The response rate for on-line sections varied widely with some close to 90% and some close to 0%. In general faculty participating in the pilot were pleased with the results and some mentioned the higher quality of open-ended comments received. Some instructors provided course incentives for students to complete the forms.

The Committee applauds the pilot program for corralling the proliferation of units creating web forms on their own, but had several serious concerns. First, the lower participation rates were very troubling particularly given that some courses were offering course incentives for completing the forms. Second, the Committee wondered about students who did not have ready access to the web. Third, the Committee wondered if the set of students who complete forms on-line can be considered as an equivalent sample to the set of students who complete forms on paper.

Recommendation: Continue the pilot web program, but fully evaluate the results of the pilot before any decision is made to make web-based evaluation the norm. Issues to evaluate formally should at a minimum include: (1) understanding what drives participation rates, (2) determining if on-line ratings correlate to paper ratings, (3) understanding student and instructor opinions of on-line ratings.

Comment: The Provost for Distributed Education and Instructional Technology is encouraged to commit resources so that a proper evaluation study of the web-based pilot can be conducted. Collaboration with OMS on developing the evaluation study is encouraged. Publication of the evaluation study in the appropriate journal is encouraged as many institutions are undecided on whether to adopt on-line evaluations.

Recommendation: The Senate Committee on Educational Policy should determine when web-based student ratings are ready to proceed past the pilot stage. Before proceeding, SCEP should ensure that the concerns noted by the Committee have been addressed.

9. *Inappropriate comments*

Student rating forms with provision for open-ended comments come with the risk that some comments will be troubling, obnoxious, harassing, mean-spirited, or related to completely irrelevant factors such as what the instructor wears or their hairstyle. All instructors have probably seen one or more of these inappropriate comments at some point in their teaching careers. The Committee has been told that inappropriate comments have been particularly prevalent for female instructors.

Understanding the magnitude of the problem was a challenge that the Committee was not able to address, although members heard of individual cases. In an attempt to understand the problem quantitatively, all 121,000 student rating forms for Fall 2003 were scanned and entered into a database for a future research project to study comments. Data were unlinked from particular courses and instructors to maintain privacy, but were linked to gender of the instructor. Analyzing the data could determine (1) the prevalence of inappropriate comments, and (2) whether female instructors are more likely to receive inappropriate comments. The study can only proceed if sufficient resources are available to support the research.

Although knowing the magnitude of the problem is interesting, what matters more is what to do about inappropriate comments because even one such comment is significant to individual instructors. The Committee saw no satisfactory solution. Screening the comments before faculty viewing would require resources beyond the ability of the University to support, plus it would require either a strict definition of what to screen or trust that the screener could make the determination in the same manner that the instructor would. Punishing students who made inappropriate comments would require an unacceptable invasion of student privacy. Eliminating the open-ended comment section would deprive the instructor of a valuable source of information about their course.

Faced with this dilemma, the Committee could only turn to three rather obvious, but weak solutions.

Recommendation: The SET instructions should state that harassing comments or comments on irrelevant factors are not helpful for evaluation of instruction. These instructions should be worded in a manner that does not turn students away from the rating process.

Recommendation: Faculty should be provided with guidelines on how to process and interpret open-ended student comments, particularly those that are inappropriate.

Recommendation: Inappropriate comments should never be used by the department as data for evaluating an instructor.

The database of comments from Fall 2003 is a valuable source of information that may shed light on this problem.

Recommendation: OCM be provided with resources to conduct a research study using the database of comments.

10. Protocols for administration of student rating forms

Reliable and valid student rating data can only come about if protocols for administering the ratings are explicit. Current Senate policy defines protocols, but many instructors are unaware that rules exist.

Recommendation: In rewriting the policy, the following protocols for administering student rating forms should be made clear:

1. The course must be evaluated during the last two weeks of instruction.
2. The evaluation must occur at the beginning of the class period.
3. The instructor may give instructions and hand out the forms, but must not be present while the forms are being completed and collected. The instructor must never touch or see completed forms.
4. The forms should be collected by a student, placed in a sealed envelope, and delivered either to the data processing center (OMS on the Twin Cities campus) or to

a collection point in the department. If the latter, the department should deliver the envelopes to the data processing center without opening the envelopes.

