

In

From: Susan Cumings <susan.cumings@gcsu.edu>
 To: Craig Turner <craig.turner@gcsu.edu>
 Subject: discrepancies in student evaluation reports produced by
 Institutional Research

Dear Craig,

I am writing to let you know of a situation that may prove problematic to faculty assessment and will need to be addressed with a clear policy that will be enacted uniformly across departments and schools. I believe the Senate's Faculty Affairs committee should have a strong voice in this process.

It came to my attention recently that for the years preceding the implementation of electronic student evaluations, the summary information from Student Opinion Surveys available on line does not match the summary information provided on paper by Institutional Research back during those years. The raw data (number of respondents who strongly agreed, agreed, etc) is the same, but the CRN averages reported are vastly different. This means that the current, on-line system, and the older system used to produce the official paper reports up to and including Spring 2008 performed their calculations differently. Needless to say, it matters a whole lot to faculty evaluation (and hence to faculty advancement, as to faculty compensation) whether your CRN averages are 4.5s or 4.1s, 4.3s or 3.2s. To give you an example, the online system on one CRN's results I examined with the cooperation of the current Director of Institutional Research, Ed Hale, reduced some scores as follows:

Original official CRN averages: (paper printout from IR office)	On-line re-calculation of CRN averages (accessed on line through mycats/paws)
4.5	4.11
4.5	4.14
4.5	4.05
4.3	3.27 (!!)
4.2	3.94

Again, let me repeat that the raw data is the same on the two versions of the report, but to go from 4.3 to 3.2 on effectiveness of teaching methods shows a huge difference in how the raw data has been used.

As I mentioned, I alerted Ed Hale on August 31st, going over the matter by telephone and faxing him printouts for comparison.

Two needs:

1. A standard way of dealing with this, a university policy that will ensure that however this data is used, it is interpreted uniformly across campus. For example, " In the case of a discrepancy, the paper version shall be deemed the correct one for all sessions up to Spring 2008."
2. If the new online evaluation forms are calculated using a different method than the old paper ones were, chairs should be given clear instructions how to interpret that data, since apparently everyone's evaluation results stand to go plummeting down, and that should not be taken as evidence of a sudden loss of competence. The change in reported averages may not have become obvious yet, since I know student response rates on the electronic forms have been abysmally low, but eventually it will. Yet the raw results might have been consistent.

I trust Paul Jones and Ed Hale to figure out how this happened, but I strongly believe faculty senate needs to take a role in ensuring that there is no fallout for faculty members as a result of any confusion arising from this flawed and inconsistent process. I am cc'ing Paul on this, as you may have seen, and Alex Blazer, as my departmental colleague on the committee, although one who did not come to GCSU until after paper surveys had ceased to be used.

Thank you for taking this matter in hand.

Best wishes,
 Susan Cumings
 (English & Women's Studies)

Printed for Craig Turner <craig.turner@gcsu.edu>

9/16/2010