

Final Report of the Student Evaluation of Teaching Committee

January 2003

Submitted to:

**Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
University of South Alabama
Mobile, AL 36688**

Acknowledgement: The SET Committee acknowledges the contribution of Steve Rockwell, Associate Professor of Communication, for his assistance in developing the web survey of Chief Academic Officers described in this report. Keith Nicholls, ex-officio member of the committee, supervised the email and web survey data collection and analysis, and wrote the corresponding sections in this report.

Final Report of the Student Evaluation of Teaching Committee

Executive Summary

A university wide committee, with representatives from USA administration, faculty and students, was established in September 2001. The Student Evaluation of Teaching Committee was charged to: (1) Study the broad issue of student evaluation of teaching; (2) Examine the issue of whether or not results of such evaluations should be made available to students; and (3) Examine the issue of whether or not the University of South Alabama should establish a requirement that all sections of all classes be evaluated each semester.

The committee completed four tasks: (1) Inventoried student evaluation of teaching (SET) policies and procedures at USA; (2) Reviewed the scientific literature to identify best SET practices used at U.S. colleges and universities; (3) Conducted a survey of chief academic officers to estimate the percentage of schools that publish results of student ratings of instruction, and to identify the likely effects of publication on faculty and student morale; and, based on the findings from these activities, (4) Developed recommendations for changing policies and procedures at USA.

Based on its research and deliberations, the SET committee makes the following recommendations:

*1. The committee does **not** recommend, at this time, that results of student ratings of instructional effectiveness be published and made available to students (7 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstentions).*

Rationale: We reached this decision based on the following:

a. Our surveys of chief academic officers indicated that publication of SET results had only modest benefits for those institutions that currently engage in the practice. The likely primary benefit of such a policy would be symbolic: The policy would communicate that USA is friendly to student interests in effective teaching. We believe that if we were to publish such findings on our campus, it is likely that our experience would mirror that of these other institutions: We, too, would achieve a modest symbolic benefit.

b. The most important potential beneficiaries of a policy to publish such results are students. Our committee could not detect much student interest in this issue. The student members of our committee did not report much enthusiasm for the topic. When it was reported to us that student government had passed a resolution in favor of the practice, we requested a copy of the resolution. Our student committee members were unable to produce it. Our committee was open to student input, and actively solicited it, but we received very little indication of student interest.

c. Based on the results of our survey of other campuses, and anecdotal reports to committee members from USA faculty, we believe that a large number of faculty members at USA would be opposed to this policy.

d. Many faculty members lack confidence in the validity, reliability and utility of the current evaluation form used in their departments. To publish evaluation results gathered using a form that is widely perceived to have questionable validity would create unnecessary conflict on campus.

e. Given the lack of student interest, the perception of significant faculty opposition to the policy, the perception that we currently use a flawed SET form and the likely small benefits to be realized, the SET committee does not believe, at this time, that the potential benefits exceed the costs of such a policy. If students become mobilized on this topic in the future, and if USA develops an evaluation form and procedure that are widely perceived as legitimate, then the committee recommends that the University be open to reconsideration of the issue of publishing SET results.

2. The committee recommends that all colleges require that student evaluations of teaching effectiveness be collected for all classes taught each semester (7 votes in favor, 1 opposed, 1 abstention)

Rationale: Currently, some units of the University only collect data at periodic intervals – it is common in Arts and Sciences, for example, for data to be collected only in fall semester. Other units gather student ratings in all classes. There are two major purposes for assessing student perceptions of teaching effectiveness. The first is summative (or evaluative): to be used in making personnel decisions (e.g. tenure and promotion and annual evaluations). The second is formative: to assist with improvement of instruction. If SET results are to be used in personnel decisions, then systematic sampling (e.g. only collecting data in fall semester) can yield biased data. For example, if one faculty member only teaches lower division classes in the fall, graduate and upper division classes in the spring, and evaluation data is only gathered in the former, his or her evaluation scores may be biased negatively since evaluations tend to be lower in freshmen level courses. To avoid this and similar sources of bias, it makes sense to collect data in every section taught. If SET results are to be used to improve instruction, it also makes sense to collect the data for all courses – presumably we want to improve all instruction, not only that which is delivered in selected classes.

3. The committee recommends that a new standard evaluation form be developed that may be used campus wide (9 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions).

Rationale: Each of the experts identified in our literature review recommended that evaluation forms and procedures be developed with full participation and “buy-in” by the faculty. We believe that the standard form currently used by many programs lacks the confidence of the faculty. We recommend that a new form, or new forms, be developed.

One good approach, recommended by several experts, uses a two part form. The first part would include a common set of questions that can be used in all classes regardless of teaching format. The second part of the form would be tailored to the particular characteristics of the class, could vary by class format, and would allow for considerable flexibility on the part of departments and individual instructors. Regardless of the final structure of the questionnaire, we feel that a new form needs to be developed, ideally by a committee primarily composed of faculty members, at least some of whom have expertise in social science and/or education research methods, including measurement issues in questionnaire construction. Student participation in this effort is also encouraged. This committee should consider adopting (and adapting as needed to the local environment) forms and procedures validated through use at other universities.

4. All SET instruments should be evaluated for reliability and validity. This evaluation should occur during the construction of the instruments, and periodically thereafter (9 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions).

Rationale: All experts in SET recommend this approach. The committee believes that many USA faculty question the face validity of the current standard form, and therefore systematic evaluation of SET instrumentation will increase the perceived legitimacy of the SET process.

5. The Committee recommends that several improvements in SET procedures be implemented. We recommend that results be archived electronically to allow for comparisons among faculty within departments and colleges within a given semester, and across semesters. We recommend that meaningful reports of SET results be prepared for all users of the results, including instructors, chairs and deans. We recommend that the data collection process be made user friendly, reducing the coding burden on proctors as much as possible. (9 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions)

Rationale: All of these reforms will increase confidence in the SET process among faculty.

6. Finally, the Committee recommends that the Office of Institutional Research, or some other academic support unit, should be charged with maintaining an effective, valid, and reliable SET process (9 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions).

Rationale: Current SET processes are decentralized, without coordination across colleges, and without much support from any University office. The Computing Center handles physical processing, but does not deal with issues such as measurement quality (reliability and validity) or interpretation of results. Current reports are misleading and not easily interpreted. The computer center does not archive data, and therefore cannot produce reports that contain meaningful comparisons, either across time or across academic programs. Assigning data collection, analysis, and reporting tasks to a single support unit will facilitate the reforms identified in recommendation #5.

Committee Charge

The Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) Committee was formed Sept. 19, 2001 with members appointed by Pat Covey, Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs. The committee was charged to:

- (1) Study the broad issue of student evaluation of instructors;
- (2) Examine the issue of whether the information should be made available to students; and,
- (3) Examine the issue of whether there should be a campus wide requirement that every course and section be evaluated by students.

Committee Members

G. David Johnson, Chair (Associate Dean, now Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences)
Cindy Stanfield, Dept. of Biomedical Sciences
Doug Haywick, Dept. of Earth Sciences
Randy Flynn, Associate Dean, Mitchell College of Business
Harold Pardue, School of Computer and Information Sciences)
Joyce Woodruff, Dept. of Adult Interdisciplinary Studies
Brenda Litchfield, Dept. of Behavioral Studies and Educational Technology
Ted Huddleston, Dept. of Chemical Engineering (now retired)
Joy Carlson, Dept. of Adult Health Nursing
Louise Hermanson (Faculty Senate Rep.) Dept. of Communication (now deceased)
Ms. Leigha Ballard, SGA Senator
Mr. Mark Spivey, SGA Senator
Keith Nicholls, Dept. of Political Science/Criminal Justice, Ex-Officio
Jerry Wright, University Libraries, Ex-Officio

Committee Activities

The committee divided its work into the following tasks:

- I) Review of existing policies and practices at USA regarding student evaluation of teaching.
- II) Review of the scientific literature regarding student evaluation of teaching. The goal of the literature review was to identify “best practices.”
- III) Study the issue of publication of results of student evaluation. This included internet surveys of a sample of Chief Academic Officers at U.S. colleges and universities. The purposes of the survey were to estimate the percentage of schools that publish results of student ratings of instruction, and to identify the likely effects of publication on faculty and student morale.