Comment: Some departments capture the forms before they are sent to OMS to copy the comments. The Committee felt that a more appropriate path would be for all data to go to OMS first and not be viewed by either the instructor or the department until after final grades have been posted.

Comment: The logistics for data flow are considerably simplified for web-based systems.

Comment: Protocols must be modified for web-based rating forms and for courses that are delivered on-line.

Comment: Protocols must accomodate courses with multiple instructors. For example, when an instructor finishes his or her two week block, there should be an option available where students can evaluate that instructor, and two weeks later, the next instructor. At the end of the course, students could evaluate the course as a whole.

Comment: The Director of OMS has considerable insight and experience with the protocols for student rating forms and should participate in discussions on policy changes.

Recommendation: The directions for students written on the student rating forms should be modified to stress the dual purpose of the form: evaluation of instructors and improvement of teaching. The instructions should be written in a manner that will motivate students to complete the forms. The instructions should explain why demographic data is being collected.

Recommendation: Students should not be required to fill in a student rating form for any course. There should be no incentives, for example course points, given for filling in a student rating form. Instructors should never know who filled in a form and who didn't.

Comment: If filling in the form is tied in any way to course performance, the data could be biased. While it would be desirable to receive feedback from every student, in reality there is no practical way to make that happen.

Recommendation: If the question bank idea is adopted, design a completely new student rating form. Drop the current form naming (e.g. "C-SR, D-SR") and simply call it "Student Evaluation of Teaching".

Appendix A
Subcommittee Charge

October 20, 2003

Professor Will Durfee, Chair
Professor Jesse Daniels
Ms. Gretchen Haas
Professor Darwin Hendel
Mr. Scott LeBlanc
Professor Martin Sampson
Professor Joel Weinsheimer
Associate Dean Shirley Garner

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a joint Educational Policy-Faculty Affairs ad hoc subcommittee on the evaluation of instruction. The Subcommittee is requested to assess the evaluation of instruction at the University. Overall evaluation of instruction is conducted by faculty peers and includes taking into account the results of student evaluations of instruction. We ask that your assessment consist of at least the following elements:

-- Evaluate the adequacy of the current course evaluation instrument for measuring the domain of instructor factors that contribute most positively to learning and suggest remedies for identified deficiencies.

-- Who should properly be entitled to access to various aspects of the evaluation results, such as the written comments and the statistical summaries?

-- What are the appropriate uses of technology in collecting student evaluation information (e.g., web-based evaluation forms, paper forms, and so on)?

-- How are the results of the student evaluation of instruction forms used? What are the practices across different departments, colleges, and campuses? Apart from what is actually done, what are good practices with respect to the use of student evaluations of instruction? Related to the foregoing, what can the University do to assist departments in assessing the results of evaluation of instruction in appropriate ways?

-- What are the practices of different departments, colleges, and campuses with respect to peer evaluation of instruction? What should be the balance between the results of student and peer evaluation in the decision-making process about faculty members? What are good practices?

-- Should the University provide guidance to departments, colleges, and campuses on the way in which evaluation of instruction should be used in promotion and tenure decisions, annual reviews, and post-tenure review? Should the University (the Faculty Senate) recommend policy on this matter?

-- How should departments deal with inappropriate written comments directed to women instructors on student evaluation forms?

-- Should instructors have the opportunity to respond to student evaluations?

In responding to the charge, we believe the subcommittee will be provided staff support from the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost.

We would appreciate it if you could have a report to us by the end of the 2003-04 academic year.

