

AGENDA

Penn State Berks Senate

Monday, April 25, 2016

1:00-2:30 PM

121 Gaige

- **Call to Order**

- **Additions, Corrections, and Approval of Minutes of March 28, 2016 meeting**

- **Announcements and Reports by the Berks Faculty Senate Chair**

- **Reports of Officers, University Senators, SGA President, and Student Senator**
 - Vice Chair Nasereddin
 - Secretary Greenauer
 - Senator Aynardi
 - Senator Snyder
 - Draft SRTE Report (Appendix A)
 - SGA President
 - Student Senator

- **Comments and Announcements by Administrators**
 - Chancellor Hillkirk
 - Senior Associate Dean Esqueda

- **Unfinished Business**
- **Motions from Committees**
- **Informational Reports**
 - Strategic Planning and Budget Committee (Appendix B)
- **New Legislative Business**
- **Forensic Business**
- **Comments for the Good of the Order**
- **Adjournment**

Penn State Berks Senate
March 28, 2016
1:00-2:30 PM, Room 121, Gaige Building

Attendees: Martha Aynardi, Amir Barakati, Donna Chambers, Tricia Clark, Ruth Daly, Nancy Dewald, Colleen English, Azar Eslam-Panah, Katie Garcia, Sudip Ghosh, Nathan Greenauer, Ben Infantolino, Abdullah Konak, Jim Laurie, Ada Leung, Joseph Mahoney, Lauren Martin, Cesar Martinez-Garza, Catherine Mello, Mahdi Nasereddin, Matthew Rhudy, Malika Richards, David Sanford, Jessica Schocker, Allison Singles, Steve Snyder, Terry Speicher, Hartono Tjoe, Praveen Veerabhadrapa, Keysha Whitaker, Donghwan Yoon (Faculty); Marie Smith (Staff); Pradip Bandyopadhyay, Mike Bartolacci, David Bender, Kim Berry, Paul Esqueda, Keith Hillkirk, Janelle Larson, Michelle Mart, Dennis Mays, John Shank (Administration)

1. Call to Order

2. Additions, Corrections, and Approval of Minutes of the February 15, 2015 –The Chair called for corrections, additions to the minutes; hearing none, a vote was called to approve the minutes; *the minutes were approved unanimously.*

- **Announcements and Reports by the Chair** – A couple of interesting things occurred at a recent Senate Meeting at University Park in curricular affairs, one of which, I don't know if this affects much more than IST and SRA but there seems to be a backlash against minors that have a huge overlap of majors. For instance in IST, you can the SRA minor with one extra course. The sentiment, even though it was a close vote, the vote was for changing that. So now they are looking at having at least 6 credits (were going for 9 credits) or two courses difference. So assuming it passes through the Senate, students will have to take at least an additional 2 courses to distinguish the minor from any given major.

3. Reports of Officers and University Senators

- **Vice Chair Nasereddin – No report**
- **Secretary Greenauer – No report**
- **Senator Aynardi** – The legislation for the engaged scholarship, which was sent to curricular affairs, was voted down for the April meeting. Very little information has been coming out of curricular affairs or from the chairs of the engaged scholarship committee. Based on previous conversation, the concern lies with the requirements that wouldn't have any credits associated with it. Additional conversation/details forthcoming pursuant to this. The University passed legislation regarding ranks for fixed-term faculty. There were some financial concerns expressed. What is currently being proposed is adding an additional rank for fixed term faculty. Currently half of the faculty at the University are fixed-term and in order to value them, you need to provide ways for them to be promoted. Currently, the only promotional opportunity is lecturer to senior lecturer. The Gen Ed legislation passed. One thing to keep in mind is there's a difference between program objectives and course objectives. We are asking faculty to read the document and think which objectives you're covering in the courses and how you would assess the course. Middle States is requiring us to assess general education and this would be a first step in achieving that goal. Student will now graduate magna cum laude, sum cum laude and cum laude as opposed to distinction. The GPA requirement will remain the same for each category.
- **Senator Snyder** – The fixed-term legislative report passed the Senate overwhelmingly and will be on the President's desk for review. The problem lies with a forthcoming report

concerning limits on one-year appointments. The recommendation in the report was that if you had a fixed-term faculty for 10 years, campuses were to automatically give that faculty member a multi-year; if you have a faculty member for 15 years, that person would be given a 5-year contract. An issue was raised that as it currently stands, this looks like promotion without process. The committee will need to take another look at this report. Also recently passed were the reports concerning faculty leads as well as SRTE's.

