GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
DRAFT MINUTES OF THE FACULTY SENATE MEETING
APRIL 3, 2019
Merten Hall, room 1201, 3:00 – 4:15 p.m.


Senators absent: Peggy Agouris, Kevin Avruch, Kenneth Ball, Sonia Ben-Ouagrham-Gormley, Jim Bennett, Henry Butler, Meagan Call-Cummings, Rick Davis, Michael Gilmore, Mark Ginsberg, Tamara Harvey, Rebecca Jones, Ellen Laipson, Kumar Mehta, Maury Peiperl, Gregory Robinson, Pierre Rodgers, Mark Rozell, Cristiano Stan, Donglian Sun, Kun Sun, John Zenelis.

Visitors present: Shelby Adams, Student Government, Senator; Sarah Ahn, Transparent GMU; Nicolo Allado, Student Senate, Mason for Survivors; Marian Almanza, Mason for Survivors; Kevin Augustyn, Director of Development, College of Humanities and Social Sciences; Monet Ballard, Student Government, Faculty Senate Liaison; Jackie Best, Mason for Survivors; Kerry Bolognese, Director, Federal Government Relations; Jeannie Brown Leonard, Dean, Institute for Academic Affairs and CAART; Dante Burrichter, Mason for Survivors; Theresa Calcagno, IT & Engineering Librarian, Mason Libraries; Vita M. Chalk, Associate Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences; Sara Deriso, Mason for Survivors; Angela Detlev, Interim Associate Provost, Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE); John Dooris, Assistant Director, Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE); Gesele Durham, Associate Provost, Academic Affairs, Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE); Michael Eagle, Assistant Professor, Computational and Data Sciences, College of Science; Mackenzie Earl, Student, Mason for Survivors; Kim Eby, Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Development; Meghan Foley, Student, Mason for Survivors; Kimberly Ford, Personnel Project Manager, Provost Office; Lewis Forrest, Associate Dean, University Life; Janine Gaspari, Student, Mason for Survivors; Timothy Gibson, Associate Professor, Communication; Matthew Grinberg, Student, Mason for Survivors; Gabriella Hutchinson, Student, Mason for Survivors (direct action); Melissa Issacs, CPR Associate, University Advancement; Donyae Johnson, Student, Mason for Survivors; Sean Keckley, Student, Mason for Survivors; Michelle Lim, Director, Strategic HR Services and Faculty Consulting, Human Resources/Payroll; Rebeca Matus, Student; Ignacia Moreno, Board of Visitors; Janette Muir, Associate Provost, Academic Initiatives and Services; Alvaro J. Muniz; Project Manager/Business Analyst, Academic Innovation and New Ventures; Steven Nodine, Director, Digital Learning, Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning; Shernita R. Parker, Interim Vice President, Human Resources/Payroll; Steven Pearlstein, Robinson Professor; Mickey Pereira, Student, Mason for Survivors; Dominic Pino, Student, GMU; Cassidy Pollard, Mason for Survivors; Shelley Reid, Director for Teaching Excellence, Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning; Michael Sandler, Director, Strategic Communications; Lauren Scheiderer, Student, GMU YDSA/Mason for Survivors; Lima Shekib, Student, GMU Mason for Survivors; Caitlin Slater, Student, Mason for Survivors; Smith, Mason for Survivors; Ashley
I. **Call to Order:** Chair Keith Renshaw called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

II. **Approval of the Minutes of March 6, 2019:** The minutes were approved.

III. **Announcements**
Chair Renshaw introduced Ignacia Moreno, a member of the GMU Board of Visitors. He offered an apology to a fellow Senator to whom he made a comment that may not have been seen as for the good of the faculty.

Chair Renshaw introduced President Cabrera. The President provided information from the morning’s Board of Visitors (BOV) meeting. The meeting was one in which the members reviewed the budget. Decisions on the budget will be made at the May 2 BOV meeting. An announcement to the campus community regarding the BOV discussions will be sent out later in the day.

The President noted that the Virginia legislature had additional tax revenue and created a fund of additional appropriations. However, if universities were going to accept the funding, they had to freeze tuition at last year’s rates. Mason took that deal. Undergraduate tuition will remain at last year’s levels while graduate tuition is likely to increase 3.5%. The final decision will be made at the May 2 BOV meeting.

The legislature’s budget does invest in salaries for faculty and staff. For instructional and research faculty, there should be a 3% base salary increase, plus 1% additional merit pools; this will be figured out by units. The matrix minimums will be raised. Classified staff has a different set of increases. For classified staff, there will be 2.75% base/2.25% merit all from the Commonwealth. There still need to be discussions around additional improvements for graduate students as we are at a disadvantage when we are recruiting talent as a Research I university. Provost Wu and Sr. VP Carol Kissal plan a Town Hall on April 9th.

Our research expenditures are up significantly; we are 50% more than a couple of years ago. Our goal is $250M, and we are squarely on that path.

On the Arlington expansion and Amazon’s headquarters locating here, the Commonwealth is investing $125M investment in Mason provided we find $125M as a match. The Commonwealth already authorized the demolition of the old department store (Arlington campus) this year. The plans are in design now, very likely the new facility will hold a whole set of tenants. It will host programs in digital innovation, not just advanced computing technology, and be a place for multidisciplinary work. NOVA is also interested in the building. This could be a place for innovation with the possibility of more companies to become connected to our faculty at the university.