Cordially,

John Fossum, Chair
Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs

Emily Hoover, Chair
Senate Committee on Educational Policy

cc: Professor Judith Martin, Chair, Faculty Consultative Committee
Professor Art Erdman, Vice Chair, Faculty Consultative Committee
President Robert Bruininks
Executive Vice President and Provost Christine Maziar
Interim Dean Victor Bloomfield, Graduate School
Chancellor Velmer Burton, Crookston
Chancellor Sam Schuman, Morris
Vice Provost Craig Swan
Thomas Dohm, Measurement Services
The Twin Cities Deans Council

Appendix B
Senate Policy on Evaluation of Teaching Contributions

(Available on-line at http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/policies/stuevalpolicy.html)

Policy Approved by the: University Senate May 19, 1992
Interpretation Approved by the: Educational Policy Committee March 7, 2001
Reported to: University Senate April 19, 2001

POLICY ON EVALUATION OF TEACHING CONTRIBUTIONS

PREAMBLE:

On May 14, 1992, the University Senate adopted a policy on the Evaluation of Teaching Contributions by the faculty (see addendum). The purpose of this policy is to facilitate evaluation of teaching for purposes of promotion and salary decisions, by defining what shall constitute adequate documentation for peer review of faculty teaching contributions. In the final portion of the motion approved as a policy, the Senate Committee on Educational Policy was directed to draw up and bring back to the Senate, for approval prior to implementation of this policy, [3]details of the required assessment of teaching.[2] In particular, SCEP was to propose [3]protocols for peer review [of teaching contributions], timing of assessment activities, institutional procedures for ensuring the accuracy and confidentiality of the results, procedures for administering student evaluations, and procedures for interpreting numerically scored evaluations.[2] In preparing the recommendations that follow, over the course of the fall and winter quarters, SCEP has consulted on an on-going basis with Anne Hopkins, Vice President for Arts, Sciences, and Engineering. We have also benefited from the advice of Dallis Perry and Gary Jocelyn (University Counseling Services) and Darwin Hendel (Academic Affairs).

These protocols shall apply to student evaluation of courses having no more than two instructors. Units whose curriculum features courses with more than two instructors shall develop their own procedures for student evaluation of such courses.

Our recommendations are presented along an imaginary time line, beginning with the distribution of student evaluation forms in class, and concluding with the use of these and other materials by those who within given units are charged with making recommendations on promotion, and/or merit-based salary increases related to teaching. Paragraphs 1 - 4 deal with procedures for administration and analysis of student evaluations; paragraphs 5 - 8 deal with procedures for peer review.

If this final part of the teaching evaluation policy is adopted by the Senate, we envision that the use of student evaluations as described here would begin in Fall, 1993, and the full policy will be implemented by Fall, 1994.

POLICY ON EVALUATION OF TEACHING CONTRIBUTIONS

The teaching performance of all faculty, regardless of their academic rank or tenure status, must be subject to evaluation. The frequency and intensity of this assessment will vary. Probationary faculty are already subject to an annual retention review that includes an evaluation of their teaching. All tenured faculty who wish to be considered for a salary increase based on teaching must submit for review evidence of their recent contributions to teaching, including items of information listed below for peer review (Recommendation 2). In addition, faculty to be considered for a teaching-based salary increase must submit written student evaluations for at least one section of each of the courses taught during the previous year; a more accurate assessment of a faculty member¹s overall performance would include evaluations for at least one offering of each of the courses taught by the instructor during the period since his/her last teaching-based salary review, and all offerings of a course if it was significantly modified from one quarter to another. Students must be made aware that their ratings will be used in making personnel decisions. A small number of questions common to all courses throughout the university will be used in the student evaluations of instructors. The use of common ques-tions provides one means of making judgments on teaching effectiveness university-wide, and allows calculation of statistical norms. It is important to stress that this type of information can be used with other types to identify very good instructors who deserve rewards as well as instructors who may need assistance in improving their classroom effectiveness, but does not have the resolution necessary to allow fine discrimination between instructors in intermediate categories. In addition to questions that request a numerical score, survey forms must include provisions for written comments by students.