- **SGA President – Not present**
- **Student Senator – Not present**

4. Comments and Announcements by Administrators

- **Chancellor Hillkirk** – As you are all aware, the budget situation for this year has been resolved. There was an article in today's newspaper, referencing a poll that was taken, noting 79% of the respondents are in favor of the Governor and the Legislature working closely together to resolve next year's budget. The article also noted there is a split between people who are supportive of increased revenues as opposed to cuts in various areas. It also noted the largest percentage of those people who are in favor of increased revenues are in favor of increasing taxes for things they will not have to pay. It's an interesting article; it gives you some sense of what drives and causes these types of political stalemates we've been dealing with.
- We have some good news and some challenging news with regard to enrollment. Summer enrollment is up nearly 200 students, which is very positive news; however, challenges lie ahead with regard to fall enrollment. The University as a whole is dealing with the transition to LionPATH; we are very dependent upon LionPATH in terms of the processing of applications and offers. Our transfer numbers have been growing each year, as an example; a lot of hard work is being done within our admissions area to try to get these things resolved. I do appreciate the faculty and staff who are helping with our recruitment right now. We do have one more Open House coming up on April 23. As you know, these Open Houses are very important. We anticipate another large turnout for April 23. I met with Lisa Baldi this morning and discussed increasing our marketing presence for the next couple of months.
- I recently learned, for the first time, we will be getting two Vista volunteers at Penn State Berks. One of those volunteers will work directly with Guadalupe Kasper. In particular, this Vista volunteer will help to build a stronger relationship with Olivet Boys & Girls Club, which will be a very positive step in increasing both the attractiveness and awareness of Penn State Berks within those students. The other volunteer is going to work with Jim Shankweiler of our business program, who is currently working with one of the physicians at Penn State Health St. Joseph. That volunteer will help with some of the work going on in terms of food access in the city. We should soon hear about a proposal in regard funding, in terms of our relationship with Penn State Health St. Joseph, and pending that funding, I anticipate there will be opportunities for us to really build upon that relationship, which also now includes conversations with Habitat for Humanity.
- During the last year or so, we have been working on building a relationship with The Rock Institute at University Park. Another workshop is being planned for this May 9-11, which will focus on ethics and sustainability. Some of you have already registered; there will be some additional information forthcoming. There is a limit of 20 people for this workshop; however, if the interest goes beyond the limit, other workshops will be offered in the future.
- If you haven't yet gone through the bystander training, I encourage you to consider doing so. I plan to attend this Wednesday; additional trainings will be offered in the future. The feedback I have received from faculty, staff and students who have gone through the training, has been very positive.

- **Senior Associate Dean Esqueda** – As was previously mentioned, enrollment numbers for the fall might be a challenge. One way that we can exercise control and influence is by making our students aware of the majors offered at Penn State Berks. Growing our number of students during the junior and senior years would help, as well as talking to your advisees and sharing with them options of the degree programs being offered at Penn State Berks.
 - The decision to cancel the celebrating teaching colloquium on Friday, May 6 still stands. The first-year seminar workshop will be now be held that day.
 - Spring commencement will be held on May 7 with the EBC graduates in the morning and HASS and SCI graduates will graduate in the afternoon ceremony. If you haven't done so, please be sure to indicate your attendance via the Google Docs invitation that was previously sent.
 - Jose Esparza will be hosting the Science Colloquium this Friday at 1 PM.
5. **Unfinished Business** – The Chair reported nominations were received for the following leadership positions of the Berks Senate for the next academic year: Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary. The nominations received are as follows: Chair, Mahdi Nasereddin; Vice Chair, Cliff Maurer; and Secretary, Nathan Greenauer. The Chair opened the floor for additional nomination; hearing none, the Chair stated by unanimous consent, these nominations will go forward and congratulated next year's Senate leaders.
7. **Motions from Committees** –
- **Motion to Revise the Associate Degree in Business (Appendix A)** – The Chair indicated a misstep was made at the last meeting with regard to this Motion. The Motion is being withdrawn. The Chair indicated at the last meeting there weren't any objections; however, changes were made noting it will need to be revised and voted on again at a future meeting.
8. **Informational Reports** –
- **Informational Report on General Safety Concerns, Physical Facilities Review and Sustainability Review (Appendix B)**
 - **Student Facility Fees Committee Minutes (Appendix C)**
 - **Intercollegiate Athletics Committee Minutes (Appendix D)**
 - **Strategic Planning and Budget Committee, Berks College Senate meeting of March 1, 2016 (Appendix E)** – An overview was provided. It was noted that due to the stalemate with this year's budget, several areas were looked upon as for ways to save money. Suggested topics for cost containment as noted in the report were reviewed and discussed. Dennis Mays referenced item f with regard to fleet cars noting this should actually be the opposite. It is a lot more cost effective to use fleet vehicles rather than personal vehicles. Not just from a mileage per diem standpoint but also from an insurance liability standpoint. It was noted that the lights in some of the classroom were not turning off automatically after 15 minutes as they are supposed to. Kim Berry will look into this. Discussed followed. A suggestion was made to use this tool and make it an opportunity going forward to be more prudent for future years noting many of these suggestions are in line with sustainability efforts currently underway. The Chancellor commented he will be following up Administrative Council with regard to these suggestions noting some areas such as recycling of lab computers need to go forward; however, other areas such as limiting or eliminating food costs, etc. can go forward. He noted these suggestions will not be wasted and will be used as a tool going forward.