President Cabrera introduced Trishana Bowden, new president of the GMU Foundation and Vice President, Advancement and Alumni Affairs.
Questions/Discussion:
A Senator asked for clarification that Virginia Tech and the Amazon HQ2 matching deal. President Cabrera noted that they did have the same deal, except that they are getting $250M to raise $250M match.

Senator Letiecq asked the following question:

Many of the students, many of them here today, contend that you are not doing enough to put the students first, to ensure their safety and wellbeing needs are met on this campus, especially among survivors of sexual assault. According to the Student Senate resolution recently passed, students want more resources dedicated to the adequate staffing of the title IX office, adequate resources for mental health and trauma-informed services, among other demands. The AAUP@Mason recently released our own resolution standing with the students’ calls for action.

Yet it appears that you have been redistributing resources on campus, building up your new ventures wing perhaps at the expense of other units, like title IX, the office of institutional research and effectiveness, as you work to convert us from a public university to a quasi for profit university.

My question: As our President, are you aligning our institution with Mason’s vision and values putting students first or are you focused on profits? And where is the evidence that a private-public online university will benefit students and faculty over for-profit shareholders.

President Cabrera addressed this question by first noting that at the BOV meeting earlier in the day students expressed their concerns and commended their commitment and the work they do. He noted the importance of eradicating sexual violence such that he served as one of two university presidents on the State Task Force on Sexual Violence in 2015, which produced a set of comprehensive recommendations. At Mason reports are up but this is being seen as a sign that survivors of sexual violence feel safer reporting. As there are more cases reported, there is more pressure on those responding, so more resources are going to the Title IX office. This remains a top priority but is not connected to other issues such as online education. On this issue the President reiterated his desire to better serve students whom Mason does not currently serve well, even if the Commonwealth provide resources to invest in online programs.

Several Senators asked President Cabrera for more information on the number of students that are expected to want online educational opportunities, details on options the university is investigating, and the role of faculty governance in making decisions regarding the next steps into the online arena, including a separate online only university. President Cabrera noted that there do seem to be data suggesting that there are many in Virginia and beyond who would be interested in completing their undergraduate education and who would be served by online opportunities. He also noted that the university has not yet made any decisions but that faculty will have a say in curriculum regardless of how the university moves forward. This includes issues of faculty relationships to the university and tenure, keeping in mind we currently have more faculty not tenured than tenured.
Chair Renshaw asked President Cabrera to comment on Justice Kavanaugh’s hiring at the law school as an adjunct professor. President Cabrera responded by noting that this was a case of faculty governance, whereby the BOV delegates specific decisions to the faculty, based on (1) faculty have the expertise to make specific decisions and (2) to create buffers from potential interference which may have political motivations. In this case, the Antonin Scalia Law School decided to hire Justice Kavanaugh to teach a class in the summer on constitutional law. President Cabrera said that it should be their decision as a faculty on whom they want to hire, as an example of shared governance.

Other Senators asked about information that was shared in the Justice’s confirmation hearing, whether the university should investigate. The President noted that the faculty of the Law School has evaluated his credentials and have hired him.

One Senator asked for information on the P3 conference at the end of April, the conference on public-private partnerships. President Cabrera noted that it was not an open conference but that he would pass along individuals’ information to the organizers if faculty wanted to attend.

Chair Renshaw thanked President Cabrera and invited Provost Wu to the floor.

Provost Wu noted that at the last meeting, the Faculty Senate passed resolution to form a Task Force to implementation of Gift Acceptance Committee. The Task Force was charged with developing processes and practices to ensure proper implementation of University Policy 1123. The Task Force has been formed and has six members. In addition to the three members in the resolution (Trishan Bowden, VP, Advancement and Alumni Relations; Bethany Letiecq and Betsy DeMulder) are Provost Wu, Keith Renshaw (both of whom served on the Internal Gift Review Committee), and Kathleen Diemer, Associate VP for Advancement Relations. Two additional meetings of this group are scheduled before April 24th.

Provost Wu and Sr. VP Carol Kissal will present “Mason Momentum: Strategies, Priorities, and Financial Plan” on Tuesday, April 9th 10:00 – 11:30 am in the Johnson Center Cinema.

IV. Committee Reports
A. Senate Standing Committees
   Executive Committee – Keith Renshaw, Chair
   The Executive Committee continues to work on gaining understanding about the use of university servers by affiliate organizations. The Senior Vice President and University Auditor have joined this effort. More information will be brought forward when available.

   Academic Policies – no report.

   Budget and Resources – no report.

   Faculty Matters – Girum Urgessa, Chair
The Faculty Evaluation of Administrators survey is out and posted on the Faculty Senate website. Urgessa also encouraged faculty to participate in Coache survey on Quality of Work Life: Faculty Engagement Survey as it closes on finish April 7th.

Nominations – Melissa Broeckelman-Post, Chair
The call for nominations for four faculty members to serve on BOV Committees closes Friday, April 5th.

Organization and Operations – no report.

B. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives
Effective Teaching Committee – Lorraine Valdez Pierce, Chair
Policy Recommendations for Faculty Evaluation Procedures Attachment A
Senate Chair Keith Renshaw commended the committee for its comprehensive look. Committee Chair Lorraine Valdez Pierce thanked committee members Alexandria Zylstra, Tom Wood, Esperanza Roman-Mendoza, Jennifer Hathaway. This report is the result of five years’ worth of work.