The required evaluation of teaching for tenure and promotion decisions must have two major components, peer review and student surveys. Academic units must make provisions for peer review for faculty being considered for tenure and promotion. This is to be supplemented by information from student evaluations of all their courses, as described in Recommendation 1. Faculty peers must evaluate course objectives and syllabi, handouts, assignments and tests, theses and dissertations, and examples of graded student work in order to measure their quality and appropriateness. Peers must also assess the instructor¹s knowledge of the subject matter, contributions to departmental teaching efforts, and any other teaching contributions, such as development of new courses or innovative instructional materials, authorship of texts or laboratory manuals, or publications on discipline-specific teaching techniques. Peer review could also include assessment of student performance on certification exams (if appropriate to the discipline), survey of the extent of mentoring and participation in other activities related to instruction, or assessment of an instructor¹s classroom performance via personal visit or videotaping of the class. It is to a faculty member¹s benefit to prepare and regularly update a teaching portfolio that contains materials that will be considered during his/her evaluation.
It is essential that the information collected to evaluate teaching effectiveness for personnel decisions remain confidential. The results must be shared with the faculty member being reviewed, but general access to information on a specific instructor must be restricted to those responsible for decisions on promotion, tenure, and salary adjustments.

Interpretation by the Committee on Educational Policy: This policy applies to all instructors regardless of whether they are tenure-track/tenured, term/P&A, or adjunct faculty or hold any other kind of teaching appointment at the University.

Details of the required assessment of teaching contributions should be drawn up by SCEP and brought back to the Senate for approval prior to implementation. These details include protocols for peer review, timing of assessment activities, institutional procedures for insuring the accuracy and confidentiality of the results, procedures for administering student evaluations, and procedures for interpreting numerically scored evaluations. A trial phase-in period might be appropriate to test the workability of the procedures indicated, to gain faculty support, and to bring about an orderly transition into full operation. SCEP believes that responsibility for implementing the recommendations contained in this report rests with the Provost, Vice Presidents, deans and department heads, all of whom must clearly convey to faculty the emphasis being placed on teaching in decisions regarding promotion, tenure, and merit-pay increases.

REQUIRED SURVEY QUESTIONS

STUDENT OPINION SURVEY
The information you provide here may be used in several ways: by the instructor¹s departments and college in making personnel decisions, including salary; by the instructor as a morale-booster or word to the wise; in planning future offerings of the course; and by administrators to improve the learning environment. Checklist responses compute and make norms and comparisons possible. In addition, thoughtful written comments are very helpful and of particular interest to all concerned.

How would you rate the instructor's overall teaching ability?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Very Poor — Exceptional

How would you rate the instructor's knowledge of the subject matter?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Very Poor — Exceptional

How would you rate the instructor's respect and concern for students?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Very Poor — Exceptional

How would you rate the physical environment in which you take this class, especially the classroom facilities, including your ability to see, hear, concentrate, and participate.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Very Poor — Exceptional

How much would you say you learned in this course?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Almost Nothing — An Exceptional Amount

Appendix C
Senate Protocols for Student Evaluation and Peer Review of Faculty Teaching Contributions

(Available on-line at http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/policies/stuevalprotocols.html)

Protocols Approved by the: University Senate April 1, 1993
Administration Spring Quarter 1993
Board of Regents - no action required

PROTOCOLS FOR STUDENT EVALUATION AND PEER REVIEW OF FACULTY TEACHING CONTRIBUTIONS
PREAMBLE:

On May 14, 1992, the University Senate adopted a policy on the Evaluation of Teaching Contributions by the faculty (see addendum). The purpose of this policy is to facilitate evaluation of teaching for purposes of promotion and salary decisions, by defining what shall constitute adequate documentation for peer review of faculty teaching contributions. In the final portion of the motion approved as a policy, the Senate Committee on Educational Policy was directed to draw up and bring back to the Senate, for approval prior to implementation of this policy, "details of the required assessment of teaching." In particular, SCEP was to propose "protocols for peer review [of teaching contributions], timing of assessment activities, institutional procedures for ensuring the accuracy and confidentiality of the results, procedures for administering student evaluations, and procedures for interpreting numerically scored evaluations." In preparing the recommendations that follow, over the course of the fall and winter quarters, SCEP has consulted on an on-going basis with Anne Hopkins, Vice President for Arts, Sciences, and Engineering. We have also benefitted from the advice of Dallis Perry and Gary Jocelyn (University Counselling Services) and Darwin Hendel (Academic Affairs).

