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Final Report of the ad hoc Committee on Student Ratings of Instruction

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Submitted by: Trent Maurer

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Discussion:

The ad hoc Committee on Student Ratings of Instruction would like to present its Final Report (attached) to the Faculty Senate.

Rationale:

The ad hoc Committee on Student Ratings of Instruction was charged to identify an instrument to replace the current Student Rating of Instruction form in use at Georgia Southern University. We were charged to pilot test a new SRI instrument, make final revisions to the new SRI instrument based on results of the pilot testing, present the new instrument to the Faculty Senate for adoption, and propose methods to make the evaluation of teaching effectiveness more equitable and consistently defined, assessed, and used across the university including developing guidelines for how SRIs should be used and objectively valued in annual reviews and in promotion and tenure (and pre/post tenure) decisions for all faculty. The Committee is ready to present its final recommendations.

Response:

3/6/2017:

Presentation of the final report of the ad hoc Committee on Student Ratings of Instruction: Trent Maurer (CHHS), Chair

Maurer thanked current and former committee members for their work on this "herculean task," Provost Bartels for her support and guidance, those faculty and chairs

who participated in the pilot, and the staffs in the Center for Academic Technology Support and IT. He urged everyone to read the 72 page report in the Librarian's report.

Maurer said that at its first meeting on March 10, 2015, the committee was charged by Faculty Senate Moderator Humphrey to identify an instrument to replace the current SRI form. The instrument would function primarily as a formative assessment to inform and improve teaching effectiveness (per BOR policy), and be consistent with the recommendations of the 2014 ad hoc Committee on SRIs, namely that it incorporate best practices from the research literature on SRIs; focus on student learning, learning behaviors, and formative feedback; and provide opportunities for students to specify in writing how the instructor promoted learning

Additionally, the committee was charged by Moderator Humphrey to pilot test the new SRI instrument in classes from every college and of various sizes and levels, revise accordingly, and present it to the Faculty Senate for adoption. Further, they were to propose methods to make the evaluation of teaching effectiveness more equitable and consistently defined, assessed, and used across the university, including developing guidelines for how SRIs should be used in personnel decisions.

Section 2 of the report provides background information that shows that our current SRI form and the manner in which it is used to evaluate teaching is significantly out-of-step with the best or even justifiable practices in the literature.

Section 3 provides information on the design of the pilot SRI instrument.

 Section 4 describes the methodology of both the pilot study and the feedback survey of selected faculty and department chairs.

Section 5 presents analysis of the results of the pilot study.

Section 6 presents a qualitative analysis and the results of the feedback survey of selected faculty and department chairs. The number of responses for both faculty and chairs was very small and represented less than half of all individuals selected for the pilot test for both faculty and chairs. He cautioned people not to extrapolate or generalize from the feedback received to the broader population of faculty and chairs.

Section 7 presents the three recommendations of the committee and their rationales.

Recommendation #1: was that the Faculty Senate adopt the proposed new SRI instrument. He noted that while the instrument proposed for adoption differs from the instrument as pilot tested, the committee believed it to be consistent with their charge and a significant improvement over our current SRI instrument. He further noted that their motion codified the responsibility of the Faculty Senate to determine the content of the SRI instrument and to periodically review the instrument for revision or replacement. This recommendation was on the agenda as a motion.

Recommendation #2 proposed changes to three sections of the *Faculty Handbook* that concern how SRIs are used in evaluating teaching. He noted that SRI data was currently being misused, and the changes would refocus the use of SRI data to be primarily formative, as dictated by the Board of Regents. He said this was independent of adoption of a new SRI and that the committee was disappointed to see that the motion making this recommendation was not put on the agenda. They were, however, encouraged that their recommendations would be forwarded to the appropriate Operational Working Group, so this recommendation might be achieved as part of the consolidation process or reconsidered by the Senate thereafter.

Recommendation #3 was inspired by President Hebert's invitation to use the consolidation as an opportunity to envision changes in how Georgia Southern works. One repeated piece of feedback was that the existing SRI administration process was too time-consuming. A centralized model for SRIs with a single office responsible for the entire process would remove that burden from every department and simultaneously reduce inefficiencies and inconsistencies. Again, the committee was disappointed to see that the motion making this recommendation was not put on the agenda. But he hoped that the forwarding of the committee's report to the responsible OWG would result in their work resulting in needed and meaningful changes.

Moderator Flynn allotted 15 to 20 minutes for questions.
Dustin Anderson (CLASS) asked why some feedback from chairs was not included in the report.

Maurer said they analyzed feedback for "emergent themes"; they did not attempt verbatim representation of every reply. Every member of the committee read every single comment, and they then selected exemplars of themes.

Meca Williams-Johnson (COE) asked if they had considered piloting the current draft of the SRI form because it was different from what was piloted.

