# Teaching Effectiveness Committee

**Faculty Senate Presentation**
**June 16, 2015**

**Donald Mulvaney, TEC Chair**

Teaching Effectiveness
Committee

# Presentation:

- *Review* our purpose and composition

- *Report* on our ongoing 'charges' and work

- *Project* a tentative charge / agenda for 2015-16

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**Teaching Effectiveness Committee**

# Our purpose / on-going charge:

**Teaching Effectiveness Committee**

*"The committee shall review what is currently in place in the University with respect to appropriate and reasonable teaching assignments.*

*The committee shall establish policy for the Teaching Grant-in-Aid program and review and recommend proposals for funding.*

*It shall also evaluate existing resources for teaching, provide systematic approaches to faculty evaluation, offer formal faculty development programs, and recognize excellence in teaching."*

# Our composition:

**Teaching Effectiveness Committee**

✓ <u>Faculty</u>: Thirteen faculty. Each school or college shall be represented by at least one faculty member

✓ <u>Continuing/Ex-officio</u>: Provost or designee, one member from the Instructional Technology Council, One member of the Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning

✓ <u>Undergraduates</u>: One undergraduate student nominated by the Student Government Association

✓ <u>Graduate</u>: One graduate student nominated by the Graduate Student Organization

# Our 18 members (2014-2015):

- Chair, Donald Mulvaney, College of Agriculture – 2017
- Constance Relihan, Assoc. Provost for UG Studies – Continuing
- Kathy McClelland, Instructional Technology Council – Continuing
- Diane Boyd, Dir. Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning – Continuing
- Carla Keyvanian, College of Architecture, Design, and Construction – 2015
- Jill Salisbury-Glennon, EFLT, College of Education– 2015
- Eva Jean Dubois, School of Nursing – 2015
- William Ravis, School of Pharmacy – 2015
- W. Malczycki, College of Liberal Arts – 2016
- Adit Singh, College of Engineering – 2016
- Todd Steury, School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences – 2016
- Dean Schwartz, College of Vet Med– 2016
- Karla Teel, College of Human Sciences– 2016
- John Gorden, College of Sciences and Mathematics – 2017
- Jaena Alabi, Library – 2017
- DeWayne Searcy, College of Business– 2017
- UG Student Representative:  Eddie Seay – 2015
- Graduate Student Rep:  Monica Baziotes – 2015

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# Charge and Plan of Work 2014-2015

- **Charge Category 1:**

- *Looked at our current student evaluation of teaching (SET) process, how could we determine if this process of evaluation and the instrument currently in use is effective for Auburn University?*

- *What might be some possible methods available for reducing the incidence of "NR" grades, which are the grades not reported by faculty as required at the end of the semester? (note: unfinished)*

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# Charge and Plan of Work 2014-2015

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- **Charge Category 2:** review and recommend proposals for funding for the Teaching Grant-in-Aid program and the new Departmental Award for Educational Excellence

- **Charge Category 3:** evaluate existing resources for teaching

- **Charge Category 4:** Faculty Development - provide systematic approaches to faculty evaluation, offer formal faculty development programs, and recognize excellence in teaching

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# Approach for charge 1 2014-2015

**Charge Category 1:** *student evaluation of teaching process,*

"*Designing evaluation systems that prompt more reflective, rational input would accord students enhanced respect, improve instruction, and treat faculty colleagues more fairly'*" – (Merritt, 2012)

- Merritt, Deborah J. (2012) "Bias, the Brain, and Student Evaluations of Teaching," *St. John's Law Review*: Vol. 82: Iss. 1, Article 6.   Available at: http://scholarship.law.stjohns.edu/lawreview/vol82/iss1/6
- Philip B. Stark, a professor of economics at the University of California at Berkeley and co-author of a widely read 2014 paper (www.scienceopen.com/document/vid/42e6aae5---246b--4900--8015--dc99b467b6e4?0)
- …critical of student evaluations of teaching, said he was even more against them now, given the growing body of evidence of their unreliability -- especially concerning gender bias.
- https://chronicle.com/article/Everyone-Complains-About/230885/?key=Sm97d19saStAY39qZGoQajdRbn07OE4gZHVKbS19blxWEg=change

# Approach for charge 1 2014-2015

**Charge Category 1:** *student evaluation of teaching process*

- The TEC met several meetings the past academic year and discussed this charge at almost every meeting. We sought to determine how we can objectively respond to the question.