These protocols shall apply to student evaluation of courses having no more than two instructors. Units whose curriculum features courses with more than two instructors shall develop their own procedures for student evaluation of such courses.

Our recommendations are presented along an imaginary time line, beginning with the distribution of student evaluation forms in class, and concluding with the use of these and other materials by those who within given units are charged with making recommendations on promotion, and/or merit-based salary increases related to teaching. Paragraphs 1 - 4 deal with procedures for administration and analysis of student evaluations; paragraphs 5 - 8 deal with procedures for peer review.

If this final part of the teaching evaluation policy is adopted by the Senate, we envision that the use of student evaluations as described here would begin in Fall, 1993, and the full policy will be implemented by Fall, 1994.

PROTOCOLS:

Directions given on student evaluation questionnaires will include the following statement:

"Your responses to this questionnaire are important because they will be used in tenure, promotion and salary decisions for your instructor. Your thoughtful written comments are especially requested, and may help your instructor improve future course offerings. The results of this evaluation (including the evaluation forms) will not be returned to the instructor until after the final grades are submitted for this course."

The questionnaire will include the questions approved by the Senate (14 May 1992), plus space for additional items generated by the instructor or the unit. The Page 2 form will ask for information on the student's major, gpa and class year, as well as whether or not the course is in the student's major and whether the course is required or elective for the student. There will also be a request, marked optional, for information on the student's age, gender, and race or ethnicity. [Note: Information about the class size and type (lab, lecture, seminar, etc.) will be included, but this information will be compiled elsewhere.]

Administering student evaluations will be the responsibility of each instructional unit. Student evaluations used in promotion and salary decisions will be administered at the beginning of a class period, during the last two weeks of instruction for the term. The evaluations will be handed out, completed, and collected without the instructor being present. It is suggested that a student be asked to hand out and collect the forms. Once collected, evaluations will be put in a sealed envelope or box and brought to the unit office, to be logged in and sent to the appropriate data processing center.

Each campus will determine the appropriate manner of administering and evaluating student evaluation forms. To facilitate tabulation of the results of standardized questions on the student evaluation forms, each campus administration will provide the instructor and the unit chair with a summary of the data; the original questionnaires will be returned to the instructor. This summary will include appropriate statistical characterization of the responses to each question and, where a statistically meaningful data base exists, comparison to the responses for the same question on a campus, college, department, and program basis. To make comparative analysis more meaningful, there will also be comparisons on the basis of class type (e.g., large lecture, small discussion, laboratory, upper or lower division, elective, needed to meet university or major requirements). As resources permit, other types of statistical processing and comparisons may be added at the request of faculty or instructional units.

To ensure that student teaching evaluation results are used with appropriate caution, tenure-home units shall be provided with a brochure summarizing current research on the meaning and usefulness of student evaluations (including questions of reliability and validity).

By fall quarter of 1994, every tenure-home unit shall have a policy on peer review of faculty teaching efforts and contributions to teaching, both for purposes of promotion decisions and for teaching-based salary increases. In keeping with the language of the Senate policy of 14 May 1992, each unit shall determine what documentation faculty must submit for peer review, and how to evaluate theses and dissertations as well as samples of graded student work. The documentation is to be used as a basis for evaluating the faculty member's knowledge of the subject matter as well as the quality of the faculty member's instructional activities. Each unit shall determine who shall have access to the documentation for purposes of peer review, and which materials will be retained for future reference.

The documentation should reflect what each unit determines to be an appropriately cumulative record of the faculty member's contributions to the educational mission of the university, beginning with the year of the implementation of this policy. It is the responsibility of the faculty member to update the documentation regularly. It is the responsibility of the unit to retain appropriate portions of this material, including cumulative summaries of student evaluations of the faculty member's courses. Each unit shall assume responsibility for maintaining the confidentiality of commentaries or conclusions based on the contents of the documentation.

