MEMORANDUM

TO: FIGEN MEKIK, CHAIR OF UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC SENATE
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

FROM: JOY WASHBURN, CHAIR OF FACULTY TEACHING & LEARNING CENTER ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FTLC-AC)

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATIONS ON PLATFORMS/TOOLS FOR STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

DATE: APRIL 12, 2013

CC: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

FTLC-AC Charge for 2012-2013:

Support ECS/UAS and Faculty Personnel Policies Committee in considering policy revisions concerning the use of student evaluations of teaching and learning at GVSU.

a. Create and develop more consistent evaluation tools and/or more consistent use of these evaluations across the whole University
b. Work with the Graduate Council to create and develop consistent "student evaluation" tools for graduate level courses.
c. Provide guidance to ECS/UAS on the value of standardizing the tools for and uses of student evaluations across all units.

Background Information:

Currently at GVSU, there is no standardized tool or platform used to obtain data on student evaluations of teaching and learning. Each college, department, or unit may independently select and use various methods to obtain data from students regarding evaluation of teaching and learning. Evaluations are administered by paper/pencil or online. The questions asked, in regards to teaching and learning evaluation, are not standardized or consistent. Each department, unit, and/or college may select their own questions. In addition, there is not a limit placed upon the number of questions that may be used on any given student evaluation of teaching and learning survey/questionnaire, therefore, the length of the evaluation surveys vary by department, unit, and/or college.

The FTLC-AC charge for 2012-13 included providing ECS/UAS with guidance on the value of standardizing tools for student evaluations of teaching/learning. In addition, the committee was charged to make recommendations regarding tools/platforms that could be used when students evaluate teaching and learning.

From September 2011 through April 2013, FTLC-AC members studied multiple platforms that could be used to administer student evaluations of teaching and learning on the GVSU campus. We determined that most platforms do not include recommended questions to use when students evaluate teaching/learning, the exception being the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction system ~ this system includes 18 pre-determined questions that must be used. The questions included with the IDEA system have been determined to produce reliable and valid data. However, there are platforms which would simplify the distribution of the evaluations to students as the evaluations could be distributed on Blackboard and/or have compatibility with mobile devices (smart phones or tablets). The platforms without recommended questions would need to have questions selected and entered that could be used for all courses at GVSU.

FTLC-AC Recommendation:
The committee unanimously recommends to ECS/UAS that either the Blackboard Enterprise platform or the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction System be used at GVSU in order to assess student evaluation of teaching and learning. Both have merit and are suited for use within the GVSU community.

Rationale for Recommendation:
Lack of consistency between and among the various units/departments/colleges in regards to collecting data on student evaluations of teaching and learning is confusing to students. Students have multiple evaluations to complete at the end of each term and the variances between each evaluation can be confusing, particularly since some are administered via Blackboard and others are done via pencil/paper. Use of a single process and/or instrument would benefit students as there would be a normed expectation consistent between and among courses taken by the students.

Information about the Platforms Recommended

- **Blackboard Enterprise**
  This platform does not include survey questions so decisions would still need to be made on the best questions that should be included on the evaluation survey and the maximum number of questions that should be asked (shorter questionnaires are more likely to result in a higher return rate). However, there is no extra cost associated with the Blackboard Enterprise evaluation platform as it is included with our service pack upgrade (release 10) scheduled for April 30, 2013. There is no additional staffing required because it is currently in place at GVSU. Our Blackboard Administrators are planning on moving to this tool for those departments which are currently using Blackboard for their end-of-term evaluations. They will probably pilot this platform during the Spring/Summer 2013 term with a few departments and then move all departments/units/colleges using Blackboard to obtain data on student evaluations of teaching/learning to this system. Overall, our GVSU Blackboard Administrators (Katie Clark and Jacob Romero) feel this platform will be much easier for department, faculty, and students to use then the current Blackboard end-of-term evaluation tool that was created by Jacob Romero many years ago. With our current system, the data must be extracted by one of our system analysts (Karen Burchard) and then put into Microsoft Access in order for the report data to be useable for departments and faculty. This step will no longer be necessary. We currently do not have the ability to run detailed reports that compare data against semesters, courses or other departments with our current system. The new report creation tool will be much more detailed than our current system. It will also allow for multiple reminders and mobile application options. GVSU owns the data collected via the Blackboard Enterprise platform.

- **IDEA**
  Of all the survey instruments that were investigated, IDEA is the only tool that comes with pre-packaged questions. These questions have also been tested for reliability and validity of the answers obtained. Benchmarking against six to ten other institutions using the IDEA system is available with this platform. In addition, comparative data is provided for all campuses and for campuses in the same general Carnegie classification using IDEA. Short form and long form survey instruments are available from IDEA. IDEA is already being used as an evaluation instrument in the College of Health Professions (CHP). Most faculty members in CHP use the IDEA short form (see sample copy of the IDEA short form which is attached). The evaluation questions are based on learning objectives identified by IDEA personnel as being most applicable to higher learning (although it is conceded that not all identified objectives may be relevant in every course). Additional open-ended or close-ended questions can be added to the IDEA form. Raw score and adjusted score are included in the results ~ the short form adjusts for three factors: Student motivation to take the class, regardless of who taught it; Student work habits; and Class size. Data obtained via the IDEA system

can be included in Digital Measures. IDEA can be administered in a pencil/paper format or via online delivery (each course must be ALL paper or ALL online). IDEA personnel analyze the data obtained and develop the reports which are shared with the institution, therefore, it is a reasonable assumption that IDEA owns the data obtained. The IDEA representative reports that it takes 10 business days to analyze the data gathered (turnaround time). There is a per-semester cost associated with using the IDEA system (cost of the survey instrument which is based on number of surveys made accessible to students ~ not based on number of surveys completed, processing charge per class section, and batch processing charge). Using data from the Fall 2012 semester, the IDEA representative estimates that had GVSU used this system for that term, the cost would have been approximately $41,547. Costs would vary each semester based upon number of course sections offered and number of students enrolled in each section (see attached document explaining the IDEA fee schedule).

Description of Action Needed by ECS/UAS:
Members of FTLC-AC are uncertain as to which body makes the final decision in regards to which tool or platform to use so we request that ECS/UAS members make that determination. We suspect the Provost Davis and other administrators will need to be brought into the conversation since there are annual costs associated with the IDEA system. In addition, a decision made by ECS/UAS and other appropriate personnel/administrators will assist FTLC-AC in making recommendations on potential charges for the committee in future academic years as the charges may vary dependent upon which platform is selected for use at GVSU.

Changes to the Faculty Handbook, Administrative Manual, or University Catalog:
NONE at this time

Documents Attached

1. Short Form – Student Reactions to Instruction and Courses (IDEA)
2. IDEA Fee Schedule (July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013)