



University Senate  
Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee (FPAC)

**Response to Charge S-1104 to the Instruction, Curricula, and Advising Committee (ICAC)  
on Online Teaching Evaluations, and Best Practices in Evaluation of Teaching  
Performance**

**A. Charge to ICAC and FPAC**

*S-1104: Investigate best practices in the evaluation of teaching performance, in particular addressing the question of whether paper or online evaluation formats should be used and whether any appropriate safeguards can be put in place to make the use of whatever format or formats might be employed more efficient and accurate. Obtain data relating to changes in response rates and average evaluations since the adoption of online teaching evaluations. Respond to Senate Executive Committee by January 2012. [Note: Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee to review and comment on the ICAC report on this charge before it is docketed for Senate action.]*

**B. Procedure**

The report by ICAC was circulated to the membership by e-mail, along with a draft of this report. Discussion and voting was conducted by e-mail.

**C. Discussion and Recommendations**

The reason that the FPAC is asked to comment on this charge is that, contrary to the originally stated purpose, these evaluations have been used increasingly in promotion decisions with tenured and tenure-track faculty and in reappointment decisions for part-time and other non-tenure-track faculty.

The FPAC endorses the report and recommendations of the ICAC report and notes that the recommendations of the report on Charge S-0109 *Best Practices in Assessment of Teaching*<sup>1</sup> made by the FPAC (then FAPC) in 2002 and adopted as university policy by President McCormick<sup>2</sup> are as relevant to the on-line version of the student instructional rating survey as they were to the paper version.

**The FPAC recommends to the administration to publicize them to the departments, (starting with number 2) possibly through the council of deans, once again.**

They are repeated below:

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://senate.rutgers.edu/bestprac.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://senate.rutgers.edu/rlmackmulti.html>

### **Best Practices and Recommendations (February 2002)**

The Committee makes the following recommendations, based on the practices discussed above:

1. The statement on the reverse side of the student course evaluation form that "This information is intended to be used by the instructor to modify or improve the course" should be deleted.
2. The Committee commends the process of mentoring, peer observation and peer evaluation used by the History Department-New Brunswick. We recommend that departments assign a teaching mentor to every first year untenured faculty member in consultation with that faculty member. Mentoring activities may include meeting periodically to discuss teaching, visiting each other's classes, co-teaching courses, reviewing instructional materials, and other aspects of teaching and student advising. We recommend that all departments conduct, taking steps to ensure that there are consistent guidelines and procedures for this process.
3. Departments should encourage faculty to develop a teaching portfolio for use in evaluations for reappointment, promotion and tenure.
  - a. Written comments from students can be included in the portfolio. All written student comments should be available, at least in the supplementary materials, to every level of the reappointment, promotion and tenure process.
  - b. A personal statement concerning teaching philosophy and accomplishments as well as scholarship and service should be included with the reappointment or promotion/tenure packet.
4. Each department should securely keep on file all of the information contained on the completed student course evaluation forms for at least ten years, or since an individual faculty member's last academic promotion, whichever is longer.
5. Candidates for promotion should be able to list student course evaluation scores for years prior to their last promotion, particularly to demonstrate any changes in student course evaluation scores prior to and after the last promotion.
6. The Teaching Excellence Center should be asked to maintain a database for each faculty member of student course evaluation scores and summary statistics that will be provided to the individual faculty member, the department chair, and the dean upon request.
7. The University should report to each department the distribution of raw scores for each course and instructor, as well as the mean scores, as now reported.

Since student-evaluation scores are most useful only when comparisons are made with similar types of courses, a best practice would be for each department to divide its courses into appropriate categories of comparable courses, for teaching evaluation, or comparison purposes. These divisions could include, for example, large lecture courses, laboratory courses, studio courses, seminar courses, honors courses, required courses, graduate courses, and research courses. Each department, from the distributions of raw scores provided by the University, would calculate the departmental means for each category of courses appropriate to that department. It would normalize the student course evaluation scores for each course and instructor against the appropriate departmental mean, i.e.-divide the raw scores by the appropriate departmental mean scores. The department would then use and report these normalized scores in its personnel

decisions and recommendations, as well as the raw scores for each instructor. In addition, each department might also wish to compute, use, and report the full score distributions and/or any other statistical quantities, such as grouped median, or standard deviation.

Regarding the move to the on-line environment, the FPAC, as well as the NBFC, have expressed reservations with respect to their use for personnel decisions. In particular, the inclusion in the pool of respondents of those students who do not attend lectures in large classes was considered to be a major issue. CTAAR responded to these concerns by allowing any instructor who so wishes to be rated using the paper forms provided their request is endorsed by the department. The mechanism for these exclusions is for departments to provide a notation of «paper forms» next to the number of the course on the Excel spreadsheet that CTAAR sends to departments each semester requesting confirmation of the name of the instructor before setting up the evaluation for the particular semester and to provide a letter from the chair endorsing it. CTAAR intends to provide different means for on-line and paper ratings for each department that employs both.

The FPAC is satisfied that providing the option to individual faculty to have their evaluations on paper adequately addresses most concerns. Providing different means for paper and on-line ratings within the same department may solve the systematic bias of 0.2 that appears between paper and on-line ratings but may create additional problems<sup>3</sup>. This should be evaluated by CTAAR after implementation.

#### **D. RESOLUTION**

In Support of Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee Report and Recommendations:

*Whereas, the University Senate's Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee has examined and reported on the ICAC Response to Charge S-1104; and*

*Whereas, the University Senate has reviewed the Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee's report and its recommendations, and finding those recommendations to be sound and in the best interests of Rutgers University;*

*Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Rutgers University Senate endorses the Report on charge S-1104 to the Instruction, Curricula, and Advising Committee (ICAC) on Online Teaching Evaluations, and Best Practices in Evaluation of Teaching Performance, and urges the administration to implement its recommendations.*

#### **Faculty and Personnel Affairs Committee members:**

Gould, Ann, SEBS (F), Co-Chair - *Executive Committee Liaison*

Panayotatos, Paul, GS-NB (F), Co-Chair - *Executive Committee Liaison*

Alizadeh, Farid, RBS:UNB (F)

Bagchi, Prosenjit, Engineering (F)

Boylan, Edward, FAS-N (F)

---

<sup>3</sup> As an example: if all the best rated instructors opt for one or the other then two very different means will be reported for the same department

Creese, Ian, Other Units-N (F)  
Fernandez, Vivian, Vice President for Faculty and Staff Resources (*Non-Senator*)  
Goldstein, Daniel, GS-NB (F)  
Gurfinkiel, Israel, FAS-C (F)  
Harris, John, SAS-NB (F)  
Hetling, Andrea, EJBSPPP (F)  
Hock, Karlo, PTL-NB (F)  
Isenburg, Steven, PTL-C (F)  
Janes, Harry, SEBS (F)  
Leibman, Ray, PTL-N (F)  
Midlarsky, Manus, SAS-NB (F)  
Mojaddedi, Jawid, SAS-NB (F)  
Niederman, Robert, SAS-NB (F)  
Robinson, Joanne, SON-Camden Acting Dean (A)  
Schurman, Susan, SMLR Acting Dean (A) - *Administrative Liaison*  
Simmons, Peter, Law-N (F)  
Suplee, Patricia, FAS-C (F)  
Thompson, Karen, PTL-NB (F)  
Toney-Boss, Permelia, Newark Staff  
Wagner, Mary, Pharmacy (F)