

## **Guidelines/Principles for the Use of Student Teaching Evaluations**

### **Purpose:**

Concern has been expressed from across the University as to how student evaluation of teaching is used, particularly in regard to potential over interpretation of numerical data. The purpose of these guidelines/principles is to provide some perspective and best practice in their use. The Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina requires “(1) that student evaluations and formal methods of peer review are included in teaching evaluation procedures, (2) that student evaluations are conducted at regular intervals (at least one semester each year) and on an ongoing basis.” See The UNC Policy Manual: 400.3.1.1[G] section II.c.

The goal of producing highly qualified students requires rigorous course standards and excellent teaching, and should not be compromised for the sole purpose of achieving higher teaching evaluation scores. Diversity in teaching styles should be encouraged, and each faculty member is urged to develop his or her unique teaching style that will provide the best educational experience for their students. As such, neither student teaching evaluations, nor any other form of teaching evaluation should be treated as “one size fits all.” Particularly when making personnel decisions it is important to give greater consideration to scholarship and pedagogy than numerics in the evaluation of teaching.

### **Best Practices for Use of Student Evaluations for Assessment of Teaching:**

Student evaluations of teaching performance using the ClassEval instrument offer both formative and summative feedback for the ultimate purposes of providing a better learning experience and producing high quality graduates. As part of their formative evaluation, faculty should utilize ClassEval data including student comments for making improvements in their teaching. ClassEval data should comprise only one component of a summative review process for evaluation of teaching used in personnel decisions.

For teaching evaluation reviews at the departmental level, the departmental voting faculty (DVF) will establish guidelines for interpreting the ClassEval data following the principles outlined below. Such guidelines should be developed by the DVF a minimum of one year in advance of the faculty evaluation process for which they will be used to ensure (a) that the individual being evaluated and those conducting the evaluation have a mutual understanding regarding procedures, standards and expectations, and (b) that the criteria for evaluation are consistently applied to all individuals being evaluated by a unit. Such departmental guidelines should be reviewed periodically (~3 years) or sooner if the ClassEval instrument and/or process change.

## **Principles for interpretation of ClassEval data for the purpose of personnel decisions**

1. Teaching evaluation scores are statistical data that are subject to variations due to course level, course content and difficulty, class size and composition, teaching style and student evaluation response rate. Therefore, DVF should evaluate a given instructor/course based on scores provided for that instructor/course combination from year to year in order to assess consistency and improvements made to ensure quality teaching. Individual course or instructor data are not suited to comparison to a departmental mean.
2. Numerical data from ClassEval should not be considered as absolute numbers because confidence levels vary depending on response rate. Information on analyses is available to faculty through University Planning and Analysis.
3. Faculty are encouraged to address constructive criticism provided in students' written feedback as an important part of self-improvement in teaching. The DVF and responsible administrators should recognize faculty efforts to address students' concerns and detail their innovations in teaching and course development.
4. Faculty have the right to provide a brief statement addressing ClassEval data issues such as isolated and unsubstantiated personal criticism or teaching innovations in response to ClassEval critique. Such a statement should be considered part of the "summary of student evaluations" in any assessment requiring the evaluation of teaching such as reappointment, tenure or post tenure review decisions.

## **Authority and Contact for These Guidelines**

The authority for these guidelines shall reflect shared responsibility between the Faculty Senate and the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and consultation with the University Standing Committee on the Evaluation of Teaching. Any questions about, or proposed revisions to these guidelines should be addressed to the Chair of the Faculty (919)515-2279