IV) After comparing practices with those of other campuses, including the identification of best practices, develop recommendations for changing policies and procedures at USA regarding student evaluation of instruction.

I. Summary of Current Student Evaluation of Teaching Policies and Practices at USA

SET Policies at USA

The USA Faculty Handbook (3.17.2) states that “All faculty ... are evaluated by students at least one time during each academic year. A computerized questionnaire is available through the University Computer Center for this purpose.” The Handbook does not mandate use of any particular form or set of questions. The University’s Policy and Procedures statement regarding Part-Time Faculty states that “part time instructors will be evaluated by students in every course” (p.4), using the same procedures used for full time faculty in their college.

Current SET Practices at USA

Members of the committee surveyed departmental chairs in their respective colleges to determine actual SET practices at USA. The following paragraphs summarize the results of this survey. The most widely used form for SET at USA is called the “Survey of Student Opinions of Teaching” (hereafter called the Standard Form). It is an optically scanned form which contains 23 questions used to “rate the instructor.” Response categories for each question are: excellent, good, adequate, poor, or very poor. Departments (or particular instructors) may add questions to the list of 23. The computer center analyzes forms completed by students and produces a report for each class. In addition, a report is typically produced aggregating results for all classes taught by an instructor in a given semester. These reports include, theoretically, comparisons for a given instructor to other instructors in the department, the college, and the University. In practice, these comparisons are restricted to classes submitted simultaneously, which usually includes only instructors in the same department. Even so, the standard report, prepared by the Computer Center, includes column headings for mean ratings of the following: instructor, department, college, and “all in run.” It is likely that most readers assume, mistakenly, that the instructor is being compared to other instructors in the college and University. Currently, USA does not regularly compile data that will allow, routinely, for meaningful comparisons across colleges, or even between departments in different colleges. Since they use a single form across all departments, some colleges (e.g. Colleges of Business, Engineering, and Nursing and School of Computer and Information Sciences) are able, at least theoretically, to compare student ratings of instructor effectiveness between departments within their own college. Because it

Table 1. Departments Reporting that the Standard Form Is Used for SET

<u>College</u>	<u>Departments</u>
Allied Health	Biomedical Sciences and Speech and Hearing Pathology
Arts & Sciences	Art, Chemistry, Communication*, Drama*, Earth Sciences**, English, History, Physics, Political Science and Criminal Justice*, Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology*
Computer & Information Science	All departments (This College adds 13 items to the standard list of 23)
Continuing Education	Adult Interdisciplinary Studies and Developmental Studies*.
Education	Behavioral Studies and Educational Technology, Curriculum and Instruction*, Health, P.E., and Leisure, and Special Education
Engineering	All departments. (Mechanical Engineering has also designed an additional form which asks students to assess attainment of specific course objectives.)
Mitchell C. of Business	As of Fall 2001, all departments used standard form. College will implement new form for 2002-3
Nursing	None

* At least some instructors add questions to the standard list of 23.

** Department is currently developing new forms to replace the standard form.

Table 2. Departments Reporting that an Alternative Form is Used for SET

<u>College</u>	<u>Departments</u>
Allied Health	Clinical Lab Sciences, Occupational Therapy, and Physical Therapy
Arts & Sciences	Air Force Studies, Biology, Foreign Languages, Marine Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics, Music, and Philosophy
Computer & Information Science	None
Continuing Education	Education as a Second Language, Emergency Management Systems, International Programs
Education	Educational Leadership and Foundations (open ended questions only).
Engineering	None
Mitchell C. of Business	2001: None; 2002-3: All departments will use MCOB form.
Nursing	Unique forms developed for College. Each class uses two forms, one to evaluate performance of instructor, and one to evaluate class content and structure. Three versions of the forms are used depending on type of class: theory, clinical, or practicum

does not archive SET results, those colleges that use the Computer Center to score forms, however, do not receive reports containing comparisons across departments, unless they submit all evaluations simultaneously.

Departments using the Standard Form (as of fall semester 2001) are listed in Table 1, and those reporting use of alternative forms are listed in Table 2.

Frequency and Scope of Evaluation: Some departments evaluate every semester. Most evaluate instruction once per year, typically in the Fall Semester. Almost all departments report that all full time, and part time, faculty members are evaluated at least once per year. One department (Chemistry) reported that in the past some faculty did not participate in SET, but currently all faculty members are evaluated at least once per year.

Scoring of SET Forms: Most colleges and departments rely on the Computer Center to scan and score forms. Among those that do not are Foreign Languages and Music in the College of Arts & Sciences, and Educational Leadership and Foundations, in the College of Education. Results in these three departments are not analyzed quantitatively. Nursing scans, analyzes, and reports quantitative results on its own, without assistance of the Computer Center.

Satisfaction with Current Procedures: Departments and Colleges which have developed their own forms seem to be pleased with existing forms and procedures. Reports from chairs of departments utilizing the standard form are mixed. Chairs of the following departments expressed dissatisfaction with the current form: Earth Sciences; English; one in Allied Health; and Health, P.E., and Leisure. Although the committee did not conduct a survey of USA faculty, anecdotal evidence suggests that many faculty members believe that the current form can be improved. The committee could not find evidence that the validity and reliability of the current form has ever been measured.

II. Literature Review: Student Ratings of Teaching Effectiveness

This review of academic literature focuses on the following issues: the legitimate and illegitimate purposes and uses of SET, including a discussion of their limitations; validity and reliability of student ratings; correlates of student ratings, including those that might call into question their validity; and, institutional practices and procedures that are recommended to maximize the practical effectiveness of SET.

Student ratings of teaching effectiveness have at least two functions: 1) Summative evaluation: To provide valid, reliable, and useful information for evaluation of teaching effectiveness (for tenure and promotion, merit raises); and 2) Formative Evaluation: To provide feedback so instructors can improve teaching performance.

Student ratings can be valid and reliable measures of teaching effectiveness – in fact, they may be the most valid and reliable of the available measures of teaching

effectiveness (Wachtel 1998). Validity of student ratings, for example, has been tested in what Ory (2001) calls the “multisection” approach. In this research design, student ratings are compared to learning outcomes for students enrolled in different sections of the same class. In the strongest design, sections are made as equivalent as possible (except for assignment of instructor), including common texts, common tests, and random assignment of students to sections (d’Apollonia and Abrami 1997). In these studies, student ratings correlate highly with learning outcomes. Cashin (1999, p. 28) concludes that “past and present reviewers continue to conclude that student ratings tend to be satisfactorily reliable, valid for most uses, relatively free from bias . . . , and useful both to improve instruction and to make personnel decisions.”

Even so, student ratings of teaching effectiveness have significant limitations. The best teaching evaluation program will include other measures to complement student ratings. These measures may include: peer observation; observation by administrators; review of teaching portfolios, including syllabi, course handouts, and tests; self evaluations; and measures of student learning outcomes (e.g. student performance on standardized exams) (Seldin 1999).

Successful teaching evaluation programs include substantial participation by faculty in the design and oversight of the program (Seldin 1999). Student ratings forms should be developed using scientifically sound practices. Seldin (1999) recommends adapting (not adopting) forms from other institutions that have established good validity and reliability to one’s own institution. Even after initial validation, the home institution should continue to study the validity and reliability of its forms and procedures.

