Date: 3/13/2009

To: Dr. Sonya Hardin, FEC Chair

From: Faculty Academic Policy and Standards Committee:

Jeff Barto  KNES
Cheryl Brown  POLS
Lee Gray  ARCH
Chuck Hamaker  LIB
Adam Harbaugh  MDSK
Dolly King  FINN
Mehdi Miri  Chair
Patrick Moyer  PHYS
Gregory Starrett  ANTH
Ed Stokes  ECE
Yuliang Zheng  SIS
Andrew Besmer  Graduate & Professional Student Gov.
Brittany Bernado  Student Government Association

RE: CALS’s Motions on Student Evaluation of Teaching

The Faculty Academic Policy and Standards Committee (FAPSC) met on Feb. 10, 2009, to consider the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences’ (CLAS) motions related to the student evaluation of teaching. Faculty members present were Cheryl Brown, Lee Gray, Chuck Hamaker, Adam Harbaugh, Martin Kane (alternate Engineering rep), Dolly King, Mehdi Miri, and Gregory Starrett. Graduate student representative present was Andrew Besmer. Members who were not present were given the opportunity to vote via email.

The following three motions were considered:

1. The CLAS Faculty Council moves that the faculty adopt the following proposal that the university adopt the 2002 Purdue Cafeteria questions (the campus currently uses the 1994 questions) for the student evaluation of faculty form.

2. The CLAS Faculty Council moves that the Faculty allow colleges to increase the number of items on the student evaluation of faculty form.

3. The CLAS Faculty Council moves that the Faculty allow colleges to utilize an electronic course evaluation process for students evaluating faculty.

FAPSC’s Recommendations

FAPSC voted to recommend the adoption of the first motion, it voted to oppose the adoption of the second motion, and it voted to recommend the adoption of the third motion with added conditions, as explained below.
FAPSC’s Rationales

1. The adoption of CLAS’ first motion would update our teaching performance criteria collection (the CAFETERIA items) so that they are more relevant to today’s teaching methodologies and technologies. We thought that this update could only be a good thing.

2. The main objective of student evaluation of teaching is the enhancement of teaching effectiveness through student feedback. We believe that the quantity and the quality of student evaluations will decline if the number of questions students have to answer becomes burdensome. A typical undergraduate student takes about 5 classes a semester and is asked to complete 5 different evaluations in a period of one week. Asking too many questions will discourage students from thoughtful participation in the evaluation process. We believe that the current limit of 27 questions is sufficient for the assessment, evaluation, and enhancement of all components of teaching. Perhaps CLAS plans to develop a teaching enhancement process that requires more than 27 questions. If such a plan is in the work, we ask that CLAS share it with us. It may provide convincing rationale for increasing the number of questions on student evaluation of teaching.

3. While we agree that the electronic assessment of teaching is an idea whose time has come, we believe that a university-level framework should be defined for its implementation. We support CLAS’ motion with the condition that Provost, in consultation with Faculty President, appoints a task force that includes members from elected faculty and student representatives, in order to define a framework that would

a) Specify a university-level survey tool for the implementation of the electronic assessment and evaluation of teaching.

b) Ensure confidentiality and electronic security.

c) Maximize student participation.

d) Maintain the rights of the faculty to select the questions to be used in collecting teaching evaluation data at the department level.

e) Specify a time-frame for conducting the electronic assessment of teaching in order to ensure that students are not burdened during final exams.

f) Recommend a procedure for administering the electronic assessment of teaching so that it is not burdensome to course instructors.

g) Recommend procedures for departments and administrators for using this new type of evaluation in the faculty review process.

It is important to add that the task force should have the power to recommend against electronic course evaluation. Some departments on and off campus have piloted electronic evaluations already, and the task force should study their results. If the task force finds that, with electronic evaluation, student participation will suffer, or that the data will be skewed in some way, etc., it may have compelling reasons to recommend against the adoption of electronic course evaluation.