The Committee presented each of the policy recommendations to the Senate and entertained questions from the body. Senators asked questions about the technical requirements of students as well as the university if we were to move to an online evaluation form, as this seems to presume that if students are to perform the evaluation in class that all students have devices on which the form can be completed. Committee members noted that if this were to occur, the university would likely work with a third party vendor who would provide suggestions about technical needs for the university.

Accompanying Motions Attachment B
Chair Renshaw noted that Motion 1 in Attachment B should have been listed last so the discussion would begin at Motion 2. Motions 2, 3, and 4 in Attachment B were presented, moved, and seconded. After discussion, Motions 2, 3, and 4 were approved.

Student Evaluation of Teaching Form Draft Revision Attachment C
Discussion of this Attachment was postponed until the next meeting.

V. Unfinished Business
Additional Gift Committee Motion #2 (postponed) Attachment D

VI. New Business – none.

VII. Remarks for the Good of the General Faculty: A discussion about online education will take place today in Research 163 at 4:30 p.m.
VIII. **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 4:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Shannon N. Davis
Secretary
Policy Recommendations to the Faculty Senate of George Mason University for Revising Faculty Evaluation Procedures

March 21, 2019

INTRODUCTION

The Effective Teaching Committee, a university standing committee, is charged with developing and helping implement procedures that encourage and reward effective teaching, enabling faculty to improve their teaching effectiveness independent of any evaluation procedures, and implementing procedures for evaluation of effective teaching.

The Committee is charged with recommending policy to the Faculty Senate and monitoring the use of such policy for the evaluation of teachers and courses, including the following:

A. Review, improve, and provide guidance to the Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness (OIRE) on the course evaluation form and related procedures at least once every three years;

B. Review existing policies relating to the faculty evaluation process, identify alternatives to these policies and recommend changes to the Faculty Senate;

C. Work closely with the Stearns Center for Teaching & Learning to support the use of formative and self-assessment techniques and materials for promoting faculty professional growth and teaching effectiveness, including strategies for robust student feedback.

During 2018–19, based on input gathered over the past few years from all stakeholder groups - students, faculty, and administrators - we drafted recommendations for changing faculty evaluation policies, including using the Course Evaluation Form as only one of multiple measures for making high-stakes decisions about course instructors. We based these recommendations on stakeholder feedback, as well as on a review of best practice in the research literature and of actions taken at universities across the nation, as well as internationally. Our review revealed university actions that include modifying the course evaluation form, converting from paper to online forms and examining response rates, and in a growing number of cases, eliminating the course evaluation form altogether and replacing it with alternatives for faculty evaluation.

Our recommendations are aimed at three levels of impact and decision-making: (1) the University as institution, (2) programs and colleges, and (3) individual course instructors. At each level, we make recommendations for faculty evaluation and using the Course Evaluation Form as part of that evaluation. In addition, these recommendations support specific goals listed in Mason’s Strategic Plan, as indicated at the end of this document.
Part I. Institutional/University Level Recommendations

I. Implementation from paper to online forms

The Committee has been made aware by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE) that online evaluation of faculty is being seriously considered due to its cost-effectiveness. While this Committee does not take a position on whether or not an online Course Evaluation Form should be made mandatory for all instructors, we do have some concerns based on our reading of the research on this topic, the experiences of other universities, and stakeholder feedback. Our primary concern regards low response rates, which have been repeatedly documented when course evaluation forms go online. Another concern is the assumptions that are made when asking students for their input on the effectiveness of their instructors’ teaching. Stakeholder feedback suggests that students are unaware of how responses are being used, e.g., to make career decisions about instructors. The following recommendations are intended to address these concerns.

Recommendation 1: The Committee recommends that Course Evaluation Forms be administered in class to retain or enhance response rates.

- For the purpose of completing online forms in class, the University will need to ensure reliable Internet access in every classroom to enable students to access evaluation forms via laptop and mobile devices.
- The University will need to change instructions for administration of the Course Evaluation Form to include reserving 15 to 20 minutes of class time for completing the form. The time required is consistent with the time required in the current administration of paper-based forms.

Recommendation 2: The Committee recommends the University establish strategies to increase response rates for any Course Evaluation Forms that are administered online.

- For this purpose, the University can issue multiple automatic reminders (automatic and personalized by instructor).
- Any online Course Evaluation Form should allow students to save and resume their responses.
- Incentives should be determined at the university/college level and may need to be rolled out over multiple years. To prevent corruption of the evaluation process, the Committee strongly advises against the use of incentives by the instructor (e.g., extra credit). The Committee recommends monitoring the effectiveness of implemented incentives for increasing response rates.

Possible incentives may include:

- Providing early access to grades.
- Providing students with upload certification on Blackboard.
- Providing students early access to future course registration.
- Providing transcript credits for graduates or other credits such as Mason money for copies or bookstore purchases.
- Providing a lottery/raffle with small prizes.
- Recognizing academic programs for meeting target responses rates.
Recommendation 3: The Committee recommends that the University engage in education of the faculty on how to communicate the uses of the Course Evaluation Form results to students.

For this purpose, the University can develop training materials and/or information sessions regarding the role and use of the Course Evaluation Form and the purposes behind latest revisions being made to the form. The University can convey the Committee’s recommendations for instructor level practices (see below), such as developing and providing program/college level discussions regarding transparency on the use of Course Evaluation Forms in faculty evaluation, promotion, and tenure decisions.