9. New Legislative Business – None

10. Forensic Business – None

11. Comments for the Good of the Order – Penn State Berks was just named a bronze status for an exercise medicine initiative for the College of Sports Medicine. This is due to the mindfulness of everyone being active.

12. Adjournment

Appendix A

SENATE COMMITTEE ON FACULTY AFFAIRS

Interpretation and Use of Student Ratings of Teaching Effectiveness (SRTEs) in Measuring the Quality of Courses and Instruction

(Informational)

The Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs was charged for the 2015-2016 academic year to investigate the Student Rating of Teaching Effectiveness for measuring the quality of the course and instruction and benchmark with our peers in the CIC (Committee on Institutional Cooperation).

Penn State's SRTEs and other student ratings instruments are designed to gather the collective views of a group of students about their educational experience in the classroom. The SRTEs are not intended to provide a definitive evaluation of faculty teaching and/or student learning. Instead, they provide one source of data to be used by administrators and faculty review committees in a more comprehensive assessment of the quality of faculty members' teaching.

All of Penn State's peer institutions in the CIC use some form of student ratings, as do most colleges and universities in the U.S.

After review of a sample of materials from the substantial body of the peer-reviewed research literature on student ratings of instruction that has accumulated over more than 80 years research, the committee concluded that the validity and reliability of using student ratings as one source of data in the evaluation of faculty teaching has been substantiated.

The committee concludes that the most important issue of concern to Penn State faculty is not the validity and reliability of student ratings, but the use and misuse of student ratings data in the evaluation of faculty for promotion, tenure, annual review, hiring, and reappointment. See Appendix A for a more detailed discussion of the use and misuse of SRTE data.

The challenge of appropriate use of student ratings data will be with us as long as we continue to use them. Faculty members rotate onto and off of review committees and faculty members move into and out of administrative roles that require evaluation of other faculty. Faculty in these roles are rarely provided with any guidance or information about how to interpret the student evaluations of their colleagues. New administrators, over time, have the opportunity to see a wide range of student ratings from an array of faculty and courses, and many eventually recognize what kinds of variability are important. However, faculty on review committees may come to their role having seen only their own ratings and thus may bring their own biases and personal experience with student ratings to bear on evaluation of other faculty members.

Perhaps most important, the committee finds no decline in the validity or reliability of SRTE data in the transition from print to online evaluations. As we note in Appendix B, "Some faculty suggest that the move to online administration of the SRTEs is responsible for their low ratings. This is generally not supported by the data. SRTE scores continue to cluster at the high end of

the scale. In fact, many faculty have experienced a slight increase in their ratings with online administration because students who are disengaged from a course are even less likely to complete the student ratings outside of class.”

The committee offers the attached documents to guide the interpretation of student ratings data and to guide conversations with faculty about their SRTEs.

Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs

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Appendix A¹ Ensuring Appropriate Use of SRTE data for Faculty Evaluation

Many faculty are concerned about how the Student Ratings of Teaching Effectiveness (SRTEs) are used by faculty and administrators to evaluate faculty. Some assume that the reliability or accuracy of the data, the instrument, or the method of administration is the source of problems. In reality, the most significant issue with student ratings—across the nation—is how these data are interpreted and used. Below are some of the most common issues of interpretation that, if not controlled, may harm the faculty being evaluated.

