

Colleagues,

It is our practice at UW-Parkside that students have the opportunity to evaluate their courses each semester. Given the abrupt transition from face-to-face to online teaching for most of the undergraduate and some of the master's curriculum, there has been ongoing discussion about whether or not to suspend course evaluations for the current semester. The issue has been debated by the University Committee, the Faculty Senate, and the Academic Cabinet.

I believe we need to balance two concerns.

We should do evaluations.

First, under any foreseeable scenario it seems unlikely digital technology will play a smaller role in teaching and learning and we are in the midst of a powerful learning moment in higher education. Institutions need to adapt and we need to learn as much as we can about what worked and what didn't. We've heard from so many of you about the creative ways you've conceived to assure your students continue to learn this semester. We've also heard about how far from ideal the current situation is. We need to understand what all this means for how we can best serve more students and serve them well as this will determine how successfully we compete as an institution in the future. As our Faculty Senate policy on Evaluation of Teaching explains (PSF 43/92-93), "In addition to being the responsibility of individual instructors, teaching is the collective responsibility of departments, programs, and the university as a whole...and should be viewed as common property, open to discussion and review." In this spirit, we need to ask students to complete online course evaluations this semester and encourage them to share their experiences and input via open-ended comments. Collectively, we need to understand how all this impacted student learning and use it to refine our goals and strategies as a university.

To administer the course evaluations in an online format, we will use the same system we have been using for several years to administer evaluations for online courses. Deans and department chairs will receive instructions within the next day or two regarding the use of that system.

I also want to apprise you of a modified approach. The University Committee has developed a brief survey that is intended to measure students' overall experiences of the curricular transition rather than individual courses, most of which were disrupted by the unplanned conversion to online and alternative delivery. I encourage departments to use these items either as a supplement to or replacement for existing course surveys this semester. These items will be made available along with the instructions noted above.

Course evaluations this semester should not be used for performance evaluation.

The second concern is that student evaluations of courses this semester not be considered for purposes of performance evaluation, whether that be for tenure, promotion, reappointment, or merit review, unless such consideration is opted for by the instructor. Akin to why the Faculty Senate endorsed a policy that colleagues be given the opportunity to extend the tenure clock for a year to account for pandemic-related disruption in research and creative activity, I'm asking department Executive Committees, the Personnel Review Committee, and deans to disregard course evaluations from this semester for performance review purposes unless it serves the interests of individual colleagues. For example, Board of Regents policy (RPD 20-2) notes, "All faculty members being considered for merit salary increases shall be evaluated by their peers as to their instructional ability, using information from student evaluation of their instruction, as well as other information relevant to assessment, at least once every three years." By this measure, we

have ample latitude to relax our practice of using student evaluation of teaching for performance review purposes for the current semester while continuing to conduct such evaluations to better understand the effectiveness of our overall instructional efforts during this unprecedented period.

### Summary

In summary, I ask that:

- all classes be evaluated this semester using existing online course evaluation surveys, and/or that the UC-developed survey be used; and that
- student evaluations from this semester not be used for performance evaluation purposes unless opted for by individual instructors.

Thanks for reading this far and for all you do.

- Rob

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