- The committee examined literature related to these questions and solicited input from colleagues within colleges we represent. We sought comparative data from other institutions that we could use to benchmark.

  - For example, a couple of items that provided comparative insight into the low numbers we have realized and fed our discussion in the future were at:

http://cnu.edu/facultysenate/current/11.19.10/atac.pdf

www.innovateonline.info/pdf/vol2_issue6/Online_Student_Evaluations_and_Response_Rates_Reconsidered.pdf

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# Observations / Recommendations

*Charge Category 1: current student evaluation of teaching*

We encourage reinforcement of the fact that course evaluations by students are only one facet of how we evaluate teaching.  Any meaningful evaluation should take into account multiple measures of performance.

- The TEC were satisfied with the global questions currently in use although further review is recommended as we accommodate innovative teaching formats (EASL, etc); This should be a charge for 2015-2016.

- Best practice:  End-of-course evaluations (SET) should be reviewed regularly by colleges and departments to ensure that they reflect the factors that the units consider most important.

  - At a minimum, the questionnaire questions should allow for a balanced appraisal of student perceptions of an instructor's preparation, mastery of the material, and delivery.

  - All evaluations should include an opportunity for open-ended responses by students

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# Recommendations

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*Charge Category 1:  current student evaluation of teaching*

- All teaching faculty should be encouraged by Departmental and College administrators to make use of the resources within the Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning
- Faculty should be encouraged to use informal mid-term evaluations/feedback to determine whether changes are needed to improve student learning and satisfaction
- Peer observation and feedback are encouraged and are important supports to student evaluations.  A well-designed program of peer observation and timely feedback can help faculty adjust to the expectations of the department and college and assist faculty in improving delivery.
- Each college should evaluate whether its peer review program is meeting these goals and consider ways to use peer reviews to strengthen overall curricular goals

- **Charge Category 1:** *current student evaluation of teaching process*

  - *Guided by literature, the TEC suggests we may have a problem with validity of the SET and acknowledges uncertainty of it's use by faculty*

  - *The primary consistent disadvantage to online SET is the low response rate;*

    - *using reminder e-mails from instructors and messages posted on online class discussions can significantly increase response rates.*

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- **Charge Category 1:** *current student evaluation of teaching process*

  - *Evaluation scores really do not seem to change when evaluations are completed online rather than paper (literature)*

  - *Students tend to leave more comments on online evaluations compared to paper evaluations especially <u>if dissatisfied</u>.*

  - *Evaluation of online courses involves many of the same criteria applied to traditional classroom courses but the TEC suggests <span style="color:red">we examine possible criteria</span> or wording based on the online environment.*

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# Perceptions

- **Charge Category 1:** *current student evaluation of teaching process*
  - *Students (see references)*
    - *Often feel that evaluations have no effect on teacher performance, and they don't seem to know if anyone other than the instructor sees the evaluations*
    - *believe faculty and administrators don't take their evaluations seriously. Some studies have found that instructors do not view student evaluations as valuable for improving instruction and very few report making changes to their courses as a result of course evaluations.*
    - *more likely to complete course evaluations if they see value in them (e.g., understand how they are being used, believe that their opinions have an effect).*

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# Best Practices

- **Charge Category 1:** *current student evaluation of teaching process*

  - *Faculty (see references)*

    - *Should communicate the value of course evaluations, providing examples of how you have used them to improve your courses in the past. Emphasize that results are completely anonymous and confidential. Students are not identified individually and results are not available to instructors until after final exams.*

    - Periodically remind students to complete their Web-based course evaluations before the deadline for the current term.

# Response Rate  Recommendations

- **Charge Category 1:** *student evaluation of teaching process*

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVED RESPONSE RATES

The literature suggest that there are effective methods to improve response rates on end-of-course evaluations:

1) Make evaluation a part of the course (most effective)

2) Continue to send reminder notices

3) Offer a small incentives

4) Encourage faculty to value the AU Evaluate as a formative development item

5) Offer reflection or feedback as how the information is helping or being used

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- **Charge Category 2:** review and recommend proposals for funding for the Breeden Teaching Grant-in-Aid program and Departmental Award for Educational Excellence
  - Evaluated proposals in the fall (moved from spring)
    - Travel enhancement $2000
    - Research oriented $4000
  - Recommended funding ~$30 K of about ten proposals for the 2015 year