1. The SRTEs should be only one of multiple measures of teaching.

Student ratings researchers unanimously recommend that personnel decisions be based on more than just the faculty member's student ratings (Arreola, 2007; Benton and Cashin, 2011; Berk, 2013; Marsh, 1987; McKeachie, 1990, 1997; Nulty, 2008). The most common additional sources of data about the faculty member's teaching include written student feedback, peer and administrator observations, internal or external reviews of course materials, teaching portfolios and teaching scholarship. While none of these additional data collection methods have been extensively examined for reliability, validity, or bias (as have student ratings), they provide important points of comparison to students' perspectives.

The Faculty Senate has also weighed in against this practice. See the "Statement of Practices for the Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness for Promotion and Tenure," available on the website of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs http://www.psu.edu/vpaa/pdfs/srte_statement.pdf. The final line in the Statement of Practices document notes that "student evaluations alone are not sufficient for either personnel decisions or for improvement of teaching." (See also Section A.1, A.11.a.4, B.1, and D.1.)

2. In personnel decisions, a faculty member's complete history of student ratings should be considered, rather than a single composite score.

When a faculty member's SRTE history is reduced to a single score, anomalous scores are given the same weight as scores that are consistent, which puts the faculty member at a disadvantage compared to faculty whose entire history is visible and for whom anomalous scores can be explained or disregarded. It is a rare faculty member who never has an inexplicable low average.

Some academic units combine a faculty member's cumulative record into a single score. While a few student ratings researchers have developed composite scores that weight different teaching factors (e.g., Arreola, 2007; Marsh, 1987), never are such adjustments applied to a subset of

¹ This Appendix is a lightly edited version of a document written by Angela Linse, Executive Director of the Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence in 2016, and is reproduced here with her permission.

faculty. Creating weighted averages based on faculty perceptions about the difficulty of a course, grading practices, or a particular teaching context should be avoided.

Furthermore, at Penn State, the SRTEs were created by the Faculty Senate based upon approval of an Advisory and Consultative Report, “Evaluating Teaching Effectiveness for Promotion and Tenure,” brought forward by the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs on April 30, 1985. On February 21, 1989, the Faculty Senate debated and approved removal of norms from the SRTE reports. Modifications of Senate-approved reporting practices remain with and should be approved by the senate and the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

3. Small differences in mean (average) ratings are common and not necessarily meaningful.

Student ratings are “broad brush” instruments used to gather information from a group of students, not all of whom will agree. They are not precision tools that produce a measurement that can then be compared to a known standard. Variations of up to 0.4 points within a course are not unusual. Some faculty evaluators over-interpret small differences as indicative of a problem, a decrease in quality, or as an indication that one faculty member is materially better than another. In reality, a faculty member could teach the same course under similar conditions and in a similar way and still receive results that differ. Sources of variation include differences in the students enrolled, in student ratings respondents, and chance.

In its Advisory and Consultative Report of February 21, 1989, the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs noted that “the spirit of the SRTE is best served by regarding SRTE results as the students’ view of the candidate’s teaching effectiveness in absolute terms—that Professor X (whose evaluation mean is 6.25) is a ‘very good teacher,’ without necessarily saying that Professor X is a better ‘very good teacher’ than Professor Y (whose evaluation mean is 6.10). ... Drawing comparative conclusions or ranking faculty based on SRTE mean scores differing by tenths or hundredths of a point is a case of giving undue precision to the data that are far from precise.”

4. Treat anomalous ratings for what they are, not as representative of a faculty member’s teaching.

Look for patterns in the faculty member’s scores over time or across different course types. Do they show a general improvement or a persistent and unexamined issue? Every faculty member, even the very best, receives an occasional low average rating. And every faculty member will have a course that does not go well or a course with unhappy students. Rather than focusing on small differences in average scores, evaluators’ time is better spent looking for patterns and consistency within courses and across time. Look for patterns of improvement that post-date a low rating. When reviewing other faculty members’ ratings, frequent and consistent low scores are more important than an occasional low score.