It is expected that the documentation for each faculty member should contain an appropriately cumulative listing of courses taught by the faculty member, a comprehensive syllabus for each course, and examples of exams, assignments and handouts prepared by the instructor. Units may also wish to include a listing of undergraduate and graduate students undertaking independent study under the supervision of the faculty member, information about student performance on certification exams, and a listing of other activities that pertain to the teaching mission of the unit (e.g. participation in teaching-related committee work or curriculum development, publication of textbooks or study guides, participation in programs like the Bush Faculty Development program, etc.). Finally, SCEP recommends inclusion of a one- to-two page self-assessment of the faculty member's teaching strengths and weaknesses. Faculty members have the option of adding any other materials they believe are indicative of their contributions to teaching.

This policy is not meant to exclude continued use of other mechanisms for peer review that may already be in place in academic units, such as classroom visitation.

Two years after this policy goes into effect, and periodically thereafter, both the overall implementation of the policy, and the value of its constituent elements (e.g. the standardized student evaluation mandated by the Senate in May of 1992) will be reviewed by SCEP, so as to bring to the attention of the Senate any changes that may seem needed.

COMMENT: (numbers correspond to the numbered paragraphs of the protocol)

It seems important to let students know the uses to which the evaluation forms they fill out will be put.

From SCEP minutes, February 11, 1993:
"A continued concern was the possibility that anonymity of students would be jeopardized by the use of identifying information, especially demographic information, especially in small classes. The Committee deliberated for some while on this issue. Points of view ranged from making provision of this information optional--with a warning that students in small classes might endanger the anonymity of the response if they provide the demographic information--to simply making it optional and leaving it at that, on the grounds that these are university students and no one can MAKE anyone fill out ANY of the surveys. In terms of possible subgroup analysis, validity will be dependent on the number of students who fill out the forms and who identify themselves by race/gender/age. (The real issue, as one Committee member observed, is race/ethnicity,

because in many small classes there may not be more than one or two minority students.)

"The Committee concluded, however, that these data should be requested, because the information obtained can be useful to instructors in demonstrating how different groups respond to his/her teaching--and possibly affect the teaching. The information should be sought because it can make a difference: problems with different race/gender/age groups can be identified and addressed.

"The Committee also agreed that other personal information--class year, GPA, major, and whether the class was elective or required--should be requested and NOT identified as optional, because these factors have been shown in prior research to have an effect on student evaluations.

"Student members of the Committee all expressed satisfaction that the privacy interests of students would be served by these proposals."

At its March 11 meeting, devoted to a consideration of reactions to the February 11 draft, the Committee noted that Measurement Services is developing a form on which demographic information would be detached before the forms are returned to the instructor. The Committee also endorsed a suggestion that Measurement Services write the program for sub-group analysis in such a way as to inhibit sub-group analysis for courses in which there are fewer than N members of a given sub-group enrolled in the course--5 seemed an appropriate number.

As was brought to our attention by those with whom SCEP consulted, studies indicate that the results of student questionnaires may be quite different if the instructor is present while the forms are being filled out.

SCEP recommends against calculation of statistical norms on a University-wide basis, because of significant differences in mission among the several campuses and collegiate units.

This addition to the February 11 draft was prompted by comments from colleagues in Psychology.

Department and college administrators should be held accountable for timely assessment of the evaluative materials assembled for each faculty member. However, for peer review of the documentation for the purpose of promotion or of teaching-related merit pay increases, the faculty in each unit should be free to decide whether they want their dean or head or chair to take responsibility for assessing the quality of teaching, on the basis of the materials, or whether they prefer that the evaluation be done by an advisory group from within the unit or college.

This paragraph draws on language in the policy adopted last year. The peer review process outlined here revolves around the evaluation of a streamlined version of what is called a teaching portfolio. In the full sense of the term, not proposed here, a teaching portfolio "goes beyond traditional quantitative teaching evaluations to capture the uniqueness of individual efforts. Teaching portfolios prompt reflective practice and, when made public in the company of other portfolios, can contribute to collective standard setting . . ." (V. M. Littlefield, in Faculty Development 5 (2), Winter 1992.