Recommendation 4: The Committee recommends that the University engage in the education of students on how the results from Course Evaluation Forms are used in the faculty evaluation process.

To this end, the University should consider the following approaches:

- Involving student organizations and associations in developing and promoting training materials about the importance of evaluations.
- Encouraging use of midterm formative evaluations as an opportunity to educate students about the importance of student evaluations. These midterm evaluations can also show students that their opinion is taken into account by instructors.
- Including training materials in orientation and transfer packets.
- Involving advisors.
- Offering a university-wide competition for students to prepare education materials (e.g. video).

Recommendation 5: The Committee recommends that in the transition from paper to online Course Evaluation Forms, the University provide increased accessibility to data sets and reports to individual course instructors.

The University should continue to provide access to raw data resulting from Course Evaluation Forms to programs/colleges/departments and faculty to enable academic units to conduct their own statistical analysis in order to aid decision making.

- The University should continue to provide measures of central tendency (mode, median, mean), variability, and percentages in the standard report to faculty based on the results of the Course Evaluation Form used in each course.
- Departments and/or units should be provided with reports analyzing the relationship between class characteristics (student information items) and item responses.

Recommendation 6: The Committee recommends that the University ensure that all buildings allow for Internet access during the period designated for students to complete the Course Evaluation Forms.

This will require infrastructure upgrades, as not all classrooms on campus have the Wi-Fi capability to allow large numbers of students online at the same time.
II. Evaluation and Monitoring of Changes to the Course Evaluation Process

The Course Evaluation Form should be periodically reviewed and revised based on careful monitoring of its use in evaluating course instructors. As noted in its charge, the Committee recommends required periodic review of the Course Evaluation Form and of the faculty evaluation process.

**Recommendation 7:** The Committee recommends that OIRE collaborate with faculty to conduct research on how the results of Course Evaluation Forms are used to evaluate faculty and to improve teaching.

- For this purpose, the University should require colleges/programs to use results of the Course Evaluation Form responsibly in determining hiring, promotion and contract renewal decisions.
- The University should also require programs to determine minimum response rates by class size and/or related factors to ensure fair and appropriate use of Course Evaluation Forms.
- The University should support and encourage the use of multiple measures beyond Course Evaluation Forms in evaluating faculty including: peer observations, self-assessment, and portfolios.

**Part II: Program & College Level Recommendations**

Programs and colleges have flexibility in determining how to evaluate instructional faculty, so some variation is evident between one academic unit and another. On the other hand, many units share common practices when it comes to the faculty evaluation process and using the Course Evaluation Form to evaluate instructional faculty. In particular, Course Evaluation Forms are typically used for only summative evaluation at the end of a course, when improvement of teaching in the current course is no longer a possibility. Second, of all the items provided on the Course Evaluation Form, academic units tend to use only one or two overall numbers to make determinations of teaching quality. Third, programs and academic units often do not require student feedback for formative purposes, i.e., improving teaching effectiveness at any time during the course of instruction. To address these concerns, the following recommendations are offered.

**Recommendation 8:** The Committee recommends that the primary purpose of faculty evaluation, and of the Course Evaluation Form as part of that evaluation, should be for formative purposes, i.e., the improvement of teaching effectiveness.

With that goal in mind, academic units need to educate both faculty and students on the processes of formative assessment. This could include:

- Ensuring that course instructors are informed of the potential individualization of items on the Course Evaluation Form. The new Course Evaluation Form can be individualized to
provide information to improve their teaching. Instructors need to be educated on how to add items to the form.

• Preparing faculty to use student feedback, and the results of the Course Evaluation Form in particular, to improve teaching.

Instructors need to be guided in obtaining student feedback multiple times for more frequent feedback throughout each semester or course. Formative assessment is only useful while a course and the teaching are in process rather than at the end of the experience. Programs and colleges can use items from the Course Evaluation Form to devise alternative formats and sample forms for obtaining student feedback and examples of how that feedback can be used to improve teaching.

**Recommendation 9: The Committee recommends that programs and colleges educate students on the uses of the Course Evaluation Form.**

Programs and colleges should ensure that students know their unique role in the faculty evaluation process. In addition, programs and colleges should provide clear acknowledgment in writing that their feedback is confidential and will not be used to affect the grading process, as instructors are required to submit grades before receiving the results of Course Evaluation Forms. Academic units should consider adding a statement to each course syllabus regarding the purpose and use of the Course Evaluation Form in making high-stakes decisions for faculty accountability and assuring confidentiality of student responses.

Programs and colleges should plan on phased implementation of outreach and education efforts for both faculty and students. For example, in the initial year of implementation, programs and colleges can volunteer for faculty training, with rolling implementation of other colleges in subsequent years. In the second year, programs and colleges can proceed with student training by individual college, again with rolling implementation across subsequent years.

**Recommendation 10: The Committee recommends that faculty evaluation should have as its secondary purpose accountability, and programs and academic units should make use of multiple measures for this process, including peer review.**

**Peer Review**

Faculty should be evaluated for accountability purposes in making decisions regarding merit, hiring, tenure, and promotion. Peer review should be part of this evaluation process. While peer review is commonly used for decisions of promotion and tenure, it is less frequently used for the purpose of annual faculty evaluation. To prepare faculty for peer evaluation, programs and colleges should provide instructor training in the process of peer observation and the use of scoring protocols. This training should include approaches for limiting bias and increasing the validity of inferences and rater training for scoring protocols to ensure reliability of outcomes.