Not all patterns are indicative of teaching effectiveness. For example, a faculty member may have different patterns of ratings for different courses. Some patterns may be indicative of

curricular problems, rather than teaching problems such as a course receiving consistently low ratings while the faculty member receives high ratings, or if every faculty member who teaches a particular course receives low ratings.

5. Examine the distribution of scores across the entire 1-7 scale, as well as the mean.

The SRTE scale is ordinal-, not ratio-level, so the difference between a 5.9 and a 6.2 is not meaningful when considered from the students' perspectives. Relying solely on the mean, without examining the overall shape of the distribution and the spread of scores can provide an inaccurate picture of the students' views.

Very few faculty have a normal distribution of scores; almost all SRTE distributions are skewed to the low end (the peak is at the high end with a tail at the low end of the scale). In non-normal/skewed distributions, the mean is sensitive to outliers. In small-enrollment courses, even one or two low scores can shift the mean lower, even though those students' views are not representative of the majority of students. The median is a better measure of central tendency in skewed distributions.

6. Evaluate each faculty individually. Evaluations and decisions should stand alone without reference to other faculty members; avoid comparing faculty to each other or to a unit average.

Student ratings instruments are not designed to gather comparative data about faculty. The purpose of these instruments is to get an overall sense of the students' perceptions of a single faculty member teaching a particular course (or part of a course) to a specific group of students. Ultimately, no one faculty member teaching a group of students can be assumed to have the same experience as a different faculty member, even if they are teaching the same group of students.

The faculty who are most likely to be negatively affected by faculty-faculty comparisons are those who are viewed as different from the norm among the professoriate. At many institutions, white male faculty are still in the majority and considered the archetypical professor. Biases, even unconscious biases, against non-majority faculty exist in the academy where women faculty and faculty of color are still not perceived by students as the professorial norm (Street et al., 1996). Biases can negatively affect any faculty member who is seen as different by students and faculty evaluators.

If personnel decisions are made by comparing faculty to each other, but only in some units, the faculty of that unit are put at a disadvantage relative to other faculty in units that do not compare faculty to each other.

Using unit means is another common way to compare faculty to each other. Unit means are not an appropriate cutoff or standard of comparison, because there will always be some faculty members who are, by definition, "below the mean." This is particularly problematic in units with many excellent teachers. Consider the case of a department with a mean of 6.0 on a 7-point scale.

If the departmental mean is the “standard,” of comparison, then faculty who have a mean of 5.5 or even a 5.9 will be labeled as “below the mean” despite being rated by students as very good teachers.

Furthermore, the Faculty Senate stated in 1989 that normative comparisons are inappropriate and voted to eliminate all normative data from SRTE reports. Comparing individual faculty means to a unit mean can also put the faculty of the unit at a disadvantage relative to other faculty at the university who are not compared to a unit average. Faculty evaluators and administrators are the only people with the power to prevent this practice.

7. Focus on the most common ratings and comments rather than emphasizing one or a few outlier ratings or comments.

Student ratings instruments are designed to reflect the collective views of a sample of students. They are best at capturing the modal perceptions of respondents, but they are not the best instruments for capturing rare views, i.e., the views of students represented by the tails of a distribution. While students with outlier views should not be ignored, they should not be given more weight than the views of the majority. This is particularly crucial when evaluating the ratings of non-majority faculty because students with biased views are typically represented in the tails of a distribution.

Many student ratings instruments are accompanied by additional questions that request written feedback from students. A variety of research indicates that written comments are highly correlated with students’ ratings (Berk, 2005; Braskamp et al., 1981; Ory et al., 1980). But too often, faculty and administrators seem to focus their attention on rare comments, possibly because these comments are typically the most vehement or the most negative. It is neither appropriate nor fair to the faculty member to treat rare comments as if they are equal to comments that are representative of the rest of the students in a course.

Evaluators need to be particularly vigilant and self-aware when they are reading or summarizing students’ comments. Including comments that are not representative not only gives rare comments more weight than representative comments, it presents an inaccurate picture of the students’ views. The number and variety of comments included in a summary should be proportionally representative of the totality of students’ comments.

One of the best ways to ensure that summaries of comments represent students’ views is to sort student comments into groups based on similarity, label the group with a theme, then rank the themes based on the frequency of comments in each (see http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/pdf/Template_for_Analysis_of_Student_CommentsSRTEs.doc). Note that many students include multiple topics in a single sentence, so those should be broken into topical fragments and each sorted separately. Faculty members should focus improvement efforts on the first 2-3 themes, not the most negative comment. Sorting written comments by theme not only helps highlight which comments are frequent and rare, it helps reviewers and faculty to not over-emphasize isolated comments, whether positive or negative.