Some departments and colleges already have in place, or may consider initiating, classroom visitation or analysis of videotaped classroom instruction as another method of assessing instructional quality. When used correctly, these can be very effective for improvement of instruction, but they may be less appropriate as tools for personnel decisions. We strongly encourage units that wish to make use of these forms of evaluation to take advantage of established procedures for the appropriate conduct and interpretation of these reviews. This policy does not include procedures for direct observation of classroom teaching, nor does it list classroom observation as a mandatory part of peer review.

One issue that will need looking at is whether there should be verbal anchor points for all seven numerical values for the five standardized questions, not just for the highest and lowest values.

Appendix D
Senate Policy: Additional Questions for Inclusion on Student Evaluation Forms

(Available on-line at http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/policies/stuevalquestions.html)

Policy Approved by the: University Senate - February 19, 1998
Administration March - 13, 1998
Board of Regents - no action required

Additional Questions for Inclusion on Student Evaluation Forms

The instructor provided (mark one)

A minimally structured learning environment

A moderately structured learning environment

A highly structured learning environment

The instructor emphasized (mark one)

Covering fewer course topics in depth

Balancing breadth and depth in course topics covered

Covering many course topics rather than a few

The Course Guide and course syllabus accurately described the learning activities that occurred during the term.YES/NO

Instructor stimulated me to think critically about the course material. YES/NO

Instructor set high expectations for student performance in the course. YES/NO

Instructor used a variety of teaching and learning strategies in the course. YES/NO

In-class learning activities contributed to my learning. YES/NO

Instructor provided me with timely and helpful feedback about my performance. YES/NO

I attended almost all of the class sessions during the term. YES/NO

I would take another course with this instructor. YES/NO

Graduate and professional programs may apply to the Committee on Educational Policy to use a mechanism different from the one set forth here

Appendix E
Excerpts from the University of Minnesota Tenure Code

(On-line at www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/FacultyTenure.html)

7.11 General Criteria. The basis for awarding indefinite tenure is the determination that the achievements of an individual have demonstrated the individual's potential to continue to contribute significantly to the mission of the University[3] and to its programs of teaching, research, and service over the course of the faculty member's academic career.[4] The primary[5] criteria for demonstrating this potential are effectiveness in teaching[6] and professional distinction in research,[7] outstanding discipline-related service contributions[8] will also be taken into account where they are an integral part of the mission of the academic unit. The relative importance of the criteria may vary in different academic units, but each of the criteria must be considered in every decision.[9]

7.12 Departmental Statement. Each academic unit must have a document that articulates with reasonable specificity the indices and standards which will be used to evaluate whether candidates meet the criteria of subsection 7.11. The document must comply with those standards, but should make their application more specific. Each such document is subject to review by the dean or other appropriate academic administrator and by the senior academic administrator and by the senior vice president for academic affairs. Each academic unit must provide each probationary faculty member with a copy of the document at the beginning of the probationary service.

7a.1. Goals And Expectations. The faculty of each academic unit must establish goals and expectations for all faculty members, including goals and expectations regarding teaching, scholarly productivity, and contributions to the service and outreach functions of the unit. The factors to be considered will parallel those used by the unit in the granting of tenure, but will take into account the different stages of professional development of faculty. The goals and expectations will be established in accordance with standards established by the University Senate. They can provide for flexibility, so that some faculty members can contribute more heavily to the accomplishment of one mission of the unit and others to the accomplishment of other missions. The goals and expectations shall not violate the individual faculty member's academic freedom in instruction or in the selection of topics or methods for research. They shall include reasonable indices of acceptable performance in each of the areas (e.g., teaching contributions and evaluations, scholarly productivity, service, governance and outreach activities). The dean reviews the goals and expectations of each unit and may request changes to meet the standards of the University and of the collegiate unit.

