

Summary Report to the U.S.U. Faculty Senate Executive Committee
Status of a Proposed Simplification of the U.S.U. Teaching Evaluation Form
Faculty Senate Faculty Evaluation Committee
April 16, 2006

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Over the past few years, U.S.U. Faculty Senate members have repeatedly expressed concerns about the U.S.U. teaching evaluation process. Our committee oversees this process. Last April, 2005-2006 Faculty Senate President Janis Boettinger asked the committee consider how the standard U.S.U. teaching evaluation form might be simplified, and also to explore the possibility of substituting on-line evaluations for paper evaluations. The focus on simplification reflects a perception that an excessive number of questions on the form prompts many students to treat the process very casually. Students affirm the validity of this perception, and in informal surveys, students overwhelmingly favor simplification of the form.

The committee responded to Professor Boettinger's request by asking the Faculty Senate conduct a survey to gauge faculty satisfaction with the form, and to probe the faculty on the issue of on-line evaluation. The response rate to the survey was about 35%—adequate in these circumstances. The survey indicates that there is widespread support for simplification of the form, with minimal opposition. The survey also suggests that most faculty are receptive to on-line evaluation, but this is a complex issue that the committee will not tackle until next year.

At a meeting on March 31, 2006, the committee unanimously agreed, in principle, to recommend simplification of the form. The simplification envisioned would preserve the open-ended questions on the back side of the form, which provide input and suggestions for improvement in teaching that many faculty value. It would eliminate many, or perhaps nearly all, of the scaled-response, closed-ended questions on the front of the form. Many of the surveyed faculty, as well as those on the committee, think that the responses to these questions provide very little information not already contained in the responses to the open-ended questions. In other cases, faculty perceive that some of the scaled-response questions contaminate the evaluation process--by, for example, encouraging students to complain about excessive class workloads.

At least one scaled-response, summary question asking students to assess the "overall quality of instruction" will remain on the form if it is simplified, as the committee presumes that at least one such question is essential to the assessment of faculty by the U.S.U. administration. The addition of a summary question focusing on overall student learning is also possible. The committee does not, however, want to remove items from the form that U.S.U. administrators commonly use in the assessment of faculty. Thus, we have distributed to seek your input. A one question survey on the teaching evaluation form appears below. We welcome other comments or recommendations. The committee will meet on Monday, April 24 to review your responses to this survey, and, most likely, it will draw up recommendations to the U.S.U. Faculty Senate at that meeting. I thank you for your attention to this matter.