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- **Charge Category 3:** evaluate existing resources for teaching

  ➢ Regularly reviewed teaching activities around campus

  ➢ Participated in Conversations in Teaching

  ➢ Participated in iTeach program

  ➢ Participated in selection processes for Biggio Center

  ➢ Participated in ad hoc committees

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- **Charge Category 4:** Faculty Development - provide systematic approaches to faculty evaluation, offer formal faculty development programs, and recognize excellence in teaching
  - ➤ Evaluated Departmental Award For Education Excellence (now in 2nd year)
  - ➤ $30,000 Grant / Award that is administered in three yearly installments of $10,000 and used for activities that enhance teaching and learning.
    - ➤ Preproposals collected in February
    - ➤ Finalists in May
    - ➤ Review of written proposals and a departmental presentation
    - ➤ Made recommendation to administration
      - ➤ Biosystems Engineering will be formally recognized as the recipient during the faculty awards program in the fall

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- **Non-charge (but desirable) Category 5:** Advance the development of members of the Teaching Effectiveness Committee

  - Encouraged seminar and workshop attendance / participation throughout the year

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# In Conclusion:

- Teaching Effectiveness Committee had an active year
  - Significant man-hours invested in evaluation of proposals to designed to promote scholarship and best practices of teaching
  - Examined teaching evaluation process but more evaluation of the AU SET is in order
    - 2015-16 plan of work should include a comprehensive look at AU Eval/ SETs
      - survey faculty views about SETs in their current form relative to helpfulness to them, and if not, what could be done to improve SET administration and use

*Thanks* to each committee member for their commitment, dedication and hard work.

**Teaching Effectiveness Committee**

**Selected References:**

- Merritt, Deborah J. (2012) "Bias, the Brain, and Student Evaluations of Teaching," *St. John's Law Review*: Vol. 82: Iss. 1, Article 6. (Available at: http://scholarship.law.stjohns.edu/lawreview/vol82/iss1/6)

- Clayson and Haley. 2011. Are Students Telling Us the Truth? A Critical Look at Student Evaluation of Teaching, Marketing Educ. Rev. 21:101-112

- http://cnu.edu/facultysenate/current/11.19.10/atac.pdf

- http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2014/12/09/gender_bias_in_student_evaluations_professors_of_online_courses_who_present.html

- http://about.colum.edu/academic-affairs/evaluation-and-assessment/pdf/Course%20Evaluation%20Literature%20Review.pdf

- http://myevals.uncc.edu/faqs/it-possible-increase-response-rates

- https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/06/10/aaup-committee-survey-data-raise-questions-effectiveness-student-teaching.

- https://chronicle.com/article/Everyone-Complains-About/230885/?key=Sm97d19saStAY39qZGoQajdRbn07OE4gZHVKbS19blxWEg=change

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# More observations

- **Charge Category 1:** *current student evaluation of teaching process*

  Effects of allowing students access to course evaluation data:

  ✓ Students who do not have access to course evaluating ratings, rate course evaluations as more important to making a course selection than those who *do* have access. This may indicate that students think course evaluation data will be more helpful than it actually is.

  ✓ If all else is equal, a student is twice as likely to choose an instructor with "excellent" ratings over an instructor with "good" ratings; however, students are willing to select a "poor" instructor if they believe they will learn a lot from the class.

  ✓ Students will choose a highly rated course over less highly rated courses even if the workload is greater for that course than the others.

  ✓ Results are mixed on whether receiving evaluation information influences how students consequently rate the instructor. Some studies have indicated that students who receive information that an instructor was rated highly will rate that instructor highly, and vice versa.

# More Observations

- **Charge Category 1:** *current student evaluation of teaching process,*

  ✓ a student who feels strongly, either positively or negatively, about their course experience is very likely to complete an evaluation. A less passionate student may take the time to complete an in-course paper evaluation but may be less likely to respond to an e-mail request to take an electronic survey outside of class.

  ✓ Withholding access to student grades until they have completed their evaluations is technically possible, but university policy does not make course evaluations compulsory. Studies indicate punitive measures such as grade withholding are counterproductive. Students respond more favorably to positive reinforcement, open communication, and persistent messages.

  ✓ Response rates tend to increase if students are informed that their survey responses will improve the course for other students who take the course in the future. Therefore, faculty participation in improving response rates is essential.

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