

# STUDENT ASSESSMENT OF INSTRUCTION

## Ad Hoc Committee

Presentation to Faculty Senate | 2.29.24



## OVERVIEW

### COMMITTEE CHARGE

Faculty continue to have concerns about the usefulness of student assessment of instruction as a tool for evaluating faculty and low response rates on evaluation forms. In Spring 2023, faculty senate formed a committee and charged them with three main goals related to student evaluations: 1) increase student response rates for evaluations; 2) reduce student bias in evaluations; 3) explore the feasibility of aligning the Longwood student assessment of instruction with other current best practices in student evaluations, based on higher education research.

### PROCESS

#### Step 1

Prioritize tasks from charge



#### Step 2

Search the literature for best practices



#### Step 3

Summarize the literature & identify themes



#### Step 4

Develop evidence-based recommendations

## FINDINGS



### STUDENT EVALUATIONS DO NOT MEASURE TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS



- Research over the last 20 years does not support the validity of student evaluations as a measure of teaching effectiveness (Kreitzer & Sweet-Cushman, 2021; Uttl, 2017; Uttl, 2023)
- Students do not have an accurate understanding of what effective teaching entails (Simonson, et al., 2022)
  - Students do not consider which pedagogical choices faculty made and why, how they are implemented, and how those design choices influence the outcomes of a course
- Students do not learn more from teachers with high evaluation ratings (Uttl, 2023)

### ► EVALUATIONS ARE BIASED AGAINST WOMEN, MINORITIES, LGBTQIA+

- Men are consistently rated higher than women and are reported to have more positive characteristics (e.g., more knowledgeable, organized; Boring et al., 2016; Kreitzer & Sweet-Cushman, 2021)
  - Experiments, quasi-experiments, and simulations demonstrate these effects (e.g., Chavez & Mitchell, 2020; Esarey & Valdes, 2020; MacNeill et al., 2015)
- There is less research on minorities, LGBTQIA+, people with accents, but preliminary research suggests they receive lower ratings (Kreitzer & Sweet-Cushman, 2021)
- If evaluations are used in administrative decisions, important decisions are made based on faculty characteristics or random chance, rather than merit, and may lead to illegal discrimination (Uttl, 2023)
  - A Canadian court ruled that evaluations cannot be used in promotion and tenure decisions (Ryerson University v. Ryerson Faculty Association, 2018)

### ► EVALUATIONS ARE EASILY MANIPULATED

- Students' ratings of instructors are easily manipulated by, for example, incentives (e.g., treats), grades (Clayson et al., 2006; Lakeman et al., 2023; Sullivan et al., 2023; Uttl, 2023)
- Suggests that student evaluations may measure student satisfaction

### ► EVALUATIONS MEASURE NON-TEACHING RELATED FACTORS

- Student evaluations measure and are influenced by factors that are not related to teaching effectiveness
  - Examples: student ability, student interest and motivation, course subject, difficulty, size, faculty characteristics (Kreitzer & Sweet-Cushman, 2021; Uttl, 2023)
  - Evaluations change systematically with changes in students' expected grades (Clayson et al., 2006)

# RECOMMENDATIONS



## RECOMMENDATION #1: Stop using student evaluations for administrative purposes

- The current student evaluation form should not be used to evaluate faculty teaching effectiveness and/or make administrative decisions (promotion and tenure, raises, faculty teaching awards, etc.)
  - We want to ensure a fair, equitable, and nondiscriminatory evaluation process for all faculty
- We recommend continuing to collect feedback from students about courses (see Recommendation #2)
  - Important for compliance with certain SACSCOC standards
  - Administrators can use feedback to investigate potential issues

## RECOMMENDATION #2: Rename the form to capture student experience

- The title should accurately reflect the content of the form – student experiences in the classroom (rather than teaching or instructor effectiveness)



- **IDEAS:** Student Experience Survey, Student Feedback Form / Survey, Student Opinion Survey

## RECOMMENDATION #3: Redesign the form and evaluation processes

- A redesign could increase utility of student feedback for faculty and promote faculty development
- Step 1: Define effective teaching at Longwood, which would guide subsequent steps of the redesign
- Step 2: Redesign the form to capture the student experience with a focus on the learner
- **IDEAS:** Conduct student focus groups, shift focus in questions from the instructor to the course elements that enhance learning (e.g., student effort, course delivery, design), objective rating scales
- Step 3: Redesign the process for evaluating teaching effectiveness to focus on faculty development
- **IDEAS:** Retain current elements (e.g., observations, reflections), add new elements (e.g., new form, observations, structured reflections), training for administrators and faculty, triangulate information
- We request to extend the ad hoc committee to work to redesign the form and evaluation processes



# SUMMARY



The use of student evaluation forms is problematic; evidence that explicitly demonstrates student evaluations do not measure teaching effectiveness and are biased (e.g., Uttl 2017). We recommend ceasing the use of student evaluations for administrative decisions, renaming the form, and redesigning the form and the evaluation process with a goal of increasing utility for faculty. We request to extend the committee to complete this work. The recommended changes would align Longwood with recent trends in higher education on the use of student evaluations (e.g., American Sociological Association, 2019; McMurtie, 2024; TEval; Ryerson University, 2018).

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