Peer evaluation should include review of syllabi, course materials, assessments, and grading practices. The process should also be based on classroom observation of instruction and the development and field-testing/validation of observation protocols. In addition, measures of learning outcomes and student perceptions of learning, such as the
Student Assessment of Learning Gains (SALG) should be included in the evaluation process. Course instructors should be provided with formats for self-assessment and documentation of their teaching, such as teaching portfolios and reflection statements based on student feedback.

Programs and colleges should plan on phased implementation of new annual evaluation procedures so that faculty are gradually introduced to and enabled to engage in self-assessment and peer review. For example, in the first year of implementation, instructors could be provided with information and guidance on preparing a teaching portfolio or statement. In the same year, some faculty could engage in peer review training, including the use of criteria for syllabus review. In subsequent years, faculty could be trained on how to conduct peer reviews based on class observations. Since peer review for annual faculty evaluation is probably not feasible for all faculty, programs and colleges could decide how often to conduct peer reviews, such as in alternating years, and how to determine eligibility of faculty for peer review.

**Multiple Measures**

Programs and academic units should use multiple measures to ensure the validity and reliability of the outcomes used in the faculty evaluation process. Given the high-stakes nature of faculty evaluation for career decision-making, programs and colleges should ensure the accuracy and fairness of the evaluation process for both full-time and part-time faculty.

To ensure metric reliability and validity, programs and colleges need to use multiple measures and take steps to ensure that no single or overall score is used to determine the teaching effectiveness of any course instructor. Instead of a single overall number or mean on Course Evaluation Forms, programs and colleges can use total mode, median, or mean scores in combination with other indicators of teaching effectiveness. Vague descriptors on the Course Evaluation Form or in scoring protocols need to be removed in order to improve the reliability of outcomes.

To increase the validity of inferences based on Course Evaluation Form results, programs and colleges should consider eliminating results of Course Evaluation Forms from faculty evaluation when response rates are low.

Programs and colleges should plan on phased implementation of revised faculty evaluation procedures, such as using the first year to determine the multiple measures to be used for faculty evaluation and developing those measures in a following year. In subsequent years, those measures can be pilot-tested and later implemented.

**Differentiating the Use of Course Evaluation Results**

Because in any given year some faculty teach more courses than others or teach required courses with large enrollments, or online courses, evaluations of teaching should be proportional to each instructor’s teaching load and course characteristics.

Programs and colleges should develop guidelines for instructor evaluation based on course characteristics such as course or student level, required vs. optional course, class size, delivery
platform, and Course Evaluation Form response rate. Some suggested weights might include 50% for peer review, 30% for self-assessment, and 20% of the total evaluation score based on the results of the Course Evaluation form, as each program determines these to be appropriate. Programs and colleges can apply weights to Course Evaluation Form results as determined by course load and course characteristics.

Programs and colleges should plan on phased implementation of differentiation of Course Evaluation Form results, such as using the first year to determine category weights for effective teaching by faculty role and the second year for determining policies for using results of the Course Evaluation Form.

**Recommendation 11: The Committee recommends that course instructors be informed of and educated on the migration from paper to online Course Evaluation Forms.**

The process of informing faculty about the move from paper to online forms could include the following:

- Explaining the timeline for the transition.
- Discussing how evaluations will be used in faculty evaluation.
- Considering how shifting response rates may impact faculty evaluation process.
- Ensuring that instructors know that they need to be proactive to ensure strong response rates, e.g., including statements in syllabi addressing course evaluations.

**Part III. Instructor Level Recommendations**

**I. Phased implementation from paper to online forms**

With Mason likely to be moving from paper to online Course Evaluation Forms, plans must be made to prepare both course instructors and students on the implications and ramifications of this migration. The recommendations below suggest actions that could be taken to prepare instructors and students for the migration.

**Recommendation 12: The Committee recommends that course instructors educate students on the importance, purposes, and uses of the Course Evaluation Form.**

Students need to be provided with information on the following:

- The purposes of the form, both formative and summative assessment
- Responses on the Course Evaluation Form are anonymous even though students must log in with student credentials to access the form
- Final grades are submitted before instructors receive results of the Course Evaluation Forms and, as such, are not affected by their responses on the form
- Assure students that the Course Evaluation Form has been developed and pilot-tested with feedback from all stakeholders, including both graduate and undergraduate students.
Instructors should describe the role of the Course Evaluation Form in the instructor evaluation process, e.g., for determining high-stakes decisions such as annual evaluation, promotion, contract renewal, and salary setting.

In addition, instructors can let students know that they plan to use their feedback on the form as formative assessment to improve the course.

II. Increasing online response rates

Research suggests that instructors can take steps to increase online response rates for Course Evaluation Forms. The Committee does not support the use of instructor-based incentives (e.g., extra credit for completing Course Evaluation Forms, snacks), as this will likely result in respondent bias.

**Recommendation 13:** The Committee recommends that course instructors of face-to-face courses use class time to allow students to complete the Course Evaluation Form.

In a process similar to paper forms, online Course Evaluation Forms can also be administered by setting aside 15 – 20 minutes of class time. During this time, students can logon and go online to access the form.

Instructors need to check their assigned classroom to determine that it can support all students on Wi-Fi at the same time so that the Course Evaluation Form can be completed during class time.

For online courses, instructors should monitor response rates and provide frequent written and oral reminders to students regarding completion of the form.

**Recommendation 14:** The Committee recommends that course instructors conduct multiple informal, mid-semester, anonymous, course evaluations.

Instructors can use online polling tools (e.g., Survey Monkey) to determine student perceptions of their teaching effectiveness and of student efficacy, such as approaches that encourage learning or challenges posed by the course. Instructors can summarize this feedback to the class with an indication of how it will be used to improve the course, such as which student suggestions will be implemented and which are not possible to implement. When the Course Evaluation Form is distributed at the end of the semester, instructors can remind students of the mid-semester evaluation to highlight that student feedback is valued, anonymous, meaningful, and implemented, while also explaining the end-of-semester form has much higher stakes.

An extensive list of references can be found on the web site of the Faculty Senate.

**Alignment of Policy Recommendations to Mason’s Strategic Plan (2017)**

This Committee's work supports the following Strategic Goals:

**Strategic Goal 8: DIVERSE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY**

*Create an inclusive and diverse academic community that reflects the diversity of the National Capital Region.*
Metric #1: Increase the proportion of instructional and research faculty, staff, administrators, and graduate students who come from historically underrepresented groups to better reflect the diversity of our undergraduate student body.

Rationale: Research has shown that using an overall measure of student satisfaction (such as Items 15 & 16 on the current Course Evaluation Form) results in negative bias toward minorities and females. By removing the bias inherent in using a single number for high-stakes evaluation, Mason can improve the accuracy and fairness of faculty evaluations and improve retention of minority and female faculty.

Strategic Goal 9: SUPPORT TEACHING AND FACULTY EXCELLENCE

Mason will provide an environment and resources to support faculty and encourage academic innovation and excellence.

Metric #1: Instructional/research faculty will report increasing levels of job satisfaction.

Metric #4: Annual increase in faculty’s satisfaction with renewal, promotion, and tenure policies, expectations, and reasonableness

Rationale: The Committee’s research regarding faculty satisfaction with the Course Evaluation Form indicated overwhelming dissatisfaction with the form itself, as well as how the form is used in renewal, promotion, tenure, and salary decisions. As such, much of this Committee’s work has focused on making those changes to the form that would increase usefulness to faculty, while also providing a fair and reasonable tool in employment decision-making.
**Strategic Goal 10: ELEVATE RESEARCH**

*Strengthen Mason’s research and scholarship portfolio to solidify the institution’s position as a public research university of the highest caliber.*

Metric #3: Recruit and retain 300 tenure-track and tenured faculty, with emphasis on amplifying Mason’s existing disciplinary strengths while also promoting multidisciplinary activities in research, scholarship, and creative activities.

**Rationale:** To retain research faculty who are also instructional faculty, the University must use fair and accurate evaluation methods. Fair and accurate evaluations can contribute to high-quality scholarly output, as well as demonstrating to research faculty that they are also valued for the quality of their teaching.

**Strategic Goal #12: GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT**

*Expand opportunities for global learning by creating partnerships and programs to support student and faculty mobility and collaboration.*

Metric #2: Increase total number of faculty engaged in international teaching or research projects.

**Rationale:** Training and development planned to enable faculty to succeed in a diverse campus environment must also provide access to fair and accurate evaluation of effective teaching. In particular, minority faculty must be supported and retained through the use of accurate evaluation systems. All faculty must be supported in effectively teaching international students and students from cultures different from their own.
Motions to the Faculty Senate - April 3, 2019

1. The Faculty Senate recommend advancing the revised course evaluation form to the Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness and to the Provost for pilot testing on a large-scale, university-wide basis with both face-to-face and online courses during AY 2019-20.

2. The Faculty Senate endorse institutional/university level faculty evaluation policy recommendations #s 1 – 7.

3. The Faculty Senate endorse program and college level faculty evaluation policy recommendations #s 8 - 11.

4. The Faculty Senate endorse instructor level faculty evaluation policy recommendations #s 12 - 14.
Revisions to the Course Evaluation Form

Recommendations by the Effective Teaching Committee – Feb. 21, 2019

As part of its charge as a university standing committee, the Effective Teaching Committee has prepared a revised Course Evaluation form for consideration by the Faculty Senate. The current Course Evaluation Form has not undergone any sort of significant revision since 2006. The revised form is the result of work conducted between 2014 and 2019 by eighteen faculty representing thirteen schools and programs from seven of the university’s ten schools or colleges. The Committee’s work has been informed by research into elements of effective teaching, as well as the purposes for which the form has been used. The Committee has revised the form to make it research-based, more useful to faculty for improving teaching, and more fair when used for the purposes of faculty evaluation (in support of Mason’s Strategic Goal #9, Metric #4).

We followed a rigorous development process, including (1) identifying elements of effective teaching; (2) revising course items; (3) obtaining feedback on the items from both faculty and students; (4) pilot testing the items; and (5) analyzing the results. We chose to undertake this development process for two reasons: (1) to ensure that the inferences made about teaching and the subsequent decisions based on those inferences are valid and can be supported by an instrument that adheres to measurement development principles, and (2) to protect all parties involved in a high-stakes evaluation process.

We developed new items based on a review of the literature on the uses of university student evaluations of teaching (SETs) for faculty evaluation with specific goals of increasing the validity and reliability of results. We also obtained faculty, administrator, and student input on indicators of effective teaching that matter to each group. We obtained feedback from all interested stakeholders by (1) conducting online surveys of students, program chairs, and instructional faculty; (2) holding focus groups with students and faculty from across the university; and (3) meeting with Program Chairs, Associate Provosts, the Provost, a college Dean, the Office of Digital Learning, the Faculty Senate Chair, the Faculty Senate, representatives of the Stearns Center for Teaching & Learning, and with the Director and staff of the Office for Institutional Research & Effectiveness (OIRE).

We reviewed a variety of sources on teaching effectiveness and identified eighteen potential categories that we ultimately collapsed into five. We identified categories of effective teaching by reviewing the criteria for teaching excellence set forth by the Center for Teaching and Faculty Excellence, criteria for genuine excellence in teaching set by the Provost’s Office, and item databases used by other universities. The categories that were ultimately included in
the revised Course Evaluation Form are: (1) student information, (2) student participation (3) learning outcomes, (4) course environment and experiences, and (5) instructor preparation and course organization. Some items may fall into overlapping categories, which suggests a need for further piloting. With additional trials and analysis, items should more clearly fall into distinct categories. We also added several open-ended responses as requested by faculty, as well as sample optional questions on the use of technology by the course instructor. We encourage faculty to customize the form by adding items of their own choosing.

We included student information items on class level (e.g., freshman vs. doctoral student), whether or not the course is required, the delivery format, self-reported information on absences from class, hours the student spent preparing for class, and expected final grade in the course. We included these self-reported items because the research shows that student ratings of faculty, as well as online response rates, can be highly correlated with some or all of these student and course characteristics.

We removed two items from the current form, Items 15 & 16, which ask for overall ratings of the teaching and of the course, respectively. These items, which in many schools and colleges across the university have become the only items out of the current twenty-three that are considered in decisions regarding teaching effectiveness for the purposes of annual evaluation, contract renewal, tenure, and promotion, were removed for several reasons. First, research on using these types of items suggests that they do not result in objective measures of teaching effectiveness and may lend themselves to gender and racial bias, as well as to bias based on grade expectations. Students may assign lower ratings to females and instructors of color and when they anticipate getting a final grade with which they do not agree. Grading leniency often leads to favorable ratings but may not lead to successful student performance in follow-on courses. Part-time instructors are particularly vulnerable to grade inflation due to the high-stakes nature of the evaluation forms. In addition, these items tend to be influenced by student satisfaction with an instructor without regard to any particular aspect of instruction, making the items susceptible to a variety of biases. Finally, these items offer no useful information to instructors for improving their teaching. By removing the bias inherent in using an overall rating for high-stakes evaluation, Mason can improve the accuracy and fairness of faculty evaluations and improve retention of minority and female faculty (in support of Mason’s Strategic Goal #8, Metric #1).

In May 2018, we pilot-tested a revised Course Evaluation Form in twenty-five online courses with almost 400 students in eight colleges or schools. Face-to-face courses were not included in the pilot-testing per direction of the Office of Institutional Research & Effectiveness (OIRE). Based on the results of the pilot test, we removed items determined to be redundant or unclear and reduced the number of items on the form to twenty Likert scale items (three less than the current form). An exploratory factor analysis on the items indicated a single factor (except for Items 7 & 8 on student participation), which we take as evidence of the construct validity of the revised form.
In preparing to use the new form, course instructors should be informed that a new Course Evaluation Form has been designed with its primary focus being to measure aspects of teaching effectiveness. The proposed form has been revised over four years of research and development, with a specific focus on stakeholder relevance (e.g., Mason faculty, deans/directors, and students). Following this Committee’s recommendations regarding how the form should be used, the University will ensure that the form serves primarily as a tool for improving teaching, with a secondary goal being accountability as one of multiple measures used for evaluation.

Since the new Course Evaluation Form is a departure from the current form, we suggest a university-wide discussion on the purposes for using the form, in light of research on its limitations and lack of reliability for summative purposes. Under no condition should the results of the Course Evaluation Form be used as a single indicator of teaching effectiveness. In every case where teaching is being evaluated, multiple measures should be used. This Committee has prepared a robust set of policy recommendations for faculty evaluation, including the use of this or any course evaluation form, which will be released as a separate document.

The Committee’s main recommendation is for the University to move forward with additional pilot testing of the revised form in a variety of course formats – online, face-to-face, and hybrid courses – with a stratified random sample of students representing each school or college in the University. Each pilot test would result in analysis and further revisions to the form to increase its usefulness and accuracy.

We submit this new Course Evaluation Form (see next page) to the Faculty Senate for discussion and consideration with the hopes that you will recommend it to the Provost’s Office for further pilot testing, and that the Provost moves to accept it as a faculty-generated tool for improving teaching effectiveness.
**Course Title (e.g., HIST 101 001)______________________**

**Name______________________________________**

### Student Information

1) What is your class level?  
- [ ] Fresh.  
- [ ] Soph.  
- [ ] Junior  
- [ ] Senior  
- [ ] Mast.  
- [ ] Doct.  
- [ ] Other

2) For your plan of study, this course is:  
- [ ] a required course  
- [ ] elective course  
- [ ] Mason Core/ general education course  
- [ ] Other

3) What is the class format/delivery?  
- [ ] Face-to-face  
- [ ] Hybrid  
- [ ] Online

4) How many times were you absent from class sessions?  
- [ ] 0-1  
- [ ] 2-3  
- [ ] 4-5  
- [ ] 6-7  
- [ ] 8 or more  
- [ ] N/A

5) On average, how many hours per week outside of class did you spend preparing for this class?  
- [ ] 1-3  
- [ ] 4-6  
- [ ] 7-9  
- [ ] 10 or more hours

6) What grade do you expect in this course?  
- [ ] A  
- [ ] B  
- [ ] C  
- [ ] D  
- [ ] F  
- [ ] Pass  
- [ ] Fail  
- [ ] Other

### Please thoughtfully consider the following statements and indicate your level of agreement or disagreement.

#### Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | N/A or Unknown

#### Student Participation

7) I completed all assigned tasks before each class.  
- [ ] 1  
- [ ] 2  
- [ ] 3  
- [ ] 4  
- [ ] 5  
- [ ] Other

8) I consistently contributed to class activities/discussions.  
- [ ] 1  
- [ ] 2  
- [ ] 3  
- [ ] 4  
- [ ] 5  
- [ ] Other

#### Learning Outcomes

9) I gained an understanding of the main concepts in this course.  
- [ ] 1  
- [ ] 2  
- [ ] 3  
- [ ] 4  
- [ ] 5  
- [ ] Other

10) I learned through the variety of learning opportunities (e.g. assignments, projects, papers, discussions, group work, peer review, exams) provided.  
- [ ] 1  
- [ ] 2  
- [ ] 3  
- [ ] 4  
- [ ] 5  
- [ ] Other

11) I found the instructor’s feedback helpful for learning.  
- [ ] 1  
- [ ] 2  
- [ ] 3  
- [ ] 4  
- [ ] 5  
- [ ] Other

12) I learned due to the instructor’s teaching methods/style.  
- [ ] 1  
- [ ] 2  
- [ ] 3  
- [ ] 4  
- [ ] 5  
- [ ] Other

#### Course Environment/Experiences

13) The instructor created an environment that facilitated my engagement with course content.  
- [ ] 1  
- [ ] 2  
- [ ] 3  
- [ ] 4  
- [ ] 5  
- [ ] Other

14) The instructor encouraged expression of diverse perspectives.  
- [ ] 1  
- [ ] 2  
- [ ] 3  
- [ ] 4  
- [ ] 5  
- [ ] Other

15) The instructor offered opportunities for students to provide feedback on the course.  
- [ ] 1  
- [ ] 2  
- [ ] 3  
- [ ] 4  
- [ ] 5  
- [ ] Other

16) The instructor offered opportunities to meet outside of class time, such as virtual or in-person office hours.  
- [ ] 1  
- [ ] 2  
- [ ] 3  
- [ ] 4  
- [ ] 5  
- [ ] Other
17) The instructor used technologies and/or resources/tools that increased my engagement with course content.

18) The course organization supported my learning.

19) The instructor clearly communicated course requirements to students.

20) The instructor clearly presented the course content.

Instructor Preparation and Course Organization

Please respond to the following questions

1) Were there any significant obstacles to learning that were beyond the control of the instructor (e.g., scheduling or technology problems, university closings, limitations caused by other students or by group dynamics)? If so, please explain.

2) What 2 – 3 aspects of this course were most valuable to your learning experience?

•

•

•

3) What 2 – 3 aspects of this course were least valuable to your learning experience?

•

•

•

4) What modifications do you suggest for the next time the course is taught?

Thank you for your feedback!

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SAMPLE ITEMS FACULTY MAY CHOOSE TO ADD

### Technology Use

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<td>1) Navigation throughout the online components of the course was appropriate for the complexity of the course.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>2) The course directed students to technology resources to help them succeed in an online learning environment.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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3) To what extent did the technology used in this course (e.g., Blackboard, synchronous learning, discussion board, Wikis) facilitate your learning?

Revised February 21, 2019
Attachment D

Motion #2

With regard to Article II Section C.6, the FS recommends that the full GAC will determine if a gift meets criteria for additional scrutiny. If the faculty representatives on the GAC are not in accord with the determination of the committee regarding the need for review, they shall raise their objections with the executive committee of the Faculty Senate for further review. If the Executive Committee concurs with the concerns of the faculty representatives on the GAC, the matter shall be brought before the full Faculty Senate for review and recommendation of gift acceptance. The vote of the faculty senate shall determine review processes under these circumstances.

The motion was amended to remove the last sentence: "The vote of the FS shall determine review processes under these circumstances." The amendment was approved. A second amendment, "with the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate to determine the best way to present the issue to the Faculty Senate" was added to the penultimate sentence. The amendment was approved.

The motion as amended reads:

With regard to Article II Section C.6, the FS recommends that the full GAC will determine if a gift meets criteria for additional scrutiny. If the faculty representatives on the GAC are not in accord with the determination of the committee regarding the need for review, they shall raise their objections with the executive committee of the Faculty Senate for further review. If the Executive Committee concurs with the concerns of the faculty representatives on the GAC, the matter shall be brought before the full Faculty Senate for review and recommendation of gift acceptance, with the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate to determine the best way to present the issue to the Faculty Senate.

The Senate voted to postpone further discussion on this motion to move to the elections of members to the Implementation Task Force, before the end of the meeting.