

The Senate of Michigan Technological University

Superseded

PROPOSAL 10-85

TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

BACKGROUND:

I. INTRODUCTION

Faculty at Michigan Technological University participate in a variety of activities in carrying out their responsibilities as members of their professions. In their roles as both creators and disseminators of knowledge, they teach, engage in scholarly activities and serve the academic community. This report addresses the improvement and the measurement of the quality of teaching at Michigan Tech; in particular, it focuses on the quality of course instruction.

The MTU Faculty Senate Committee on Teaching Effectiveness was established by unanimous vote of the Senate on November 2, 1983. The charge to the Committee was twofold:

1. to study the dimensions of effective teaching in order to enhance the quality of MTU graduates through the promotion of teaching effectiveness and
2. to develop a procedure, with Senate approval, that will ensure that teaching effectiveness be an important consideration in faculty reappointment, promotion, tenure, and salary decisions.

This committee was formed in response to concerns about teaching which are shared by the entire university community. Students are concerned because they want good teachers and they want their opinions heard. Faculty are concerned because they want to be effective teachers and they want their good teaching recognized and valued. Administrators are concerned because they want to provide quality instruction for MTU students and they want a fair method of identifying and rewarding good teachers.

Several problems came to the attention of this committee. First, there is no clearly defined source of help on campus for those faculty members who seek to improve their teaching skills. Second, teaching evaluation is not performed in a consistent, systematic manner throughout the university: 1) student evaluations are conducted irregularly using numerous, diverse rating instruments; 2) colleague evaluations of teaching which are conducted for reappointment, promotion and tenure lack consistency from department to department and are not routinely used in salary adjustment recommendations. Our proposal addresses these problems.

The Committee defines effective classroom teaching as clear communication of appropriate course content. Workable teaching effectiveness programs use evaluation information collected from more than one source and include provisions for providing help to faculty in improving their teaching skills. Students are good judges of how effectively knowledge is communicated but colleagues are better judges of appropriateness and currency of course content. A center for teaching excellence can provide guidance and practical assistance to faculty who wish to continually sharpen their teaching skills. The center is an essential component of a teaching

effectiveness program. Once the evaluations identify areas where refinement is needed, the center can help the faculty member work toward real improvement.

II. REPORT OF COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The Committee studied the literature concerning teaching effectiveness and teaching evaluation. It surveyed departments and schools at MTU to learn how much and what kind of evaluation of teaching is currently in place, and it surveyed peer institutions to determine what is being done about teaching evaluation elsewhere. The Committee also visited MTU departments to elicit faculty opinion about evaluating teaching. The detailed results of these surveys were presented to the Senate in a previous committee report (Appendix C to Senate Meeting No. 136; May 2, 1984; page 2325).

According to our survey, MTU faculty consider the preferred sources of information for evaluating teaching to be, in order of importance:

1. systematic student ratings
2. content of course syllabi and examinations
3. chairman evaluation
4. teaching improvement activities

MTU faculty indicated that an evaluation system should include input from a number of sources, that there must be flexibility in the "weight" given to teaching in arriving at personnel decisions (depending on the situation of the individual faculty member), and that an evaluation system must be taken seriously by academic administrators.

A Teaching Effectiveness Workshop conducted by Peter Seldin of Pace University was held at the Ford Forestry Center in September, 1984. The workshop was attended by faculty representatives from all academic departments and by academic administrators.

III. DISCUSSION OF PREVIOUS DRAFT PROPOSAL

The Committee prepared a draft proposal which described a very comprehensive teaching evaluation procedure and the establishment of a center for teaching excellence. That proposal was circulated to all faculty and was described fully in an article in the *Lode*. The Committee held open meetings with faculty and students for the purpose of receiving criticism and comment about the draft proposal. Most of the favorable comments concerned the development of a center for teaching excellence and the systematic student evaluation procedure. Most faculty criticism focused on the proposed colleague evaluation system, and on the projected cost (in time and dollars) of the entire proposal. In addition, faculty sought evidence that the results of a teaching evaluation system would be taken seriously by academic administrators.

Comments and criticisms made by faculty and students concerning the draft proposal have been taken into account in preparing this final proposal.

PROPOSAL

The Senate recommends that:

1. The University establish a permanent professionally staffed center for teaching excellence where individual faculty members can obtain help in developing teaching skills and

improving instruction and

2. the University adopt an equitable and standardized teaching evaluation system that will provide information for individual faculty to use in improving teaching performance and for administrators to use in making personnel decisions.

