ARTS, SCIENCES & EDUCATION

Policy on the Distribution of Student Comments in Teaching Evaluations

Whereas the manner in which the quantitative portion of student evaluations has been distributed has been consistent and uniform, that of the student comments has not. Historically, departments have formulated their own policies; however, as the number of intra-college competitions increases and as tenure and promotion files receive greater scrutiny and require more consistency, the College needs to regularize its practices.

The inclusion of student comments is a necessary component of the presentation of the total picture of the student evaluation of the instructor. The faculty's personnel file as well as any other type of file or portfolio being prepared needs to include the complete set of information of the students' assessment of the course.

Whereas the quantitative data is secure in that the department and faculty are provided with the tabulated results complied by a third party (Institutional Research), the department needs to secure the qualitative "data," i.e., the students comments so that when faculty present them as part of a file, the reader of the file can feel confident that all the comments have been included. The department needs to establish a system that can guarantee that all the comments are available.

The following are two options:

1) transcribing the comments onto a separate sheet
   advantage: the transcription doesn't occupy much space in the file (either the personnel file or the portfolio being prepared)
   disadvantage: labor intensive

2) numbering the individual sheets containing the comments so that anyone reading them can quickly discern if there are any missing; one way of doing this is by numbering them 1/15, 2/15, 3/15, etc.
   advantage: easy to do
   disadvantage: 1) the sheets take up a lot of room in a file or portfolio; this became an issue with the TIP files when the committee imposed a maximum width for the files, and faculty in certain departments had to use a second binder to incorporate all their student comments
   2) possible identification of student from the handwritten comments.

It is very important that the personnel files and that the files/portfolios faculty prepare for presentation to committees be as complete as possible. The departments need to guarantee that all the student comments as well as the numerical computation of the student evaluations are complete and accurate.

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