UNIVERSITY of HAWAI'I® SYSTEM

Risa E. Dickson
Vice President for Academic Affairs

April 20, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council of Chancellors
Council of Chief Academic Officers
Council of Senior Student Affairs Officers
All Campus Council of Faculty Senate Chairs
UH Student Caucus

FROM: Risa Dickson
Vice President for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Please Review: Proposed Course Evaluation System Concept Paper

Course evaluation is one of an array of tools that can be utilized by instructors and departments to ensure high quality curriculum and instruction. For a culture of continuous improvement to be established and maintained, all segments of the learning community must be engaged and allowed to influence the process and outcomes. In this spirit, the Course Evaluation System ad hoc committee, a systemwide, multi-disciplinary group, was charged by the Council of Chief Academic Officers and the Vice President for Academic Affairs to explore and evaluate current issues in this area, and to propose a path forward to create a more useful and effective course evaluation system. The enclosed concept paper is the culminating document from this effort.

The University of Hawai'i System currently supports eCAFE (electronic Course and Faculty Evaluation), a voluntary online assessment system. Over the years, students and other constituent groups have expressed concerns regarding the lack of transparency around evaluation results. At the national level, there is an increasing demand for institutions to demonstrate clear accountability for student success and achievement of student learning outcomes, which has clear implications for program accreditation. These issues, among others, have precipitated the need to update the current evaluation approach of the ten UH campuses.

The enclosed concept paper proposes a new course evaluation system and includes an appendix of possible questions. It has been reviewed by the VPAA and has been sent to UHPA for consultation. The committee is now seeking additional feedback from other relevant constituent groups. Please send questions and feedback to course-eval2@lists.hawaii.edu by May 15, 2015.

Enclosures

c: Hae Okimoto, Director of Academic Technology Services
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University of Hawai'i Course Evaluation System

Concept Paper

The University supports a course evaluation program for a number of reasons. Students have a desire to provide feedback on their experiences and expect that this input will used for course improvement. Faculty want this feedback to inform their teaching practices, and program directors may want to collect information more broadly to evaluate and demonstrate the effectiveness of programs, which are in a sense a combination of individual courses. At the national level, there is an increasing demand for campuses to demonstrate accountability for student success and achievement of student learning outcomes (SLOs). These issues, among others, have precipitated the need to update the current evaluation approach of the ten UH campuses.

The current online system, eCafe, evolved from earlier paper systems developed at Mānoa and other campuses. It is suboptimal for the purposes identified above because of the degree to which it is customizable by the individual instructor for the specific section being taught. Beyond the three common questions on the form, instructors can choose from more than 400 questions. This variability means that no one set of course evaluations is truly comparable to another, even for the same course taught by the same instructor in a subsequent semester, because a standardized common set of questions is not used consistently.

The new Course Evaluation System (CES) has been the product of a system-wide and multidisciplinary committee and will be administered to all ten UH campuses by UH System ITS. Individual campuses can tailor the survey to fit their needs, but the key concept is that the CES questions will be stratified into up to four distinct tiers. For three of the four, the questions on the CES will be common, while individual faculty members will retain the ability they now have to ask section-specific questions if they wish.

1) Campus: broad questions about such things as General Education requirements or Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs),
2) College/School or Department/Program: an optional layer to address specific issues related to the missions/goals of the unit; may be useful for units with professional accreditation,
3) Course/Department/Program: questions related to student and course expectations, quality of content and instruction, accessibility of the professor in office hours, SLOs,
4) Faculty Member: section specific questions.

This will provide a transparent, consistent process to contribute to the assessment of program effectiveness and provide comparability.

Our expectation is that these evaluations will be conducted for all classes and the results subsequently shared with both the faculty member and the department chair. Only aggregated data from Tiers 1-3 will be shared with others outside the unit, including cognizant administrators. See appendix for sample questions.

APPENDIX

Sample items:

Items would be rated on a 4 point Likert Scale, with a NA (Not Applicable) option. In addition, each section could include an open ended question option.

(public) **Campus**: broad items about such things as General Education requirements or Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs), etc. [Campuses will be able to customize]

1. The classroom facility was conducive to a positive learning experience.
2. The technology utilized was conducive to a positive learning experience.
3. The course challenged me to solve complex problems, explore new areas of knowledge, and/or engage in self-directed research.
4. The course fostered respect for diverse people, cultures, and ways of knowing.

(public) **College/School**: an optional layer to address specific issues related to the missions/goals of the unit; may be useful for units with professional accreditation. [College/School to customize]

1. Grading policies were clearly stated in the course syllabus and clearly explained during the introductory class(es).
2. The course design permitted students to have meaningful interaction with the course instructor and other students in the class.
3. Faculty within the college worked as a cohesive unit to promote student success.

(public) **Course/Department/Program**: questions related to student and course expectations, quality of content and instruction, accessibility of the professor in office hours, SLOs, etc. [Departments will be able to customize]

1. The course objectives were clear.
2. The course materials were presented in a clear, organized, and effective way.
3. I was encouraged to think and demonstrate my learning.
4. The assignments aided in my learning.
5. The level of course support (e.g., technical support, access to library resources and tutoring) was adequate.
6. (For CTE programs) This class prepared me for entry into the workforce and/or success on industry-recognized credentialing exams.
7. The steps needed to enter and progress through the program were clearly stated in program materials (handbooks/websites, etc) and information sessions.
8. The amount of hands-on experience and instruction that I received in this course was sufficient to allow me to obtain proficiency with essential clinical or laboratory skills.
9. This CTE program provided sufficient support with job placement.
10. The concept of a "Hawaiian Place of Learning" that is physically and conceptually grounded in Native Hawaiian knowledge was apparent in the course.
11. The level of student interaction permitted by this online course was comparable to equivalent face-to-face courses.

(private: faculty & department chair) **Faculty Member**: section specific questions.

1. The instructor gave me feedback on exams and assignments in a timely manner.
2. When asked questions, the instructor responded in a helpful manner.
3. The instructor responded to my questions with helpful comments and suggestions.
4. I feel comfortable interacting with and asking questions of the instructor.
5. The instructor was consistently well prepared for class.
6. The instructor was able to explain concepts clearly.
7. Grading of exams, papers, and other assessment procedures used to determine the grade has been fair.
8. Overall, how would you evaluate this instructor?
9. Overall, how would you rate this course?