

Minutes of the University Faculty Affairs Committee
February 8, 2017

Present: Miriam Liss, Lou Martinette, Marie McAllister (secretary), Angela Pitts (chair)

Absent: Courtney Clayton, Bob Greene

Also attending: Debra Schlee (Office of Institutional Analysis and Effectiveness)

I. MINUTES

The minutes of 1/18/18 were approved.

II. STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS

Dr. Debra Schlee reported on ongoing attempts to increase return rates. Current goals include encouraging faculty to set aside a few minutes of class for evaluations (in addition to the online window), mentioning evaluations on syllabi, improving the statement that accompanies the evaluation instrument, considering whether written comments or other questions should appear first in the instrument, simplifying the report to faculty, making it easy for faculty to add questions without needing to go through Institutional Research, and publicizing evaluations through social media.

Other topics discussed included: Paper vs. electronic evaluation. Bias in student evaluations. Strategies for having students opt out rather than opt in. Whether evaluating all courses each term, as COB and COE already do, could improve returns or benefit faculty. Whether doing evaluations in class could affect student perceptions. How student evaluations can be used for outcomes assessment. Whether it is time to reexamine some of the instrument questions in light of another decade of research on student evaluations.

The committee agreed that the most urgent issue is to increase the rate of return, particularly for the sake of tenure and promotion. Thereafter it will be worth looking at the language of the instrument again in light of research. Members suggested that Institutional Analysis and Effectiveness begin gathering validated studies on student evaluation.

Dr. Scheef noted that student course evaluations appear to fall under the purview of both the UFAC and Academic Affairs.

The UFAC noted reasons to evaluate all courses each semester: COB and COE already do so. Departments with few untenured faculty offer no basis for comparison if only one or two faculty are being evaluated. Because courses are not all offered every term, tenured faculty can go years without getting feedback on certain courses. Rates of return will go up if evaluation is part of every course. The accuracy of the instrument depends heavily on a representative rate of return. Finally, institutional research will no longer have to remove tenured faculty members by hand every term.

III. OLD BUSINESS

1. COB Tenure and Promotion Procedures – Angela reports that the change to Appendix J

does not need to go through UFC according to Anand Rao. Therefore that business is concluded.

2. Compensation Study Group – Miriam reports that this committee is getting close to a workable model. She has reported our input to the committee.
3. Minority Faculty Workload – Angela reports that the President’s Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion is currently looking into this issue. We will await their next action.
4. Contingent faculty welfare – Marie volunteered to compile a list of suggestions from professional organizations, the AAUP, internal documents, and committee suggestions on how UMW might be better able to support adjunct and contingent faculty welfare in the absence of financial resources. The Committee will discuss this next meeting.