References Cited

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Appendix B²

Providing Feedback to Faculty and Responding to Faculty Concerns about Student Ratings

Administrators and faculty review committees are responsible for providing feedback to the faculty they evaluate. Both groups can experience discomfort about making life-altering decisions that affect other faculty based on student ratings data (though hopefully not solely on those data). The discomfort and fear surrounding SRTEs is exacerbated when faculty make incorrect assumptions about the history of the SRTEs or if they rely on opinion pieces or stories about studies that have not undergone peer review rather than the significant body of research conducted by student ratings experts.

Administrators have the additional responsibility of providing useful and productive feedback to guide faculty development, as well as responding in productive ways to faculty complaints or defensiveness. Below are some of the most common questions asked by administrators during or after a feedback meeting with a faculty member.

How do I respond to a faculty member who claims that his/her ratings are invalid because of contradictory student comments?

All faculty members receive written comments that are contradictory, but most faculty do not know this because they only see their own ratings. New faculty can be particularly frustrated or concerned when students' comments contradict each other. Nearly every faculty member receives contradictory comments. Administrators and faculty who have served on review committees can help other faculty focus on the most frequent ratings and comments.

How do I know whether a faculty member's ratings are "good" or "bad?"

In general, faculty members are doing well if most of their scores are in the 5-6 range, even if they do receive some scores that are lower. When looking at a faculty member's distribution of scores, if most of the ratings are clustered at the higher end of the scale, then the faculty member is doing fine. A faculty member who receives an occasional average of 4 over the course of five years, with most averages between 5 and 7 is probably not having serious problems. However, if a faculty member consistently receives averages of 4 or lower, it most likely indicates an important instructional challenge.

What should I say to faculty member with ratings distributed across low end of the rating scale?

Faculty with many scores in the 1-3 range, or with scores broadly distributed across the entire scale, are typically facing serious challenges with their students. These kinds of distributions

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need to be addressed as soon as possible because faculty need sufficient time to develop their teaching before coming up for a review or a contract renewal.

Faculty members should also be reassured that even though some faculty seem “born to teach,” nearly all of the behaviors practiced by excellent teachers can be learned. Remind all faculty of the resources available to support instructional development. Penn State has a wealth of resources at the university level, within the colleges, and at the Commonwealth Campuses. The Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence (<http://schreyerinstitution.psu.edu>) provides faculty with help interpreting and responding to student ratings, as well as workshops and online resources about student ratings and effective teaching. Faculty also have access to local resources. Many of the campuses and colleges have faculty teaching groups and can identify faculty teaching mentors. The Commonwealth Campuses have an active network of instructional design specialists, many of whom also assist in faculty development. College e-learning units are also excellent sources of information.

Faculty should not be sent to the teaching center only in response to low or problematic student ratings because the center then becomes a punishment rather than a source for information, resources, and support. It is far better to begin talking with faculty immediately upon their arrival on campus about the resources the institution provides to support teaching and learning. This is the best way to ensure that all faculty are successful teachers.

How do I respond to a faculty member who says that “only faculty who give away As get high SRTEs” or who argues that another faculty member who receives high SRTEs “must be giving away grades?”

Most faculty members at Penn State receive high student ratings. The university has hundreds of faculty who teach tough courses and who also receive high student ratings. Our students do not equate high standards with poor teaching. Faculty members who try to manipulate students’ ratings by “giving away As” should be advised that they are at risk of receiving low ratings from the students who work hard in the course and who turn in A-level work.

How do I respond to a faculty member who says that SRTEs are “just a popularity contest” and that they are “not valid?”

Administrators can take a number of approaches when responding to this kind of comment. First, they can try to explain that the student ratings are the most thoroughly examined topic in higher education, with thousands of studies conducted by researchers in both experimental and empirical contexts. The vast majority of the legitimate research on student ratings indicates that they are more reliable and accurate than any other method of evaluating teaching (McKeachie, 1997). Their validity has been tested more than any other method for evaluating faculty teaching, including peer observation, focus groups, and external review of materials (Berk, 2005, 2013). Unfortunately, this may not be sufficient to change a faculty member’s mind.