Maurer said they had been charged to conduct a pilot, revise on that basis, and present the revision to the Senate, which is what they did. They were not charged to pilot a second time. He said "it's pretty much accepted standard practice that if all you are doing is deleting quantitative items, but not adding any quantitative items, there's no need for an additional pilot test. The changes were all deletions of quantitative items, not additions of any quantitative items."

Rob Pirro (CLASS) asked why all of the SLO's had been deleted.

Maurer said Section 7 of their report gave a detailed explanation, but the short answer was that it was a technical issue: The Remark Office Software that is used to read this is extremely sensitive to user error. In the pilot, three departments returned entirely unusable data because of user error. Given how many different administrative assistants would have to be trained and the possibility for even a tiny error to make all the data in an entire department unreadable, the committee found the possibility of that type of catastrophic failure unacceptable.

Pirro (CLASS) said deleting the SLO's only for technical reasons worried him. He thought including SLO's was problematic because it "is consistent with this model of pushing content to students and then they have to measure whether or not in week 13 or 14 whether they have gotten all the content, and . . . half the students when I ask them what have you learned? They said it takes them a semester or a year or maybe many years to understand fully what they've learned in a class, and this idea that in week 13 or 14 or 15 through some set of . . . SLOs they'll be able to accurately and helpfully assess what we have taught them I think is really problematic." Another problem was that he could foresee a day when SLOs won't be chosen by the professor, but people above us, and that would be a major infringement on academic freedom. He hoped that even if the technical difficulties could be overcome, SLO's would still be omitted.

Mark Edwards (COSM) commented that the Senate could be a very differently constituted body after consolidation and so he wasn't sure that were a new SRI adopted now it would have any effect at all.
Alice Hall (CHHS) said her experience on P & T committees made her find the committee's work and recommendations valuable; they should be kept in mind when the merged institution develops, as she thought it would, a new SRI. She also asked if there are online SRI's available for purchase.
Moderator Flynn said there were and that Armstrong uses one of those.
Lisa Abbott (CLASS) clarified that the upcoming SEC motion was in part to forward the committee's report to the responsible OWG, so it was not just being thrown away.

Jim LoBue (COSM) wondered if it was premature to discharge the committee when the SRI issue was going to continue.

Moderator Flynn noted they were being discharged because they had finished their work by submitting their final report.

Maurer totally agreed with Moderator Flynn.

LoBue opined that voting on the proposed SRI seemed to him to be an "inconsequential or premature or not sensible thing to do."

Moderator Flynn said the whole thing could be tabled, but that the SEC thought the issue was important enough to be put to a vote. He also noted that there was confusion about the charge, which apparently was not put in writing, but which he assumed came from the original SRI committee's report. He advised that in future the Senate be sure to put ad-hoc committee charges in writing.

Maurer noted that the Librarian's Report contains the minutes of his committee's first meeting, on March 10, 2015, where Moderator Humphrey verbally charged them, but agreed that they had not been given a written charge. Essentially, they were told to carry out the recommendations of the 2014 committee, which are all in writing.

Moderator Flynn noted that some of that earlier committee's recommendations led to changes to the *Faculty Handbook,* including about how it is inappropriate to make SRIs the sole or even majority factor in personnel decisions. He also noted that Moderator Humphrey had told him something different from what Maurer reported, and he had gone on what she said.

Maurer said he had gone on what could be found in that Librarian's report.

Jonathan Hilpert (COE) asked, were the new SRI approved, when it would go into effect because he thought it likely implementation would require some training.

Maurer said the motion would implement it this coming Fall. However, now that it was a one-size-fits-all form, training would be minimal.

Barbara King (CLASS) said that question 18, which asks "how interesting was the subject matter of this course," had been moved from evaluation of the instructor to evaluation of the course, "yet the question as it pertains to instructor offering a before

and after essentially, or the equivalent, that seems to generate much more information than the information we currently have in question 18." She asked him to comment. Maurer was not clear on her question. He rephrased it: "What you're saying is that on the current form there are two questions. One asks about their interest in the course before they took the course, and one asks about the interest of the courses at the end of the course, both of which are asked at the end of the course. Whereas on the proposed measure we ask one question about interest in the course and that's what you're asking me to comment on."

King said, "Sort of."She really wanted to know why the proposed new SRI asked this about the course rather than the instructor.

Maurer said it did not: "Section 2, the course question 7, how difficult was the subject matter? Question 8, how interesting was the subject matter? That's in the course, that's not in the instructor." King said, "Right, but currently I believe it was the instructor." Maurer said, "If I'm not mistaken, it's after question 18, in the stand-alone section in our current form."

Moderator Flynn said this discussion would be more appropriate when the actual motion was debated.

Ellen Hamilton (CHHS) wondered whether, should the SRI motion fail, the report would be forwarded to the OWG. Moderator Flynn said that should the SEC motion pass, the committee's report would go to the OWG whether the SRI motion passed or failed.

Attachment:

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