The effect of grades on student ratings is not fully settled in the literature (Wachtel 1998; Krautman and Sander 1999). Ratings of instructors are moderately correlated with grades - students with higher grades tend to evaluate instruction as more effective than students with lower grades. This may or may not be a causal relationship - that is, easier grading (independent of actual learning) may lead to higher evaluations. On the other hand, it would be expected that students who learn more in the class, and therefore earn higher marks, would also be more likely to report satisfaction with the quality of instruction. Ory (2001) contends that in most studies the magnitude of the statistical relationship between grades and student ratings is a zero order (with no control variables) correlation of about .3 - thus grading might explain, at a maximum, nine percent of the variance in teaching effectiveness. Ory concludes, therefore, that easier grading has, at most, a modest effect on effectiveness. Many other researchers contend that ease of grading has no established effect whatsoever.

The latter finding is related to another point made by Ory (2001) concerning the effects of collecting student rating data on grading. It is possible that use of SET on campuses has an inflationary effect on grades. According to Ory, this hypothesis has not been tested in any study with a rigorous research design. In one study, which Ory apparently regarded as insufficiently rigorous, Stratton and Meyers (1994) found that when SET is first introduced on a campus, some initial inflation of grades occurred, but, over time, these effects flattened out.

Several other factors are known to be correlated moderately with student ratings:

- a. Students in elective courses tend to rate instructors higher than those in required courses (Ory 2001);
- b. Courses taught at a higher level (e.g. junior and above) tend to be rated higher than those at lower levels (freshmen and sophomore) (Feldman, 1978; Marsh, 1987);
- c. The discipline of instruction is correlated with ratings. Students in courses from the humanities and arts, biological and social sciences, and business tended to evaluate instruction more favorably than students enrolled in computer science, math, engineering, and physical science (Ory 2001, Wachtel 1998, Ramsden, 1991, Cashin 1990).

According to Ory (2001), in a multivariate statistical analysis, each of these three factors tends to explain from 1 to 2 percent of the variance in student ratings. Smaller positive relationships exist between the following factors and student ratings: rank, age, years of experience, and research productivity of the faculty member (Ory 2001, Wachtel, 1998).

Several characteristics of instructors appear to be unrelated to ratings in most studies, including, the physical appearance (Wachtel 1998), race, and gender of instructors (Ory 2001). Wachtel (1998) argues that gender effects have been found in some studies, but they are modest in magnitude, and contradictory in direction. Many characteristics of students appear to be unrelated to ratings, including gender and personality variables.

Cashin (1999) recommends that student ratings forms include questions that may be quantitatively scored. Open ended questions are also useful, but only for “formative” evaluation, not “summative.” In other words, responses to open ended questions are especially useful for developing strategies for improving instruction. They are much less useful, however, at determining the effectiveness of one instructor relative to others (as for personnel decisions, determining merit raises and the like). For the same reason, Cashin also recommends that universities and colleges have a common core of fixed format questions that are used for all faculty members regardless of discipline. This “short form” may be relied on as one measure for summative evaluation. The questions on this short form should be global in nature (e.g. “Overall, how effective was the instructor in this class?”). More specific questions (e.g., how effective was the instructor at leading class discussions?) do not correlate as well with learning outcomes. Cashin recommends that institutions allow other questions to be added to those on the short form. These “long form” questions may be optional and may be specific to disciplines or to class formats (lectures vs. labs/ seminars vs. large audience). These questions may be used primarily for formative evaluation, or for more limited summative evaluation.

Reports of results of student ratings should be easily understood by all consumers (especially the faculty). Distribution characteristics (e.g. frequency of ratings) should be reported as well as central tendencies (e.g. means). Distributions of student ratings are often bi-modal, and therefore relying on means alone can hide important results (Cashin 1999).

Cashin (1999) also recommends that student ratings (especially via the short form) be collected every term for every class. He also suggests that results be archived so historical analysis (both at the individual and aggregate level) may be conducted. Relying on a single snap shot of student ratings may yield results that are inconsistent with longer trends.

Most experts (e.g., Cashin 1999, Seldin 1999, Wachtel 1998, Ory 2001) emphasize that for a teaching evaluation program to be fair, procedures for administration of the student ratings must be consistently applied and enforced across academic units, and over time.

III. Publication of Student Ratings: Common Practices and Problems

A review of the academic literature found virtually no information regarding the publication of student ratings of teaching effectiveness. Seldin (1999) mentions that some U.S. colleges and universities make ratings results available to the public, but says nothing about the effects of this practice. Howell and Symblaluk (2001) conducted a survey of students and faculty members at a two year college that did not publicize ratings. Their survey attempted to measure attitudes among these two groups concerning the practice. As might be expected, students were more likely to favor publication than were instructors. Neither of these studies, nor any others we were able to locate, reported findings on the effects of publication on instruction, student and faculty morale, or any other aspect of the academic environment.

In order to learn about experiences with publication of student ratings at other colleges and universities, the committee asked the Director of the USA Polling Group to conduct a survey of administrators. What follows are a description of that study and a report of findings.

Project Overview

USA Polling Group facilitated the implementation of a survey of American four-year degree-granting colleges and universities regarding the dissemination of ratings of teaching effectiveness. Primary contacts at the target institutions were the chief academic officers. The project involved a two stage process in which an email survey was used to identify those institutions which disseminate ratings, followed by a web-based survey of disseminating institutions to gather information on common practices and problems encountered in the process.

Email Instruments and Questionnaires

All survey instruments were developed by members of the SET Committee. The first instrument was an email survey designed to determine how common it is for schools to collect student ratings of teaching effectiveness, and to identify those schools which make such ratings available to students (for full text of email, see Appendix Item A). This initial email also invited respondents to note in their reply whether they were interested in receiving results of the completed survey. The second instrument was an email message to the schools that make ratings available to the public (for full text, see Appendix Item B). That message provided a link to a website where respondents could complete a follow-up survey on their experiences in disseminating student ratings. In addition, an alternate email message was sent to those schools that do not disseminate ratings to thank them and to provide promised results from the original email survey (for full text, see Appendix Item C). The website survey included an introduction and 10 questions dealing with common practices and problems encountered in the dissemination of ratings (for full text of web survey, see Appendix Item D).

Samples and Responses

A list with contact information for the Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) of American four-year, degree-granting colleges and universities was obtained from Market Data Retrieval, Inc. The initial sample taken from the list included the universe of 353 institutions with student enrollment of more than 7,500 and a random sample of 600 schools with 7,500 or fewer students. Email addresses were obtained via the internet for the CAOs of 313 (87%) of the 353 large schools and 467 (78%) of the 600 small schools. The 780 CAOs for whom we had email addresses constituted the final sample. The initial emailing resulted in 443 replies for a response rate of 57%. Of the 443 responses, 71 (16%) were from institutions that disseminate student ratings. These 71 institutions comprised the sub-sample for the follow-up web survey. From this sub-sample, 27 CAOs completed the web survey for a response rate of 38%.

Timing

The first email messages were sent in the last week of April, 2002. The bulk of responses were received in the first few days after the mailing. Follow-up email messages were sent on June 3, 2002. The web survey was considered complete as of June 10, 2002.

Results

Results reveal that the collection of student ratings of teaching effectiveness is widespread, with over 95% of institutions doing so. Dissemination of such ratings to students, however, is not common; only 16% of the total sample reported publicizing

ratings. Comments from the total sample of email respondents regarding their views on the dissemination of ratings were overwhelmingly negative. Follow-up feedback from those institutions that disseminate ratings, however, was not nearly so negative. Primary faculty complaints involve questions of context, reliability, and validity of data being publicized. Generally, results reveal that this is a very complex, multi-faceted issue. There appears to be wide variation in the logistics of dissemination, as well as in perceptions regarding the impact of dissemination on students, faculty, and administration.

Initial Email Survey: Frequencies

1. Are student ratings of teaching effectiveness regularly collected on your campus?

	Count	Percent
Yes	421	95%
No	13	3
Varies by academic unit	9	2
Total	443	100%

2. Do any academic units within your institution make available to students any of the results of student ratings of teaching effectiveness?