When faculty question the validity of students ratings, they are typically not, in fact, talking about the statistical validity or reliability of the ratings instrument, but instead they are concerned

whether their ratings will be used against them. This provides an opportunity to talk about many of the issues discussed above.

If neither of these strategies works, be honest that student ratings are unlikely to become obsolete any time soon, no matter what the latest headlines say. Student ratings have been around since the 1920s and were first used at Purdue University, the University of Washington, the University of Texas, and Harvard (Marsh, 1987); the first research on them was published by Remmers in 1933. The SRTEs provide an effective and systematic way to gather feedback from students enrolled in courses and it is in the faculty member's best interest to learn how to use these data to benefit his/her teaching and the learning environment for students.

What do I do when a faculty member argues that something other than their teaching is responsible for lower than expected ratings?

Sometimes faculty who do not fit students' perceptions of what a professor should look or act like can experience bias among the students. While biases do exist, such bias rarely, if ever, fully explains the results for a faculty member who consistently receives ratings clustered at the low end of the ratings scale. The research on gender bias has a longer history than does the research on bias due to race, ethnicity, or culture, but the number of studies is increasing. Yet even as these areas of research continue to expand, the studies do not indicate that gender, race, ethnicity, or culture explains all of the variability in the students' ratings.

Some faculty suggest that the move to online administration of the SRTEs is responsible for their low ratings. This is generally not supported by the data. SRTE scores continue to cluster at the high end of the scale. In fact, many faculty have experienced a slight increase in their ratings with online administration because students who are disengaged from a course are even less likely to complete the student ratings outside of class. Some individual faculty members may be able to make a case that their ratings changed dramatically before and after the shift to online administration. However, other potential causes should be ruled out before attributing the change to the method of administration, particularly because such changes are relatively rare.

How do I tell a long-serving faculty member who has had poor SRTEs for years that those ratings are no longer acceptable?

Some administrators avoid having these conversations, which is fair neither to the students nor the faculty member. This avoidance happens for a variety of reasons—including not knowing what kind of ratings are acceptable, not knowing how to approach the faculty, or wanting to avoid hurting the faculty member. While it might have been sufficient in the distant past to receive these kinds of ratings, students rightly expect more now. Again, the university has invested resources to help faculty take the next steps to improve their teaching.

How do I respond to faculty who have been told that “teaching doesn’t matter for promotion and tenure”?

At many universities, it is true that faculty cannot expect to be successful in the promotion and tenure process based primarily on excellent teaching. In general, faculty must meet unit requirements for research before the teaching record becomes an issue. However, poor teaching can hurt a tenure and/or promotion case. The bottom line is that in these days of heightened scrutiny of higher education, few faculty members can afford to ignore teaching, not even “star researchers.”

What do I say to a faculty member who says “My response rates are too low to be included in my dossier”?

There is no single standardized “ideal” response rate, although a number of researchers have made suggestions (Franklin and Theall, 1991; Marsh, 1984; Nulty, 2008; the recommendations of the latter are reproduced by Barre, 2015). Administrators and review committee members should be skeptical that ratings from courses with extremely low response rates are representative. One of the benefits of the decreased response rates associated with online administration of student ratings is that evaluators are less likely to over-interpret the results.

No SRTEs may be excluded from the dossier without making advance arrangements prior to administration of the SRTEs; see the Statement of Practices for the Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness for Promotion and Tenure (http://www.psu.edu/dept/vprov/pdfs/srte_statement.pdf, section 1.A.11.a.2). While this practice has been in place since 1985, very few faculty take advantage of it, and some change their minds after realizing that their ratings did not decrease as expected. When the SRTEs were first administered in 1987, the Faculty Senate recommended that 2/3s of the students be present in the room, but a minimum response rate of 67% was never required. Today, there is no minimum response rate for the SRTEs.

How do I respond to faculty who say that the lower response rates of the online student ratings system make the ratings “invalid”?

As noted above, the validity of student ratings has been well established for decades. When some faculty express concerns about validity, they are, upon further discussion, actually concerned about the representativeness of the sample of responding students, not with the statistical validity of the instrument. Average response rates have decreased, as expected, with the transition to online ratings. Many faculty have found success emphasizing how important the feedback is to the improvement of the course and by providing examples of course improvements suggested by past students (see <http://www.schreyerinstitution.psu.edu/IncreaseSRTERespRate/>).

