Faculty Personnel Policy Committee

Memorandum

TO: Felix Ngassa, Chair, UAS/ECS
              Courtney Karasinski, Vice-Chair, UAS/ECS
FROM: Kathryn Stieler, Chair, FPPC
DATE: Friday, November 10, 2023
SUBJECT: FPPC MEMO: Faculty Fora Summary on Teaching Evaluation
CC: FPPC

Please find attached FPPC's summary of the Fall 2023 Faculty Fora Summary on Teaching Evaluation.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Stieler

Fall 2023 Faculty Fora
Summary of Teaching Evaluation

- Culture
    - What is the ecosystem of effective teaching at GV? Is the university supporting and nurturing faculty in addition to measuring them?
    - If teaching evaluations were offered formatively, new hires would learn that the culture around teaching evaluation is to improve teaching. This would quell their fear about trying new things.
    - Perhaps enforcing a standardized approach to teaching evaluation across all units/colleges would help to mitigate bias and improve culture (e.g. uniform delivery of evals, use of data, etc.).
- Peer Evaluation
    - There are advantages to evaluating each other (compels engagement, builds community, encourages collaboration).
    - A robust, multi-pronged peer evaluation system will help mitigate bias.
    - If piloting the proposed peer evaluation system is a priority, we should allocate resources and time. Asking faculty to add to their workload may discourage participation.
    - Faculty are likely better equipped than students to recognize and overcome their biases.
    - Consider how peer evaluation for T/P overlaps with annual review.
    - It increases faculty workload. What can faculty give up to add this?
    - Faculty are afraid to criticize each other, particularly if the peer observer is untenured.
    - A smaller pool of faculty may result in a small-sample bias.
    - May require faculty training to help mitigate bias.
    - Biased feedback from colleagues is damaging, particularly for minority faculty who may not have built relationships with colleagues outside of work.
    - Choosing one's own peer evaluator may create an artificial "bubble of excellence".
- Student Feedback
    - The student voice is needed, particularly for things they are able to evaluate.
    - Penn State uses a model whereby student feedback is only shared with faculty to help faculty improve their teaching (i.e. formative). By removing student data from the evaluation process, it's less work for people and the student voice is still present. Part of their system lets faculty "annotate" student feedback and it seems pretty simple to do.
    - Training may help students avoid giving biased feedback.
    - Gathering student feedback throughout the semester is advantageous (e.g. MIT).
    - Student evals do not need to be part of summative evals as long as we have robust systems where student voices are heard.

- The timing of student feedback is problematic as students are tired at the end of the semester and it is difficult to get full participation. How does one encourage/incentivize more participation in the LIFT evaluation without violating the students' privacy or influencing them with extra credit?
- Student feedback is not as helpful as it could be (LIFT questions that students are not equipped to answer or vaguely worded questions that lead to bias) and its misinterpretation is destructive.
- Some units are better trained than others at interpreting student feedback. Does the training that personnel committee members receive help to mitigate bias in interpretation?
- Bar charts may compound bias.
- Minoritized student voices may not be heard in the LIFT process.
- The numbers generated in LIFT evals been found to be meaningless, yet some units/colleges are still using this data summatively. The university needs a strong statement against using the numbers that are generated in LIFT.
- Some units do not receive a summary of LIFT data.
- Student feedback is a source of shame for some. It is emotionally difficult to take in. People in marginalized communities have felt that student feedback takes aim at their identity in a very exacting way. It is extra work for minoritized faculty to go through LIFT and redact egregious comments. Every time a faculty member must speak to this publicly, it re-traumatizes them.

- Self-Evaluation
  - Faculty need a framework for reflecting on their work.
  - Identify an important learning objective and how you are assessing it.
- Personnel Advocate
  - A trained advocate could help faculty interpret and respond to their student and peer feedback.
  - An advocate has a particular lens to detect bias and can be present in the personnel process to speak up if they witness any forms of bias.
  - An advocate could help avoid the long-lasting damage that is sometimes inflicted on faculty in the personnel process.
  - The Math Department has an effective model in place.
  - The university ombuds could play a role in the personnel process, particularly instances of teaching evaluation bias.
- Next Steps
  - Avoid changing one imperfect model for another.
  - We need to avoid reinventing the wheel, duplicating work that has already been done.
  - Charge a taskforce with examining the validity of peer-, self-and student evaluations.
  - Follow up with another survey to faculty.
  - Consider whether we need three forms of evaluation.

- o Conduct exit interviews with faculty who leave before earning tenure. [Note: These are currently being conducted and the process is being updated.]
- o Could GVSU be a leader in rethinking the evaluation process rather than following the paths of tradition?