

Memorandum

To: Bruno Giberti
Academic Senate, Chair

Date: 4/1/2008

From: Andrew Schaffner
Instruction Committee, Chair

Subject: Instruction Committee Winter 2008 Quarterly Report

The Instruction Committee met five times during the Winter quarter. Our student representative attended regularly.

During this quarter we focused our attention on the issue of course evaluations. The intention of the committee was to research strategies and best practices used by other universities to assess courses and to make a recommendation to the Senate on how course evaluations may be improved at Cal Poly.

Ultimately our recommendation to the Senate and/or the Administration is to form a Task Force supported with sufficient resources to carefully address this issue. Our research indicated that many other universities who have made substantive changes to their course evaluation protocols have done so under the guidance of a dedicated Task Force consisting of administrators and faculty.

The following are issues that a Task Force will need to consider:

- To what extent can evaluations be based on student opinion versus some other measurable outcome?
- How frequently should a course be assessed?
- How will the assessment data be used? (RPT, WASC, Program Review, personal growth as an instructor, course revisions)
- Should evaluations be followed by a response from the faculty (e.g., a reflective statement)?
- Currently colleges use different evaluation questions and use the data for different means (some of which are RPT based).

- Should faculty peers play a role in course evaluation? To what extent?
- The importance of current course learning objectives.
 - Does the course meet the objectives? How is this measured?
 - How frequently must objectives be updated?
 - Is there a simpler way to update learning objectives than pushing course proposals through the curriculum committee?
- How to use program objectives (in contrast to course objectives) as part of the assessment process?
- How can we create a climate of self-assessment and continued course improvement?
- How can we support a climate of *constructive* criticism from our students?
- University wide course evaluation questions/criteria versus course specific (objective based) questions/criteria
- Technology
 - Web based
 - Ability to easily create course specific questions
 - Detailed reporting including the ability to study relationships between the questions, not just univariate summaries.

The committee has noted that many other universities are in the process of revamping their assessment strategy. While many of these universities claim that their revised evaluations focus on evaluating courses, it appears that it is very difficult to isolate the evaluation of the course and the evaluation of the instructor.