Proposed Changes to the Language Describing Administration of Course Evaluation Forms

Last year, conversations between the Development and Evaluation Committee and the Academic Council led to a suggestion that the policy for the administration of course evaluations should be changed to recommend that administrative assistants do most course evaluations. Such a process might lead to greater standardization of administration, at least within departments. This is a change from the phrasing in the current handbook, which says:

“The instrument should be given by a faculty member other than the instructor at the beginning of a class period sometime during the last third of the academic term. The faculty member administering the questionnaire should explain the importance of the questionnaire, distribute the form to the students, remain in the class while students complete the form, and return the form to the departmental office. Staff members may be used when other faculty are unavailable.”

The DEC recommends that the handbook language be changed to say:

“The course evaluation instrument should be administered by an administrative assistant. If an administrative assistant is not available, another faculty member may administer the course evaluations. Instructors must not administer their own evaluations or ask students to administer evaluations for them. Evaluations should be completed at the beginning of a class period sometime during the last third of the academic term. The person administering the questionnaire should explain the importance of the questionnaire, ask students to remain quiet while evaluations are completed, distribute the form to the students, remain in the room while students complete the form, and return the forms to the appropriate office.”

Please note that the prohibition on professors administering their own evaluations is not a change from current policy. Although about 6% of respondents to the faculty survey done by the DEC in 2004-2005 strongly disagreed with a statement that “someone other than the course instructor should administer the student evaluations of teaching,” more than three-quarters of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. (A few other respondents were neutral; no one “disagreed.”) There appears to be a general consensus in the faculty that faculty members should not administer their own evaluations, and the proposed language is consistent with that sentiment.

If you have questions or concerns about this proposal, please feel free to raise them with any current member of the DEC (i.e., Susan Cody, Heather Haas, Celia Hay, Fay Riddle, or John Tures). If you have concerns, or spot a flaw we've overlooked, we will attempt to address those issues before we present the recommendation for a vote. If no concerns are expressed, we plan to present this proposal for a vote at the next faculty meeting.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal.