

Faculty Senate - Teaching / Learning Council Annual Report for 2010 – 2011 Academic Year

Submitted by Lloyd M. Rinehart, Chair – Teaching / Learning Council

The Teaching / Learning Council (TLC) of the Faculty Senate completed three major projects for the 2010 – 2011 academic year. Those projects included two, which are standard TLC activities: solicitation and evaluation of the nominees for the Chancellor’s Excellence in Advising Award, and solicitation and evaluation of the nominees for the Chancellor’s Excellence in Teaching Award. During this academic year, the TLC also took on an assignment requested by the Provost’s Office to initiate an investigation of possible alternatives which might lead to a reduction in the number of items used in the “Student Instructional Assessment System – SAIS.” The first two of these activities were completed and submitted to the Chancellor (Teaching Award and Advising Award evaluations) for final determination of 2010 – 2011 recipients. In addition, documentation was sent to the Provost’s Office including the importance rankings of the SAIS items for consideration by the administration in addressing the process of assessing student perceptions of instructional quality.

Below are the 2010 – 2011 members of the Teaching / Learning Council. Without the hard work of these individuals, the TLC annual tasks could not be accomplished.

First Name	Last Name	Role / University Unit	
Lloyd	Rinehart	Chair	Marketing & Logistics
Ruth	Darling	ex officio	
Joy	DeSensi	ex officio	
Sally	McMillan	ex officio	
Elizabeth	Pemberton	ex officio	
Dave	Schumann	ex officio	
Jon	Gray	Graduate Student Senate	
Teri	Henke	Graduate Student Senate	
Crystal	Diaz	Student Government Association	
Zac	Giffin	Student Government Association	
Sarah	Lankford	Student Government Association	
Caitlin	Quandt	Student Government Association	
Katherine	Ambroziak	Faculty	Architecture
Robyn	Blakeman	Faculty	Advertising & Public Relations
Marianne	Breinig	Faculty	Physics
Linden	Craig	Faculty	Pathobiology
Hillary	Fouts	Faculty	Child and Family Studies
Todd	Freeberg	Faculty	Psychology

Matthew	Gray	Faculty	Forestry, Wildlife & Fish
Michael	Handelsman	Faculty	Modern and Foreign Languages
Russel	Hirst	Faculty	English
Ron	Kalafsky	Faculty	Geography
Alex	Long	Faculty	Law
Natalia	Pervukhin	Faculty	Modern and Foreign Languages
Rupy	Sawhney	Faculty	Industrial Engineering
Gregory	Sedrick	Faculty	UT Space Institute
Robert	Sklenar	Faculty	Classics
Susan	Speraw	Faculty	Nursing
Edgar	Stach	Faculty	Architecture
Marlys	Staudt	Faculty	Social Work
Klaus	Van den Berg	Faculty	Theatre

The Excellence in Advising Award process was established through solicitation of nominees via e-mail contact lists accessed through the colleges and units of the university. From the nominations received, each nominee was contacted for additional information. A subgroup of the TLC was formed as a team to review the documentation from both the nominators, and the nominees (no members of this subgroup / team were nominated for this award). The team then ranked the nominees and decided which nominees should be interviewed for consideration by the Chancellor.

Below are the recipients of the Chancellor's Excellence in Advising Award:

Lisa Byrd – Engineering
Luis Cano – Modern and Foreign Languages
Betsy Sutherland – Classics

The Excellence in Teaching Award process was also established through a solicitation of nominees via e-mail contact lists in the colleges and units. Over 50 faculty and instructors were nominated by all sectors of the university community. Each nominee was then contacted for additional information to support his / her nomination. The materials received were then consolidated with the materials from the nominators, and sent to a subgroup of the TLC (a different subgroup than those who evaluated the Advising Award nominees, and again, no member of this group was nominated for this award) who acted as a team to evaluate the materials. All members of this team were asked to review all of the materials of all nominees who provided documentation, and then identify (and rank) the top nine candidates out of the total group. The outcome of this process lead to the identification of a group of candidates (approximately 18% of the original set of nominees) who were recommended by the team for observation in the classroom. Each of the members of the team was then assigned to observe three of the candidates in the classroom and rank the three, based on their observation of the classroom activities. Therefore, each instructor was observed three times, yielding a final aggregate ranking of those observed. The outcomes of that ranking were then sent to the Chancellor for final determination of the recipients in 2010 – 2011.

Below are the recipients of the Chancellor's Excellence in Teaching Award:

Jed Diamond – Theatre
Michael Handelsman – Modern and Foreign Languages
Mary McAlpin – Modern and Foreign Languages

The 2010 – 2011 academic year is the second year of process revision for soliciting and evaluating nominees for the Chancellor's Awards for Excellence in Advising and Excellence in Teaching. The process is gradually improving with significantly increased numbers of nominations by all members of the university community. However, it is not a perfect process at this time. The challenge for next year is to improve in three areas. First, the colleges and units will be contacted (by the Chair of the TLC) to work on "streamlining" the process for soliciting the nominations. This should make processing nominations less cumbersome, and will increase the quality of documentation available for the evaluation teams. Second, a meeting will be scheduled with the Chancellor sometime before the start of the Fall 2011 semester to secure greater clarification from the Chancellor as to how the Advising Award structure will be established. There are many different types of advising that occur at UTK and UTSI, and the purpose of that meeting with the Chancellor will be to more clearly delineate how he would like to establish categories of advising (if he wants to at all) and how that might be reflected in the Excellence in Advising award solicitation and evaluation process. Finally, during the spring and summer, effort will be given to establishing what SAIS data are accessible and whether the TLC may have access to those data so they may be used by the Teaching Award evaluation team when evaluating the nominees. During 2010 – 2011 the TLC became aware that SAIS data is difficult to access as a part of the evaluation of the candidates for the Excellence in Teaching Award. Hopefully, we can establish what data are available and what data cannot be accessed in 2011 – 2012. It should be recognized that the above items of future direction for the TLC are not reflective of a broken process. However, they are indicative of a spirit of continuous improvement of the process.

Finally, the Provost's Office contacted the TLC during the Spring Semester of 2010 about contributing to the knowledge base of how to handle SAIS response rates. Significant concern has arisen on the campus concerning the transition from the "paper based system" to the "electronic based system" for both quality of data, and the fact that those data are used as a part of faculty evaluations. One of the primary concerns is the low response rates that have initially evolved from early adoption of the electronic system. A possible method for attempting to address that issue is to reduce the number of items asked of students in the process. The TLC agreed to offer insight into which items might be used (or removed from the set of items included) in future SAIS execution. First, the 33 items on the current form were classified into three groups (absolute, relative, and environmental). Absolute items were items which were perceived to not require a point of reference. The relative items were items which require a point of reference. Finally, some items were identified as "environmental items. These items in many cases address inputs that may be accessible from other elements of the information system, and may not be necessary to collect in the electronic structure.

Second, the items were classified into content categories as follows:

Course Organization and Structure

Data can now be available from the database offering actual grades, and class standing information

Instructor Attitude Toward Learning

Instructor Effectiveness

Overall Quality and Challenge

Student Effort in the Learning Experience

The 33 items were then ranked by the participating members of the TLC. The summation of that ranking system is presented below in order from the item that was identified as the most important items to include (at the top), to the item that was identified as the least important item to include (at the end). Therefore, if it were to be decided that the number of items currently used is detrimental to response rates, and a reduction of items is desired, the list below might provide guidance for which ones to include.

The instructor's contribution to the course was (Excellent to Very Poor):

This course as a whole was (Excellent to Very Poor):

The intellectual challenge presented was (Much Higher to Much Lower):

The amount of effort you put into this course was (Much Higher to Much Lower):

The amount of effort to succeed in this course was (Much Higher to Much Lower):

The instructor's effectiveness in teaching the subject matter was (Excellent to Very Poor):

Instructor's interest in whether students learned was (Excellent to Very Poor):

The course content was (Excellent to Very Poor):

Clarity of course objectives was (Excellent to Very Poor):

Amount you learned in the course was (Excellent to Very Poor):

Explanations by instructor were (Excellent to Very Poor):

Instructor's enthusiasm was (Excellent to Very Poor):

Use of class time was (Excellent to Very Poor):

Course organization was (Excellent to Very Poor):

Instructor's use of examples and illustrations was (Excellent to Very Poor):

Student confidence in instructor's knowledge was (Excellent to Very Poor):

Instructor's enhancement of student interest in the material was (Excellent to Very Poor):

Clarity of student responsibilities and requirements was (Excellent to Very Poor):

Availability of extra help when needed was (Excellent to Very Poor):

Instructor's ability to present alternative explanations when needed was (Excellent to Very Poor):

Interest level of class sessions was (Excellent to Very Poor):

Relevance and usefulness of course content were (Excellent to Very Poor):

Sequential Presentation of concepts was (Excellent to Very Poor):

Evaluative and grading techniques (tests, papers, projects, etc.) were (Excellent to Very Poor):

On average, how many hours per week have you spent on this course, including attending classes, doing readings, reviewing notes, writing term papers, and any other related course work?

Grade I expect I this course (A, B+, B, C+, C, D, F, Satisfactory, No Credit, Other):

Your involvement in this course (doing assignments, attending classes, etc.) was (Much Higher to Much Lower):

Reasonableness of assigned work was (Excellent to Very Poor):

From the total average hours above, how many do you consider were valuable in advancing your education?

In regard to your academic program, this course is: (in my major, in my minor, a distribution requirement, an elective, other)

My class is: (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Graduate, Other)

Do you expect your grade in this course to be (Much Higher to Much Lower):

When registering, was this a course you wanted to take (Yes, No, Neutral)?

These materials were submitted to the Provost's Office as a point of reference as the administration tackles this issue.