7a.2. Annual Review. Each academic unit, through its merit review process (established in accordance with the standards adopted by the senate), annually reviews with each faculty member the performance of that faculty member in light of the goals and expectations of the academic unit established under section 7a.1. This review is used for salary adjustment and faculty development. The faculty member will be advised of the evaluation and, if appropriate, of any steps that should be taken to improve performance and will be provided assistance in that effort. <*subsection continues…*>

Appendix F
Section 13.43 of Minnesota Statutes

13.43 Personnel data.

Subdivision 1. Definition. As used in this section, "personnel data" means data on individuals collected because the individual is or was an employee of or an applicant for employment by, performs services on a voluntary basis for, or acts as an independent contractor with a state agency, statewide system or political subdivision or is a member of or an applicant for an advisory board or commission. Personnel data includes data submitted by an employee to a government entity as part of an organized self-evaluation effort by the government entity to request suggestions from all employees on ways to cut costs, make government more efficient, or improve the operation of government. An employee who is identified in a suggestion shall have access to all data in the suggestion except the identity of the employee making the suggestion.

Subd. 2. Public data. (a) Except for employees described in subdivision 5, the following personnel data on current and former employees, volunteers, and independent contractors of a state agency, statewide system, or political subdivision and members of advisory boards or commissions is public:

(1) name; employee identification number, which must not be the employee's social security number; actual gross salary; salary range; contract fees; actual gross pension; the value and nature of employer paid fringe benefits; and the basis for and the amount of any added remuneration, including expense reimbursement, in addition to salary;

(2) job title and bargaining unit; job description; education and training background; and previous work experience;

(3) date of first and last employment;

(4) the existence and status of any complaints or charges against the employee, regardless of whether the complaint or charge resulted in a disciplinary action;

(5) the final disposition of any disciplinary action together with the specific reasons for the action and data documenting the basis of the action, excluding data that would identify confidential sources who are employees of the public body;

(6) the terms of any agreement settling any dispute arising out of an employment relationship, including a buyout agreement as defined in section 123B.143, subdivision 2, paragraph (a); except that the agreement must include specific reasons for the agreement if it involves the payment of more than $10,000 of public money;

(7) work location; a work telephone number; badge number; and honors and awards received; and

(8) payroll time sheets or other comparable data that are only used to account for employee's work time for payroll purposes, except to the extent that release of time sheet data would reveal the employee's reasons for the use of sick or other medical leave or other not public data; and city and county of residence.

Appendix G
Excerpt from Minnesota Rule 1205.0400 Access to Private Data

Subp. 2. Who may see private data. Access to private data shall be available only to the following: the subject of such data, as limited by any applicable statute or federal law; individuals within the entity whose work assignments reasonably require access; entities and agencies as determined by the responsible authority who are authorized by statute, including Minnesota Statutes, section 13.05, subdivision 4, or federal law to gain access to that specific data; and entities or individuals given access by the express written direction of the data subject.

Appendix H
Brief reading list on evaluation of instruction

For those wanting a background on the research on evaluation of instruction and student rating forms, the following items are recommended.

Theall M, Abrami P, Mets L eds. *The Student Ratings Debate: Are They Valid? How Can We Best Use Them?*, New Directions For Institutional Research, Number 109. Jossey Bass, 2001. (ISBN 0-7879-5756-9)

Arreola, RA, *Developing a Comprehensive Faculty Evaluation System*, 2nd ed., Anker, Bolton MA, 2000.

The following papers are produced by The Individual Development & Educational Assessment (IDEA) Center at Kansas State University. The Center homepage is http://idea.ksu.edu/.

No. 20: Student Ratings of Teaching: A Summary of the Research, Cashin
No. 21: Defining and Evaluating College Teaching, Cashin
No. 22: Student Ratings of Teaching: Recommendations for Use, Cashin
No. 32: Student Ratings of Teaching: The Research Revisited, Cashin
No. 36 Appraising Teaching Effectiveness: Beyond Student Ratings, Hoyt and Pallett

Papers No. 22 and 32 are particularly recommended. At the time this report was written, IDEA papers were available on-line at http://idea.ksu.edu/resources/Papers.html