TO: Undergraduate Education Council  
Faculty Senate Executive Committee  

FROM: Advancement of Teaching Committee  

RE: UEC subcommittee recommendations on Student Evaluation of Teaching  

DATE: January 28, 2008  

The Advancement of Teaching (AOT) Committee was asked to review the UEC subcommittee recommendations for the Student Evaluation of Teaching. The committee had some electronic discussion of the recommendations prior to meeting, then had a meeting on Jan. 28, 2008, attended by all 7 committee members for further discussion.  

Members of the AOT expressed a variety of individual opinions about the SET in general. These included:  

- The SET asks the wrong questions at the wrong time. Feedback should be sought mid-quarter and at the end in a two-tiered approach. Most of the questions are not useful.  
- A major flaw is that students don’t have enough time to carefully complete the SET in class; it should be done on-line outside of class time. This needs to be tied to a response incentive.  
- A form of standardized student feedback can be useful, however, the SET should not be the only means of assessing teaching.  
- The SET appears to be used differently by every department on campus, thus limiting its usefulness as a standardized method of teaching assessment.  
- The questions don’t seem relevant and the response categories are ill-defined (comment by a student member of the committee).  
- The SET is so flawed that it should be scrapped rather than adopting proposed changes.  

In an attempt to find some consensus among committee members, we decided that a basic problem was that we did not understand the purpose of the SET. There seem to be four possible purposes that could be served:  
- to facilitate mentoring of teaching faculty by identifying strengths and weaknesses,  
- to evaluate worthiness for promotion and tenure,  
- as a measurement of student learning  
- to provide accountability, i.e. to identify poor teaching and intervene
The committee’s best guess is that the SET as it currently exists is most useful in assessing students’ satisfactions with their courses, which is obviously different from assessing how much they’ve learned or how effective the instructor is in teaching. If the purpose of the SET is to promote the advancement of teaching, or to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching, the committee could revisit the SET and come up with a more useful critique of the proposed changes or other suggestions for changing the form. If the purpose is something else, the committee would have different recommendations.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed changes.