I. CENTER FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

A Center for Teaching Excellence is a professionally staffed facility which will sponsor workshops and training programs for faculty and graduate teaching assistants, as well as provide private consultation for individual faculty members. The Center for Teaching Effectiveness materials on individual faculty shall be kept confidential and will not be made available to administrators.

II. TEACHING EVALUATION SYSTEM

A. Student Evaluations of Teaching Effectiveness

1. Evaluation Instrument:

The Instructor and Course Evaluation System (ICES), developed and administered by the Office of Instructional Resources at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, will be the instrument used for student evaluation of teaching.

ICES elicits two kinds of responses from students. On side one, the student is asked to rate the course and the instructor on a series of up to 26 directed statements or questions. The first three of these questions are preprinted and are common to all ICES evaluations. The next two questions will be selected by the Teaching Effectiveness Committee and will be common to all MTU evaluations. The remaining items on side one are optional items which may be selected by the instructor from an extensive menu.

Side two asks the student for written personal comments about four preprinted open-ended questions and provides room for two additional instructor-selected questions of this type.

2. Frequency of required student evaluation:

Student evaluations of untenured faculty members will be done in all courses every term. Student evaluations of tenured faculty members will be done in all courses during one term of the faculty member's choice each year. (Additional voluntary evaluations are not precluded).

3. Procedures for student evaluations:

Evaluation instruments will be completed by students during a class meeting in the seventh, eighth or ninth week of the term. The evaluation will be administered by someone other than the faculty member being evaluated. This person will send the completed student evaluation forms to a central campus location where they will be collected and mailed to the University of Illinois for scoring and analysis.

ICES forms will be returned to MTU where the tabulated summary of the University-wide

questions will be reported to the department head/chair/dean. The evaluated faculty member will receive the entire student evaluation package (raw data and tabulated summaries).

4. Use of the results of student evaluations:

The department head/chair/dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs will use the ratings derived from student evaluations in partial support for and justification of personnel decisions (reappointment, promotion, tenure and yearly salary adjustments) concerning the faculty member being evaluated.

The evaluated faculty member will be able to use the information derived from student evaluations to identify strengths and weaknesses.

B. Peer or Colleague Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness

1. Rating instrument:

The attached standard form (*Available by Request from the Senate Office*) will be used to report the results of peer or colleague evaluation of teaching by individual faculty members.

2. Implementation of peer or colleague evaluation:

The faculty of each department or school will establish an internal mechanism by which it evaluates the appropriateness of level, content, and currency of courses taught by individual faculty members.

3. Frequency of required peer or colleague evaluation:

For untenured faculty members, peer or colleague evaluation of teaching will be done as part of every reappointment consideration. Peer or colleague evaluation of tenured faculty will be done at least once every four years and at each promotion consideration.

4. Procedures for peer or colleague evaluation:

Peer or colleague evaluations of teaching will be conducted according to departmentally established procedures and reported initially to the evaluated faculty member. After he or she has had the opportunity to respond to the evaluation, the evaluators will report a final summary evaluation to the head/chair/dean on the rating instrument described above.

5. Uses of peer or colleague evaluation:

The evaluated faculty member will be able to use the evaluation as guidance in course development and teaching improvement.

The head/chair/dean and the Vice President for Academic Affairs will use the summary ratings as partial support of and justification for personnel decisions (reappointment, tenure, promotion, and yearly salary adjustments). The evaluation of teaching will be weighted in a manner which is commensurate with the assigned teaching responsibilities of each faculty member.

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS PROPOSAL

The teaching evaluation system will be implemented for a trial year beginning in the Fall Term of the 1985-86 academic year. During the late spring and summer of 1986, the entire system will be evaluated by surveying all affected persons to ask their opinions about the usefulness and fairness of the system. The Senate Teaching Effectiveness Committee will use the results of those surveys to recommend necessary modifications.

Because the success of this proposal will depend on the Center for Teaching Excellence, we recommend that plans for developing this center go forward as quickly as possible.

Initial Senate approval of the teaching effectiveness proposal is requested for one year only. The Teaching Effectiveness Committee suggests that the Senate reconsider the proposal after this trial year and make a final recommendation about the proposal.

Adopted by Senate: 1 May 1985

Approved by Administration: 14 May 1985

Implementation Period Extended by Senate Proposal 7-86

See Proposal 12-03