Faculty with low response rates in small enrollment courses may have cause for concern because when the number of respondents is small, a single student’s rating carries a lot of weight. But in general, the lower response rates have typically not had a negative impact on faculty members’

average scores (Linse, 2010). Administrators should be wary of over-interpreting results from small enrollment courses with low response rates.

How do I respond to faculty who argue that the SRTEs should not be used because they were originally meant for the improvement of teaching, but were co-opted for faculty evaluation?

At Penn State, the SRTEs were specifically enacted by the Faculty Senate on April 30, 1985 to provide consistent data for the purposes of promotion and tenure and annual review. This contrasts with many other institutions where student ratings were first developed for the purpose of improvement and then were absorbed into the faculty evaluation process.

Faculty members were highly involved in the creation of the SRTEs and included in the process from start to finish. After the Senate passed legislation to enact the process, faculty were asked to propose questions for the new instrument. The 177 questions (http://www.srte.psu.edu/SRTE_Items/) used today are the result of that process.

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Appendix B

Strategic Planning and Budget Committee, Berks College Senate meeting of April 13, 2016

Attending: Samantha Kavky, Abdullah Konak, Randall Newnham, Sudip Ghosh (Chair) and Hartono Tjoe

Committee Agenda

The Senate Executive Committee has asked this committee to consider the following:

The initial charge of the committee was to look at the faculty salary at Berks campus and compare it with other campuses for year 2014-2015. However, we received the report on Friday April 15 after our meeting. Therefore, the focus of the April 13 meeting was to look at the summer compensation for full time faculties if they choose to teach a second course. And also to look at the adjunct salaries at our campus more closely.

1. Summer compensation for full-time faculty for teaching a second course during summer session

On several occasion, the administration alluded that we were very fortunate in the past two years with increased summer enrollment at Berks College. Even for 2016 the summer enrollment looks very promising. During summer at Berks, we offer traditional face-to-face classes along with a combination of online classes, and hybrid classes. The success of the summer classes at Berks, relies on classes and the mix of the student body. Obviously, it also depend on how the class is taught - face-to-face versus online. Berks is once again poised to take advantage of the summer sessions which has proven to be a cash cow for our campus.

Berks is in the midst of offering twenty plus majors and a whole array of minors. It is sometimes attractive for students to take advantage of summer offering, especially ones that are struggling during the regular semester, coupled with high performing students who intend to graduate early. We also attract a cohort of potential transfer students, in addition to students from other institutions.

Given the increase demand for summer classes, certain disciplines face challenges of finding qualified individuals to teach. The most obvious ones are the new majors. To meet these challenges, sometimes our full time faculty take the onus of teaching an extra summer class. This is in light of keeping student success in mind coupled with providing quality education at Penn State Berks. Despite these, the biggest distractor is the salary for full time faculty if they choose to teach a second summer course. According to the current compensation structure, full time faculty receives equivalent of adjunct compensation. The committee feels that in order to maintain the Penn State quality, the summer compensation for full time faculty who choose to teach a second course be exactly equal to the salary of the first course to make it worthwhile for them. Thus, the committee proposes same summer compensation for the second course as the first one. Especially, when the enrollment is in the upwards of ten.

The committee has also suggested an important exception. If a full time faculty uses his/her RDG for class release during the regular semester they should be precluded from teaching second summer course under the newly recommended summer compensation.

2. Adjunct Salary at Penn State Berks

The committee proposes that we revisit the salary structure for adjuncts faculties. This is important since a sizeable proportion of our classes are taught by adjuncts. Again, going by the Penn State value, if we would like to provide higher quality education it should commensurate with higher pay for adjunct faculties. Then we can attract the best talent who can do a decent job. Often Berks is compared to Penn State Altoona but it does not make much sense comparing it with a campus which is geographically so far away from Reading. The committee felt, that we should compare adjunct rates at the five area colleges instead. Upon comparing we can come up with a benchmark number which can be used for future compensations for part-time faculties. This will also make Penn State Berks more competitive as well as attractive for adjuncts.

The committee suggests, that adjunct rates should be adjusted for inflation. In addition, the committee strongly feels that the annual salary report provided by the University Senate should also include adjunct salaries across all Penn State campuses. This will give us a better understanding as to where we stand in terms of adjunct salary.