	Count	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	71	16%	17%
No	335	76	80
Not sure	15	3	<u>3</u>
Not Answered	22	5	100%
Total	443	100%	

3. Approximately how many of your academic units make results of student ratings available to students?

	Count	Percent	Valid Percent
All	43	10%	61%
Not all, but more than half	9	2	13
Some, but half or less	16	4	22
Not sure	3	1	<u>4</u>
Not Answered	372	84	100%
Total	443	100%	

Size Matters

When it comes to the dissemination of student ratings, size of institution is an important variable. We found that large institutions (over 7,500 students) were much more likely to disseminate ratings than smaller ones.

Do any academic units within your institution make available to students any of the results of student ratings of teaching effectiveness?

	Student Enrollments:	
	≤7500	>7500
Yes	8%	30%
No	91	63
Not sure	1	7
<hr/>		
Total	100%	100%

Open-Ended Comments

In 53 (12%) of the 443 email replies, respondents offered comments. The majority of these contained only objective information regarding the dissemination of student ratings. Most of the others were negative. The following table reflects an admittedly cursory coding of these comments according to their tone.

Tone of Comments

	Count	Percent
Non-evaluative	31	58%
Negative	18	34
Mixed	3	6
Positive	1	2
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Total	53	100%

Summary of Comments

A review of these comments reveals interesting perspectives and insights. The following is a summary of such perspectives and insights. The verbatim text of the actual comments can be found in Appendix E.

On the impetus for publicizing results

Freedom of information and open records laws in many states require that ratings be publicized, though typically only in response to some request. Students have been known to file suit to obtain access to ratings.

Students may be more interested in the battle over disseminating ratings than in the actual ratings. Once the issue is settled and the results of ratings are published, students may lose interest in the issue.

Obstacles to Dissemination

Faculty senates, faculty unions, and the faculty generally are regularly identified as prime obstacles to publicizing ratings.

Faculty resistance may be diminished by making the process voluntary.

Even where voluntary, faculty participation may be very high due to peer pressure; faculty may participate to avoid the appearance that they have something to hide.

Validity and Reliability of the Ratings

If the ratings are not both valid and reliable measures of teaching effectiveness, they should not be disseminated.

If students know that the ratings will be made public, they may not be fully honest—student may use the process to “grandstand” or they may be overly generous to popular professors.

Issues in Dissemination

Decisions have to be made regarding what will be published: all courses vs. some subset of courses; standardized university-wide ratings, college-specific ratings, or department-specific ratings; objective ratings; subjective (open-ended ratings).

The logistics of dissemination may impact the process: on-campus vs. off-campus accessibility; ease with which student can access ratings (id required?);

Where voluntary, faculty participation might be encouraged or discouraged by the ease with which faculty members agree to participate or to opt-out of process.

Timing of posting and removal from posting are important issues: faculty might be unfairly penalized if old, negative, and no longer valid ratings are accessible.

If students are involved in the actual dissemination, they may fail to fulfill their responsibilities, due to either waning interest or turnover, or both.

Impact of Dissemination of Ratings

Of major concern is the impact on the actual effectiveness of teaching. One suggestion is that teachers will pander to students for higher ratings.

If the primary purpose of ratings is to serve as a guide to students, they will be less useful as a guide to teaching improvement.

Conversely, if the primary purpose of the ratings is to serve as a guide to teaching improvement, publication may have an adverse effect: teachers may reduce their standards and expectations in order to improve their ratings.

The impact on scheduling is of concern: classes of popular teachers might be over-subscribed, while unpopular teachers might be under-subscribed. This also has an impact on faculty workload equity.

Web Survey (Follow Up to Email Survey)

Institutions that reported publication of student ratings in the email survey were asked to participate in a follow up survey via the web. These institutions were asked about their experiences with publication. Results from the web survey follow:

Question 1: Which of the following best characterizes your institution's policy regarding the dissemination of student ratings of teaching effectiveness?

	Count	Percent
We require that only objective (quantified) ratings be disseminated.	16	59.3%
We require that all results (objective and subjective) be made available.	4	14.8
We encourage the dissemination of ratings (faculty participation is optional)	3	11.1
Not Answered	4	14.8
	27	100.0%

Question 1a

Comments:

- We have two questions that are similar on all evaluations regarding the comparative effectiveness of the instructor and the course. These data are available to students through materials on reserve in the library. This was developed as a result of a student reporter's request for access to teaching evaluation data.
- We have nine University-wide questions that are disseminated to students and anyone

who goes to the web site. College specific questions are summarized and returned to college, department, and instructor. Open ended questions are sent to instructor only.

- Faculty control dissemination on an intranet web. Only quantitative measures are disseminated. Probably half of the faculty allows the data to be seen by students
- Objective ratings are forwarded to our Student Government Association (SGA). SGA publishes these data in a public folder for students/faculty/staff to access.
- Each course has to be evaluated by trustee mandate each semester, but the evaluations are turned in to the department, then discussed between chair and faculty member. Later, when tenure time comes, the student government gets to study the evaluations course by course. None of the above seems to fit. We don't disseminate.
- For the past year the College of Arts and Sciences has disseminated undergraduate course evaluations. The 12 professional schools do not yet disseminate their evaluations. We are planning to go to an on-line campus-wide system that will make many more evaluations available to undergraduates. In Arts and Sciences faculty cannot opt out of publication.
- The student government association brought a proposal to our Academic Council to put student evaluations and grading distributions on our student information server for students to review. It passed and has been implemented with a password access.
- Note that this is required in certain schools, but not all.
- Faculty participation is not optional. According to our faculty handbook, all courses must be evaluated every semester and the numerical responses made public.
- Two of our eight colleges currently disseminate quantified ratings. We are developing a process for all eight colleges to disseminate quantified ratings on a core set of summative questions. Results on other quantified ratings, plus subjective ratings would not be disseminated. I expect this university-wide system to be approved and implemented during the next academic year.
- Policy of our Regents requires that all numerical results of the student evaluations be public, available to students and others.
- Results are on file in the library for students to review if they wish.

Question 2

Why did your institution decide to disseminate student ratings of teaching effectiveness?

	Count	Percent
Administrative initiative	5	18.5%
Student or student government demands	5	18.5
State law or charter requirements	3	11.1
Faculty initiative	1	3.7
Other	7	25.9
Not sure	2	7.4
Not answered	4	14.8
	27	100.0%

Question 2a

Other reason for decision to disseminate:

- Years ago, the University Senate (1/3 faculty, 1/3 students, 1/3 administrators) resolved that the quantitative results of the (then) eighteen different surveys be placed in the Reserve Room of the Library for student viewing as a means to help them determine course selection for the next semesters. That practice fell into disuse. When we instituted a new, single, campus-wide student survey of teaching, the issue was raised by students at a Senate committee meeting, and it eventually got to the Senate itself. The Senate decided on optional dissemination, in hard copy, electronic version, or both. After two years we noticed that no one was using hard copy, so we ended that. In short, the initiative came from students, but with considerable administration and some faculty support.
- SGA was going to gather data whether or not faculty/administration supported it. With that, faculty governance decided it would be better to make available to students the summative data gathered by departments for personnel decisions rather than have a second form (i.e., in addition to the one already used by departments for personnel decisions) administered by SGA.
- We don't pass this material around publicly.
- Both administration and students feel it is best method.
- State law supports the request of the student association to publish results and there is administrative support from the Provost and Arts and Sciences. This is one of the best ways to improve teaching-make it public.
- The ratings and their public nature began in the mid-1960s as a student initiative, and was taken over in the 1970s by the administration.
- The program was begun by students for the benefit of students. Students are heavy users.
- See above -- Regent Policy 4-B, first adopted in 1986.

Question 3

Which of the following groups at you institution actually carries out the dissemination of student ratings?

	Count	Percent
University Administration	15	55.6%
Student Organization	4	14.8
Other, please specify.	3	11.1
Not Answered	5	18.5
<hr/>		
	27	100.0%

Question 3a

Other Means of Dissemination of Student Ratings:

- Academic Affairs
- A University Administration organization does the work of posting the data electronically; the faculty can toggle yes or no to allow students access.
- Office of dean of UG, with student help.
- Arts and Sciences provides the data file to the student association.
- Administration charged the IT center with responsibility for technical aspects of posting data to student government website.
- Institutional Analysis.
- Office of Institutional Studies.

Question 4

How are ratings of teaching effectiveness made available to students?

	Count	Percent
On the internet	14	51.9
Through printed records available at a common site (e.g. library)	5	18.5
Not answered	3	11.1
Through student associations or student government	3	11.1
Other, please specify	2	7.4
<hr/>		
	27	100.0%

Question 4a

- Other units make evaluations available in different ways.
- Both on the internet and on paper at several common sites.
- Internet, but access to website is restricted to users within campus domain.
- For current two colleges, in the department offices. The proposed system would disseminate on the internet.

Question 5

How often do you think students actually review the ratings of teaching effectiveness at your institution?

	Count	Percent
Very Frequently	4	14.8%
Somewhat frequently	9	33.3
Somewhat infrequently	5	18.5
Very infrequently	1	3.7
Not sure	5	18.5
Not answered	3	11.1
<hr/>		
	27	100.0%

Question 6

Generally speaking, how would you describe student reaction to the dissemination of ratings?

	Count	Percent
Very favorable	12	44.4%
Somewhat favorable	7	25.9
Neither favorable nor unfavorable	2	7.4
Somewhat unfavorable	--	--
Very unfavorable	--	--
Not answered	3	11.1
Not sure	3	11.1
<hr/>		
	27	100.0%

Question 7

Generally speaking, how would you describe faculty reaction to the dissemination of ratings?

Very favorable	--	--
Somewhat favorable	5	18.5
Neither favorable nor unfavorable	11	40.7
Somewhat unfavorable	6	22.2
Very unfavorable	--	--
Not sure	2	7.4
Not answered	3	11.1
<hr/>		
	27	99.9%

Question 8

What would you say is the primary faculty complaint regarding the dissemination of ratings?

- The data lacks context and over-simplifies the complexity of course evaluation.
- Many feel that it was a way to improve teaching—that is defeated by this method.
- That the questionnaire is not optimally done; that other measurements needed as well.

- They don't like bad results published. Also the graduate student union went through the data section by section and proved they were better teachers than regular faculty. Oh well.
- Faculty reaction is mixed. Those who complain argue that the survey instrument is not meaningful; others see it as a potential invasion of what should be a dialogue between faculty member and chair (the fact that dissemination is now totally at the discretion of the faculty has weakened that argument). Complaining faculty believe that this is a form of pandering to students, who will misuse the data.
- Faculty adjusts teaching to garner better student ratings.
- Student evaluations are very subjective.
- Unfair and biased to easy graders.
- When student ratings are not high, faculty do not like the exposure.
- One Faculty Senate Committee supports and another is concerned about privacy (e.g. why should you be able to access the data off campus) and whether the publication of results will damage new Teaching Assistants (no evidence is offered).
- They recognize that the student opinion survey does not cover all of the issues related to effective teaching.
- That student opinion is only one factor in evaluation of a faculty member's performance.
- Many folks don't like our current instrument (we are in the midst of revising it) and don't believe it accurately reflects what they do. I agree.
- Inaccuracy and superficiality.
- That the comments are biased--only those who hate the course/instructor bother to fill out the ratings.
- Concern that students are most frequently choosing courses based on the rating of workload.
- That standardized questions can't capture the parameters of a particular course that might influence the ratings.
- It is very mixed, but primary complaint is probably that they question the validity of the student ratings. However, some faculty members are very supportive of the program.
- That quantified ratings are not valid. A minority of faculty hold this view. Also, some faculty feel the evaluation is not appropriate for their particular course. In that case, we allow them to use other forms of evaluation.

Question 9

How would you describe the overall impact of the dissemination of ratings on your institution? Would you say the impact has been:

	Count	Percent
Very positive	5	18.5%
Somewhat positive	10	37.0
Mixed results	4	14.8
Somewhat negative	2	7.4
Not sure	3	11.1
Not Answered	3	11.1
	27	100.0%

Question 10

What are the most significant administrative problems in the process of disseminating ratings:

- The over-enrollment in general education classes of faculty with higher evaluations. And, of course, the opposite enrollment . . .
- We had some problems with promptness of getting results to faculty, but these have been ameliorated. Always have problems with different %s of student response. We are debating if on-line forms would work better.
- We've solved them all. The system is very simple for faculty and students.
- Now that we give SGA an electronic copy of the data, we have no significant problems. Prior to providing an electronic copy, SGA was given a hard copy and the problem with it was that it was cumbersome to use (i.e., difficult to find a particular person teaching a particular course).
- Takes time to post.
- Students wrote software for displaying results. Over longer term, students are unreliable and likely to not be responsible enough to keep the process going so administration will have to assume responsibility.
- Implementing it on the web.
- Remembering to update the binders in the library---we do it once a year.
- Can't think of any.
- Dealing with complaints about inaccuracies; providing realistic overview about what ratings can do; balancing their worthy purpose against their lack of credibility.
- Getting a higher response rate for the on-line collection of ratings (on-line is the standard or default method of collection; paper forms are available if the instructor requests.)
- Separating the different purposes that student course ratings serve and maintaining quality, i.e., separating use of ratings for P/T and salary adjustments from ratings disseminated to student body.
- None within the two current colleges. Unsure of what they might be under the proposed system.
- No significant ones -- program has been in place quite awhile.
- Having the results available in the library is probably not sufficient for many students, but greater availability (i.e. through the web) would likely be resisted by faculty.

Question 11

Please feel free to offer additional comments:

- This happened quite a few years ago-(four or five). I believe it has served its purpose which was to make the faculty more student-centered. Probably has outlasted the original intention. We are now examining whether to continue this practice.
- Some of our colleges are moving from a scan sheet based input to a web based input with the data being sent to Provost Office for analysis.
- Do you understand what we do?

- Currently, we administer a bubble-sheet form in the classroom. After we began to publish the summary results, the response rate jumped 50% - from 24K to 32K student responses.
- Not advertised to students so few students know about the availability of these summary ratings--also, it is voluntary at our Univ.--if faculty don't give permission, we don't make their evaluations public.
- These ratings do encourage faculty members to seek help from our faculty development center because they are so public, and because what faculty receives is a summary that compares their course to the average in their department, in the college in which they reside, and to the university. So folks below those averages assume they need help.

Conclusions from E-mail and Web Surveys:

Our sample data indicate that a minority of U.S. colleges and universities (about 1 in 6) currently publish results from student ratings of teaching effectiveness. Larger institutions are more likely to do so: approximately 1 in 3 universities with enrollments greater than 7500 publish student ratings. Administrators of institutions currently not publishing results tend to express negative views of the practice. Administrators at publishing institutions, in contrast, tend to report acceptance of the practice by both faculty and students, but only moderate student use of the ratings data by students. Only a handful of respondents (7%) reported that publication of results had negative results on their campuses.

IV. Recommendations

The Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) Committee makes the following recommendations regarding SET policy and procedures at the University of South Alabama:

*1. The committee does **not** recommend, at this time, that results of student ratings of instructional effectiveness be published and made available to students (7 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstentions).*

Rationale: We reached this decision based on the following:

a. Our surveys of chief academic officers indicated that publication of SET results had only modest benefits for those institutions that currently engage in the practice. The likely primary benefit of such a policy would be symbolic: The policy would communicate that USA is friendly to student interests in effective teaching. We believe that if we were to publish such findings on our campus, it is likely that our experience would mirror that of these other institutions: We, too, would achieve a modest symbolic benefit.

b. The most important potential beneficiaries of a policy to publish such results are students. Our committee could not detect much student interest in this issue. The

student members of our committee did not report much enthusiasm for the topic. When it was reported to us that student government had passed a resolution in favor of the practice, we requested a copy of the resolution. Our student committee members were unable to produce it. Our committee was open to student input, and actively solicited it, but we received very little indication of student interest.

c. Based on the results of our survey of other campuses, and anecdotal reports to committee members from USA faculty, we believe that a large number of faculty members at USA would be opposed to this policy.

d. Many faculty members lack confidence in the validity, reliability and utility of the current evaluation form used in their departments. To publish evaluation results gathered using a form that is widely perceived to have questionable validity would create unnecessary conflict on campus.

e. Given the lack of student interest, the perception of significant faculty opposition to the policy, the perception that we currently use a flawed SET form and the likely small benefits to be realized, the SET committee does not believe, at this time, that the potential benefits exceed the costs of such a policy. If students become mobilized on this topic in the future, and if USA develops an evaluation form and procedure that are widely perceived as legitimate, then the committee recommends that the University be open to reconsideration of the issue of publishing SET results.

