

Attachment B

TO: Faculty Senate

DATE: May 9, 1984

FROM: Professional Welfare Committee II: David Whillock, Chair
Hebe Mace
John Moore
Tom Nall
Bruce Payette

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHING

As we reported on March 21, the problems pointed out in the literature on student evaluation of teaching find striking parallels on our campus. The study by the 1982-83 Professional Welfare Committee II highlighted the difficulties encountered because of the lack of standardized forms, efficient procedures, or clearly stated policies. Our December 1983 questionnaire pinpointed the last as the major problem at SFASU: our faculty's greatest concern is not with student evaluation per se but with the ambiguity or absence of administrative policies about the use of evaluation results in merit, promotion, and tenure decisions.

We conclude that there are three possible courses of action:

(1) we can continue our present practices without change; (2) we can eliminate all student evaluations of teaching effectiveness; or (3) we can institute a standardized evaluation format and methodology. The first alternative seems clearly to cause more damage than benefit; the second does not seem realistically practicable, given that the impetus toward documentation in support of requests for merit, promotion, and tenure will likely continue.

We therefore recommend that a standardized, university-wide form and procedure for the student evaluation of teaching effectiveness be instituted and that its use be mandatory for all faculty. Specific recommendations for evaluation policies, procedures, and format design follow.

Evaluation Policies

(1) We recommend that the administration issue a written statement to all faculty specifying the policies on which student evaluations are based and the purposes for which they are to be used.

(2) We recommend that the administration's statement be founded on the general policy that the primary purposes of student evaluation of teaching are first to encourage faculty development, and second to assist administrators in making decision about a faculty member's professional status, in that order of priority.

(3) We further recommend that the administrative policy include the following specific statements:

(a) Results of student evaluations will be interpreted as applying only to the individual faculty member under review, and such results will be considered as valid only in the context of data accumulated over a reasonable period of time. We suggest that a "reasonable period of time" be defined as a minimum of two semesters.

(b) No procedure will be instituted which attempts to compare faculty members by rank according to evaluation scores within a single department or school. Since professional development and administrative judgments about a faculty member's status are necessarily applicable only to individuals, such comparisons would be counter-productive.

(c) A clearly defined and specified weight will be assigned to student evaluations, relative to other documentation in support of teaching, service, and research, in making decisions about faculty status.

(4) We request that Mr. Provan submit a written brief to the Faculty Senate and to the administration containing his interpretation of the rulings by the Attorney General's office concerning the Texas Open Records Act as well as a summary of court decisions relevant to all other legal questions surrounding the use of student evaluations for administrative actions and policies regarding faculty personnel status.

Assuming that Mr. Provan confirms our interpretation of the various rulings relating to the exclusion of student rating data from the Texas Open Records Act, we recommend that the administrative policy include a statement that student ratings of faculty will be regarded as private personnel documents.

Evaluation Procedures

(1) We recommend that a university standing committee be established whose responsibilities will be to decide upon specific details for the administration of student evaluation procedures, to design and monitor ongoing statistical and other analyses of the validity of resulting data, to take actions to solve any problems or complaints that may arise, and to function as liaison between the administration, the faculty, and the Student Government Association.

(2) We recommend that the first duty of this committee be to meet with representatives of the administration in order to draft mutually satisfactory statements of the policies and purposes which underlie the student evaluation process.

(3) We further recommend that the procedural details devised by the committee include the following:

(a) Specific procedures, consistent with those implemented by the President and the Vice President of Academic Affairs, to

be followed by all deans and department heads in assessing student evaluations of teaching.

(b) Guarantees that each faculty member will receive a copy of his evaluation scores, along with sufficient explanation of statistical analyses, and that appropriate care will be taken to safeguard the privacy of each individual's ratings data.

Format Design

(1) We recommend that the evaluation instrument (see attached sample) be designed in four major sections:

(a) Section 1: in addition to information about course, instruction, and semester/year, the first part of the form requests data concerning student classification, sex, age, GPA, expected grade, class size, and class type. These data identify the major variables which affect student ratings of faculty. Their purpose, therefore, is to serve not only as a guide in the assessment of completed forms but also as a foundation for subsequent validity studies conducted by the Evaluation Committee in order to determine, and make any necessary adjustments for, the specific effects of these variables on student ratings results.

(b) Section 2: the second part of the form contains ten items with a six-point rating scale ranging from "very strongly agree" to "very strongly disagree." The six-point scale permits the student a reasonable range of choices without establishing a neutral point.

The ten items, designed to identify those characteristics of teaching that are general across the university, are divided

into three topics. Questions 1 through 5 address the clarity of presentation; questions 6 and 7 deal with the instructor's conduct toward students; questions 8 through 10 concern grading and testing procedures. The first item under each topic is a general statement; those that follow are more specific. A higher inference can therefore be drawn from the first item in each set.

(c) Section 3: the third part of the form contains space for 5 items which may be added by the school, department, or individual to conform to particular characteristics and needs. The same six-point rating scale applies to these added items.

(d) Section 4: the last part of the form contains two broadly phrased questions which ask for the student's written response. The questions serve merely to give the student a point of departure for additional commentary.

(2) We recommend that the questionnaire be used during the last week of the semester before final exams, that it be distributed and collected by someone other than the instructor (who should leave the room while students complete the form), and that the completed forms be sealed in an envelope and delivered to the department chairman.

(3) Given the untested nature of the questionnaire, we strongly recommend that results not be used for personnel decisions until reliability and validity studies are completed. The first semester's use, at the very least, should be a trial run with studies to follow.

PROPOSED FORM
STUDENT EVALUATION OF CLASSROOM TEACHING
May 9, 1984

Course _____ Instructor _____ Semester/Year _____

Classification _____ Sex _____ Age _____

GPA at SFA _____ Expected grade in this class _____

Class size (circle one): 1-10 11-20 21-40 41-60 61-above

Class type (circle one): requirement elective

	very strongly agree	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree	very strongly disagree	
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	The instructor appeared well organized.
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	The instructor presented the subject matter clearly.
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	The instructor challenged students to think and to question.
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Course objectives and requirements were explained at the beginning of the semester.
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	The instructor summarized the material at the end of important topics.
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	The instructor welcomed questions from students.
7.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	The instructor was available for consultation if a student needed help.
8.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	The tests and grading procedures were fair.
9.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	The tests reflected the material covered in the course.
10.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Tests and other graded material were returned within a reasonable period of time.

What did you like about the course and the instructor?

What do you think should be changed to make the course better and the instruction more effective?