Academic Policy Committee Report -PART I
Spring 2020

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Charge 1: Review options for multiple ways of evaluating teaching and make recommendations on best practices.
Charge 2: Re-evaluate and, if necessary, revise and/or recalibrate the purposes for which TRACE and other teaching evaluations are used.

Process: We began by conducting a literature review and discussing our findings in our meetings. We invited members of the FDC to attend one of our meetings to coordinate work on our closely related charges; the two committee chairs stayed in close coordination as work progressed. Two of our members also met with CATLR staff to discuss teaching evaluation.

Findings:
There were many, especially concerning Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET). But we focused on a few major concerns:
  * Bias, especially gender and racial bias: try to make questions learning-based rather than summative.
  * Reliability of sample size, especially of a response of less than 10 students or less than 67%.
  * Use of the average of all ratings, especially on the summative "overall effectiveness.".
  * Formative vs Summative Measures: important to distinguish what purpose the evaluation will be used for.
  * Formative Measures: a) Get student feedback during the semester from a midcourse SET or other method. b) Have faculty peers conduct a class observation and/or review of class materials.
  * Summative Measures: a) SETs, b) Class observations by faculty peers or trained specialists, c) Review of course syllabi or other materials, d) Self-reflection statements.

Recommendations:
We made several recommendations to the FDC, which was charged with looking specifically at TRACE. In addition, we make the following recommendations:

1. We recommend the use of a midcourse SET or other form of student feedback during the semester. (We note that CATLR provides some resources for this: https://learning.northeastern.edu/midterm-course-evaluation/).
2. We recommend the use of peer classroom visits and review of course materials (cf. the Compensation Module in the Faculty Handbook)
3. We recommend that all faculty create an annual Teaching Portfolio for administrative purposes (merit review, promotion, etc). This should include TRACE scores (using median or mode or other score distribution), but may include other evidence of teaching quality, such as course syllabi, self-reflection statements, peer classroom visits and review of course materials.
4. We recommend that all faculty and academic units make an effort to raise TRACE participation rates above 66%. (Currently, the university response rates for TRACE are between 60 and 65%.)