2. The committee recommends that all colleges require that student evaluations of teaching effectiveness be collected for all classes taught each semester (7 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 2 abstentions)

Rationale: Currently, some units of the University only collect data at periodic intervals – it is common in Arts and Sciences, for example, for data to be collected only in fall semester. Other units gather student ratings in all classes. There are two major purposes for assessing student perceptions of teaching effectiveness. The first is summative (or evaluative): to be used in making personnel decisions (e.g. tenure and promotion and annual evaluations). The second is formative: to assist with improvement of instruction. If SET results are to be used in personnel decisions, then systematic sampling (e.g. only collecting data in fall semester) can yield biased data. For example, if one faculty member only teaches lower division classes in the fall, graduate and upper division classes in the spring, and evaluation data is only gathered in the former, his or her evaluation scores may be biased negatively since evaluations tend to be lower in freshmen level courses. To avoid this and similar sources of bias, it makes sense to collect data in every section taught. If SET results are to be used to improve instruction, it also makes sense to collect the data for all courses – presumably we want to improve all instruction, not only that which is delivered in selected classes.

3. The committee recommends that a new standard evaluation form be developed that may be used campus wide (9 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions).

Rationale: Each of the experts identified in our literature review recommended that evaluation forms and procedures be developed with full participation and “buy-in” by the faculty. We believe that the standard form currently used by many programs lacks the confidence of the faculty. We recommend that a new form, or new forms, be developed. One good approach, recommended by several experts, uses a two part form. The first part would include a common set of questions that can be used in all classes regardless of teaching format. The second part of the form would be tailored to the particular characteristics of the class, could vary by class format, and would allow for considerable flexibility on the part of departments and individual instructors. Regardless of the final structure of the questionnaire, we feel that a new form needs to be developed, ideally by a committee primarily composed of faculty members, at least some of whom have expertise in social science and/or education research methods, including measurement issues in questionnaire construction. Student participation in this effort is also encouraged. This committee should consider adopting (and adapting as needed to the local environment) forms and procedures validated through use at other universities.

4. All SET instruments should be evaluated for reliability and validity. This evaluation should occur during the construction of the instruments, and periodically thereafter (9 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions).

Rationale: All experts in SET recommend this approach. The committee believes that many USA faculty question the face validity of the current standard form, and therefore systematic evaluation of SET instrumentation will increase the perceived legitimacy of the SET process.

5. The Committee recommends that several improvements in SET procedures be implemented. We recommend that results be archived electronically to allow for comparisons among faculty within departments and colleges within a given semester, and across semesters. We recommend that meaningful reports of SET results be prepared for all users of the results, including instructors, chairs and deans. We recommend that the data collection process be made user friendly, reducing the coding burden on proctors as much as possible. (9 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions)

Rationale: All of these reforms will increase confidence in the SET process among faculty.

6. Finally, the Committee recommends that the Office of Institutional Research, or some other academic support unit, should be charged with maintaining an effective, valid, and reliable SET process (9 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions).

Rationale: Current SET processes are decentralized, without coordination across Colleges, and without much support from any University office. The computing center handles physical processing, but does not deal with issues such as measurement quality (reliability and validity) or interpretation of results. Current reports are misleading and not easily interpreted. The computer center does not archive data, and therefore cannot produce reports that contain meaningful comparisons, either across time or across academic programs. Assigning data collection, analysis, and reporting tasks to a single support unit will facilitate the reforms identified in recommendation #5.

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Appendix A
Initial Email: Input & Reply

Subject line: Request from Academic VP at USA

Dear <name>, <title>
<university>

The Chief Academic Officer at the University of South Alabama, Dr. Pat Covey, is considering a proposal to make available to students the results of student ratings of instructional effectiveness. If adopted, students and others would be able to review the student ratings from previous semesters for any instructor in the University. Dr. Covey has asked my office to contact a random sample of Chief Academic Officers throughout the U.S. to determine how widespread this practice is at other colleges and universities.

Please take a moment to answer the following three questions by clicking your email "reply" button (be sure the "include message from sender" feature is turned on). In the reply, simply insert an "x" in the appropriate response bracket. When finished, click "send."

1). Are student ratings of teaching effectiveness regularly collected on your campus?

- Yes
- No (If No, that completes the survey)
- Varies by academic unit

2) Do any academic units within your institution make available to students any of the results of student ratings of teaching effectiveness?

- Yes
- No (If No, that completes the survey)
- Not sure (If Not sure, that completes the survey)

3) Approximately how many of your academic units make results of student ratings available to students?

- All
- Not all, but more than half
- Some, but half or less

All results will be confidential. Please feel free to offer comments here:

If you would like to receive a copy of the aggregated results, please mark this box:
Thanks for participating in the survey.

Appendix B
**Follow-up Email Correspondence
To Schools that Disseminate Ratings**

Subject line: Follow-up from Academic VP at USA

Dear <name>, <title>
<university>

In our recent survey on student evaluations of teaching effectiveness, we found that your institution was one of only 71 in our national sample of 443 American colleges and universities that disseminate publicly the results of student ratings.

We are now attempting to gather additional information on the logistics of dissemination and the consequences and implications for students, faculty, and administrators. Please take a few moments to visit our website, www.usouthal.edu/SET_Survey, to answer 10 quick questions in a follow-up survey. Your participation will be extremely helpful to us and other schools dealing with this issue.

All results will be confidential; no individual participants will be identified in any fashion. Once the results are in, they will be made available on the web.

Thanks for participating in the survey.

G. David Johnson, Interim Dean,
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Alabama
Mobile, AL 36688
Voice: (251) 460-6280
Fax: (251) 460-7925
deanartsci@usouthal.edu)

Appendix C
Follow-up Email Correspondence
To Schools that Do Not Disseminate Ratings

Subject line: Follow-up from Academic VP at USA

Dear <name>, <title>
<university>

In your reply to our recent survey on student evaluations of teaching effectiveness, you asked to be informed of our results. We found that 95% of the schools in our national sample of 443 American colleges and universities collect student ratings data. Of those schools that collect data, 17% make results available to students. In 61% of those schools that publicize results, all units participate, in 13% of schools more than half of the units participate, and in 23% of the schools half or fewer of the units participate.

We will conduct a follow-up survey with that school who publicize results to gather additional information on the logistics of dissemination and the consequences and implications for students, faculty, and administrators. Once those results are in, they will be made available on the web and all participants in the original survey will be notified.

Thanks again for participating in the survey.

G. David Johnson, Interim Dean,
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Alabama
Mobile, AL 36688
Voice: (251) 460-6280
Fax: (251) 460-7925
deanartsci@usouthal.edu)

Appendix D

University of South Alabama Student Evaluation of Teaching Survey

The following questions deal with policies and practices at your institution regarding the dissemination or publication of student ratings of teaching effectiveness. We are specifically interested in this issue as it applies to regular, full-time faculty. All results will be confidential. We will not keep data that allows individual respondents to be identified.

Which of the following best characterizes your institution's policy regarding the dissemination of student ratings of teaching effectiveness?

- We encourage the dissemination of ratings to students (faculty participation is optional).
- We require that only objective (quantified) ratings be disseminated.
- We require that only subjective (open-ended) ratings be disseminated.
- We require that all results (objective and subjective) be made available to students.

Comments:

Why did your institution decide to disseminate student ratings of teaching effectiveness?

- State law or charter requirements
- Student or student organization demands
- Administrative initiative
- Faculty initiative
- Other
- Not sure

If other selected, please explain.

Which of the following groups at you institution actually carries out the dissemination of student ratings?

- Student organization
- University Administration
- Faculty Senate
- Other, please specify.

How are ratings of teaching effectiveness made available to students?

- On the internet
- Through printed records available at a common site (e.g. library)
- Through student associations or student government
- Other, please specify

How often do you think students actually review the ratings of teaching effectiveness at your institution?

- Very frequently
- Somewhat frequently
- Somewhat infrequently
- Very infrequently
- Not sure

Generally speaking, how would you describe student reaction to the dissemination of ratings?

- Very favorable
- Somewhat favorable
- Neither favorable nor unfavorable
- Somewhat unfavorable
- Very unfavorable
- Not sure

Generally speaking, how would you describe faculty reaction to the dissemination of ratings?

- Very favorable
- Somewhat favorable
- Neither favorable nor unfavorable
- Somewhat unfavorable
- Very unfavorable
- Not sure

What would you say is the primary faculty complaint regarding the dissemination of ratings:

How would you describe the overall impact of the dissemination of ratings on your institution? Would you say the impact has been . . .

- Very positive
- Somewhat positive
- Mixed results
- Somewhat negative
- Very negative
- Not sure

What are the most significant administrative problems in the process of disseminating ratings:

Please feel free to offer additional comments:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Select Submit Survey now to send your responses to us.

<input type="button" value="Submit Survey"/>	<input type="button" value="Clear All Answers"/>
--	--

Appendix E

Initial Email Survey

Verbatim Text of Comments

- I personally think it is bad policy to release student evaluations. This is greatly devalues any potential information in them and makes the whole process a beauty contest.
- There have been several discussions about making the evaluation results available. Georgia is an open records state, so it is probably that we would have to release the results if anyone made a formal request and pressed it. At this point, however, the possibility of release has not gone beyond the discussion stage.
- We are a collective bargaining campus and decisions such as this would have to be agreed upon by the union. I suspect the union would never agree to this.
- The Faculty Senate at Penn State has consistently blocked any attempts by student government leaders to publicize the student ratings of individual instructors under the belief that this is feedback for the instructor and the department head to use for instructional improvement.
- Mount Marty College does evaluate every class in the College every semester. However, such ratings are given only to the Faculty member and the Dean. Many members of our faculty would never allow wider distribution. I taught at Arizona State in the 1970's and ASU distributed the student evaluations to everyone. The Student Government even polished a version of it that was sold to new students (somewhat to our dismay).
- At our university the only people who see the results of student evaluations of teaching are the instructor, the supervisors of the instructor all the way up the line to the provost, and faculty committees formally charged to review candidates for tenure, promotion and reappointment. I believe that our faculty would find publication of the results to students unacceptable and potentially demoralizing. I can think of several arguments against the practice and few for it. A student run system, independent of the university is another matter. I participated in such a system as an undergraduate and it has its uses, but its limitations were clear to all involved.
- Coincidentally, I had a student in my office yesterday asking how he would mount a campaign to make evaluations available to the student body. I look forward to seeing your results.
- I think it's a terrible idea to publicize student comments about Profs. It only strengthens the (wrong-headed) idea that Prof's main goal is to "keep the students

happy". Sometimes challenging students in healthy ways hurts a little; I want my faculty here to do it and not merely keep students happy!

- But an interesting aside is that anyone wanting the data might be able to secure it under the New York's Freedom of information Law.
- The idea has been considered here and probably will be again. While there is a certain appeal to the idea of letting students see the results, I find it somewhat contradictory to require faculty to conduct student evaluations in classes but at the same time making the results available to the whole world.
- At my previous place of employment -- University of Miami (FL) the student's ratings process is run by the students and the numerical portions published each semester. Faculty have an opportunity to opt out of the process. I liked the system. Results should be available to the students.
- Student rating are considered part of the confidential faculty evaluation, and thus are not released to the public. We use the rating for both evaluatory and formative purposes, working with the faculty to improve the student perception of the class, teaching effectiveness, and faculty knowledge/student focus. We are a small campus, with 2900 students and 100 faculty. Release of information, even if aggregated, would definitely remove the focus of formative utilization. Faculty are sensitive about these rating forms and unsure on their interpretation; a request from students would probably result in the Faculty Union intervening. Personally, I would prefer not to release this information to students - the student grapevine works well without data.
- One must consider why the evaluations are taking place, I.E., for formative or summative reasons. There are many reasons why students should not be given the formative evaluations.
- Yes across the board to your questions, some units place the students written comments in the library in addition to the numerical scores ...
- We actually published the result for each instructor during the mid 1980's. Students looked at them casually and then ignored them. It was a waste of money to keep publishing them and so we stopped. There was absolutely no student complaint when we did. My guess is that they had an informal network for evaluating instruction that worked well for them and eliminated the need for documentation.
- We make aggregate course questionnaire data available but not at the instructor level.
- An independent .com entity uses open records request to get the data and post it to a site.

- I consider it a breach of faculty confidentiality rights to make such information available. It is completely contrary to the reason we give out evaluations: To help faculty improve their teaching. Publicizing such information only creates a demand on faculty to succumb to student demands and enter a popularity contest. It undermines the academics and the academic integrity of the grading process
- A summary of student evaluations of courses (with course name, number, and faculty name) is on file in the college library. They are available for anyone to review, not just students.
- We use open-ended questions instead of ratings. We would have to turn those over if requested since we are an open records state. We have not received a request for that data, probably since it is not easily summarized or reported.
- Our students have raised this issue. I would be eager to learn how widespread the practice is.
- This was done at the university of Michigan when I was there in the 70's and I have heard of its being done elsewhere. The result was initially intense interest, stories in the student newspaper, and resentment on the part of some faculty and smugness on the part of others. After a couple publishing, the interest level drops way down, and there is no effect on students' selection of courses. The reason is that among the variables dictating to choice, the perceived quality of the instructor does not rate as high as time of day or need for completing a schedule. My personal belief is that little is changed by publishing evaluations other than attitudes, but that is a good thing, in that we all become more realistic about the difference between the ideal and varies by academic unit - Most faculty do their own, but they do not go on to other faculty. Not sure - not that I am aware of or systematically.
- Last year a member of our student newspaper sought access to data produced by student evaluations of faculty. We believed we would ultimately lose if this were pursued as a GRAMA request. As a compromise all evaluations contain two questions one a comparison of the instructor, the other comparison of the course. These data are available to students through documents in our library. This solved what could have been a difficult problem for the university and the interest in this has quickly died down. It might be useful for you to see the student evaluation data that is published by Harvard University.
- Just a note to say that I believe that, even though it is not a practice at my institution, students have access to the results of student evaluations of instruction. I have not been able to review the results of your survey.
- Our SGA has asked that we do this, but we never intend to. The obvious concerns would be how it would invite gossip, comparisons, etc. All of which beg the question of the validity and reliability of the instrument -- let alone other factors that impact student rating (grading, required course, upper-level course, etc.)

- Read the recent studies of the impact of student evaluations on grade inflation. Now magnify that impact by x factor if students know they will all see the results.
- Brandeis University's "universal" course evaluation is administered through the dean's office. Copies of evaluations are given to the instructor, instructor's chair, and to the Student Senate Course Evaluation editor, who edits and publishes the annual Student Senate Course Evaluation Guide.
- I am responding to your request for information regarding shared faculty evaluation. I would be most interested in the findings of your random sample. We are addressing a similar interest here at Regis College (Weston MA).
- Every faculty member is evaluated at the conclusion of the course each semester. The evaluations are reviewed by the Department Chair, the Division Director, and the academic Dean. Students do not review the evaluations.
- Through a College Senate mandate our Student Opinion of Faculty Instruction Form is administered in every class every semester. The only exceptions to that mandate are classes that resemble independent study such as applied music instruction, senior theses. Etc. These records are public documents, and the student newspaper publishes many of the results each semester in the edition right before registration for the next semester.
- My answer to all questions is basically yes. However, I have major concerns about any instrument that (1) has not been validated and (2) has no measure of reliability. Moreover, "teaching effectiveness" is poorly defined within any rational context of "learning." Therefore, most surveys measure "satisfaction with a course and/or teacher." Many institutions use these poorly designed instruments for their promotion and tenure decisions and merit increases. I am concerned about that for many reasons. As dean of my college, I am using a carefully constructed, but invalid and probably unreliable, instrument for feedback to our teaching faculty for improvements. We also use the instrument as only one of many assessments of "teaching effectiveness" or student learning. Perhaps a good question for your provost is simple--what is the outcome you wish to achieve with taking this approach? Our students really don't use the data provided. Interestingly, the provost office took over this task from the student government because they didn't want to do it anymore. Ramblings, but just a few useful thoughts.
- This practice was used by the CUNY system during the 80's. I do not know if it is still in use. However, administrators there may be able to assist you.
- After long battles at our university senate, and building on a long-standing "rule" that student evaluations of faculty had to be made available in the library (a rule that fell into disuse a decade ago for want of student interest), we decided that (A) evaluations would be available electronically only and (B) only with faculty permission. (About 2/3 of faculty release their numbers to the students on the web.)

Each semester, faculty can click "yes" or "no" to making all their evaluations (numerical ratings only) to the students.

- We have a faculty union, which may complicate matters. When students have asked, I have responded that students are certainly able to conduct their own surveys, etc. However, our use of the official instrument forms the basis of critical personnel decisions such as tenure or promotion. Anything that might create a bias, such as students being aware of past assessment, or comments about workload that might affect enrollments, etc. would be unfair and cause a variety of complications in our personnel processes. The students have found this a satisfactory explanation.
- A few years ago, a group of students sued the university over access to course evaluations. We now make this information available to all students.
- Our form for students to mark their responses is divided into several sections. The results from just one of the sections (more "global" questions like, "The instructor's contribution to this course is...") are available to students. Those results are printed out and are available in the library and at the student governance office.
- Q1-yes: We have Collective Bargaining agreement, so they are collected for all tenure-track faculty each semester and for tenured faculty during the five-year review process. Q2-no: Our collective bargaining agreement prohibits them being shared outside of the faculty review process.
- We questioned 14 of our "competitor" universities and found that Carnegie Mellon, Cornell, MIT, and the University of Rochester have some sort of public posting of results sponsored by the university (as opposed to a student-run evaluation with public postings).
- My connection to student evaluations goes way back. Dr. Ken Eble, my dissertation advisor, spearheaded the nationwide adoption for student evaluations through his work with AACU and other professional organizations. His model was meant to be course specific, giving quick and entirely confidential communication between the instructor of the course and the students enrolled in it. That confidentiality allowed candor and real statement of what the students found effective or faulty. It should have aided the instructor in making real progress toward improvement where it was obviously needed. Of course, what happened to student evaluations and how they came to be used in promotion and tenure evaluations on most campuses took the process far away from its original intent. Nevertheless, I believe the results should not be published, as that could further erode the integrity of the process. At Towson University, only the instructor, the department chair, and appropriate members of the instructor's review committee get to see the results. All are required to keep those results confidential.
- It might help you to know that a central office at northwestern collects student evaluation of all (undergraduate) instructors each quarter. Although it is the

instructor's option, nearly all instructors allow their results to be published, which for us means made available on the web. This is the basis on which I am answering your questions.

- This is not done yet here at Temple, but we are heading in that direction. It was done routinely at Penn where I was before coming to Temple as Provost 8 months ago.
- If you have not, check out George Mason University on this matter.
- Academic units within institution make evaluations available to students if the faculty member agrees.
- This is a big issue right now on campus. The students are demanding access and have threatened to boycott the evaluations unless granted access to the data. As dean, I support the students having access to some of the data.
- Only allow students to review average evaluation of teachers, not written comments
- Since these are considered a component of requests for personnel action, they are confidential.
- Student evaluations are used whenever a faculty member is involved in a personnel action (reappointment, tenure, promotion, post-tenure review) and in several departments (School of Business, Department of Human Ecology) all faculty are evaluated each semester. In general, the information is considered as a development tool for individual faculty members, although it is used for evaluative purposes in personnel actions. As a result, the information is not shared widely. Having said that, we often use student groups within each department to collect the questionnaires for mechanical scoring and to collate the subjective responses that are received. Thus at least a few students have a sense of subjective evaluations of faculty who are being evaluated. I do not know of an instance in which there has been a major breach of confidentiality in the process. For several years in the 70s an ad hoc group that had modest support from the Student Government Association ran their own evaluation/rating of faculty members and published the results each semester, but it has been at least 25 years since that was last done.
- The student association and the joint committee of faculty and students are working on a standardized part of the student course evaluations that will be released to the students at the end of each term.
- We evaluate all course sections, and make those results available to all students on the web.
- They are available in the University libraries.

- You didn't ask, but at one of my former schools, we did this. The students thought it was useful. Most faculty didn't much care for it but didn't say so. A few were vocal and mainly made themselves look silly. After all of the students who originally pushed for the policy graduated or left, the whole thing died a quiet death and no one complained.
- Ratings are made available annually to the Student Government pursuant to a state open records request.
- Regarding Item 1: All faculty at the rank of assistant professor are evaluated each term using student ratings as one measure of instructional effectiveness. The frequency of ratings of post-tenure faculty varies by academic unit, but occurs no less frequently than every five years. Regarding Items 2 and 3: Student ratings from an institution-wide survey were published centrally for over 30 years. Ratings from a new instrument will soon reappear on the campus web. To my knowledge, no individual academic units publish ratings independently. From the late-seventies until 1998, the student rating instrument in use served as a consumer guide for undergraduate students, it was a project of Student Government and results were published in print from until the 1996-1997 academic year. At this point, publication moved too concerns over the fairness and accuracy of ratings led to a major revision in process and methodology (the development of norms) in the early 1980's. Over the next two decades, the availability of data from the instrument led to use of data in administrative/personnel matters, the instrument and "norms" became obsolete, privacy issues emerged and departments dropped the instrument in favor of their own departmental surveys (further eroding the value of the student rating instrument.) Faculty council disqualified the instrument from use in 1998 and called for development of a new university-wide system under the leadership of the provost's office. A new system was developed and validated by the Center for Teaching and Learning in 1999 to comply with recommendations from the Provost's Task Force on Student Evaluation. Components of this system are being used with increasing frequency by departments on campus (funds for full implementation have been unavailable due to the continuing budget crisis in the State of North Carolina.) One standardized component of the new system will be published on the UNC website: student responses to 6 items developed by Student Government. These are "The instructor answered questions well," "The instructor used examples that had relevance for me," "The instructor used class time well," "The instructor encouraged students to participate in this class," "This course was designed to keep me engaged in learning," and "The workload was appropriate for what I gained from this class." Composite scores on other items in the survey will be added as funds permit. We sought to avoid some problems attending the old system in developing the new system with the Task Force. First, it is important to isolate student ratings that may affect administrative/personnel matters from ratings that would be published and accessible to a wide audience on campus. This practice, coupled with a frequent "refresh" rate of published data are least likely to cause harm to the faculty and most likely to protect their privacy. Second, we recommend a refresh rate as soon as data from a current term is available (Fall to

Fall or Spring to Spring as faculty repeat course offerings). As faculty developers, we know that the introduction of a classroom innovation, such as teaching with technologies for the first time, can produce a downturn in student ratings. Using ratings and experience to guide reworking a course, the downturn should be temporary. Initial ratings should not be archived on the institution's website, long after the faculty member learns from his/her early mistakes to create a high-quality course. Finally, we are trying to insure that access to ratings is restricted to users who log-in with a campus ID.