UtahStateUniversity

Office of Analysis, Assessment & Accreditation

To: All Faculty and Course Instructors
From: Michael Torrens
Re: IDEA: Student Ratings of Instruction

August 22, 2011

IDEA Course Evaluation System: Background

Fall 2011 will mark the launch of a new course evaluation system at Utah State University (USU). Based on recommendations from the USU Faculty Senate, the IDEA Center *Student Ratings of Instruction* was chosen to evaluate all classes at USU (there is a special policy in effect for tenure-track faculty, please see the section below for details). The hallmark of the IDEA system is its focus on student progress on specific learning objectives selected by the course instructor. The IDEA system has documented validity and reliability and provides an option of administering the evaluation as a slightly longer *diagnostic* that provides feedback on teaching methods and practice.

I have been fortunate to present details of the IDEA system, and answer faculty questions, in many departments and colleges. If you have not yet had a chance to attend one of these presentations, there are three critical points that are important to understand about the IDEA system vs. USU's old one:

- The IDEA system is focused on **Learning Objectives;** <u>these must be selected by each instructor</u>
- Students are asked (at the end of each semester) to judge their progress on learning objectives;
- It's critical to communicate learning objectives to your students through your course materials (e.g. syllabi) and communications, so you have a common understanding of those objectives

The IDEA system requires faculty members to select between 3-5 learning objectives (from a list of 12 provided by IDEA). Assistance on this process can be found here: http://usu.edu/aaa/idea_faq.cfm. ***Although you will not be entering these learning objectives into IDEA's online system until October, we strongly encourage faculty to review and select their learning objectives now***, so that these objectives can be included in course materials (e.g. syllabi) and in initial communication with students. IDEA course evaluation results are most accurate when faculty and students share a common understanding of course learning objectives throughout the course. You do not need to change the objectives/outcomes that you have already established for your classes; examples of how to map/incorporate the IDEA objectives with current objectives/outcomes in your syllabi are available at the AAA web site, here.

Implementation of the IDEA System

The IDEA system will be implemented online. This means that both faculty and students will interact with the system through a web-based interface. Using data from USU's Banner system, the AAA Office is currently preparing a list of all courses to be evaluated and the students enrolled in those courses. Students will be given a three-week window—the three weeks prior to the last day of classes listed in Banner—in which they may complete their evaluations. For full-term classes in fall 2011, this *evaluation window* will run from November 21 – December 9. Each student will be sent a personal email with a course evaluation link, and they will be sent reminders every three days until they complete it.

Faculty members will be sent an email nine weeks prior to the last day of classes (October 10th for most classes this fall), asking them to complete a faculty information form with their selected learning objectives. Faculty will have a two week window complete the form online, indicating their choice of

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between 3-5 learning objectives, and confirming a few additional details about their class. Faculty and/or departments may choose to add additional questions to the evaluation, and may select whether to use the "short form" or the "diagnostic form" for the evaluations (see details for tenure-track faculty).

Administration of the IDEA Course Evaluation System for Tenure-Track Faculty

The Provost has determined that specific policies for course evaluation will apply to all tenure-track faculty in years 1-5 of the P&T process. Those instructions are as follows:

Current tenure-track faculty coming up for review in 2013 or 2014 will remain on the old evaluation system (with paper forms processed by the AAA office). The old system will be phased out as those faculty advance through the process. Tenure-track faculty who will come up for tenure review after 2014 (i.e. 2015 and beyond) will use the IDEA Center "Diagnostic" student evaluation form for all classes taught. Tenure-track faculty coming up for review in 2012 are not affected by this policy.

A list of all tenure-track faculty impacted by this policy is being compiled by the Provost's office. Names will be provided to each department for confirmation. Departmental staff will be trained on the administration of the course evaluation system for all faculty and will be able to provide assistance.

Departmental Administration and Training on the IDEA System

Currently, Departments are responsible for determining which classes will be evaluated, ensuring that course evaluations are administered, and that "cover sheets" and surveys are properly completed and submitted to the AAA office. Under the new IDEA system, this will change. <u>Training will be provided</u>.

- ✓ The AAA office will provide a master file of all courses to be evaluated to the IDEA Center
- ✓ The IDEA Center will upload the course information (course and instructor details and list of enrolled students) into their online system
- ✓ In each department, IDEA *online administrator(s)* will be identified and trained (trainings to be held in Sep. and Oct.); these administrators will have access to the IDEA system
- ✓ Departmental *IDEA administrators* will solicit from department faculty any classes that should be evaluated using the "diagnostic" form (the "short" form is the default)
- ✓ The selection of "short" vs. "diagnostic" form will be entered in at the departmental level
- ✓ Departmental *IDEA administrators* must ensure that all 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year tenure-track faculty are set up to use the diagnostic form for their classes, and that any other faculty in the department that *wish* to use the diagnostic are set up with that option
- ✓ For tenure-track faculty preparing their binders in the next two years (2013 and 2014), the old system will be used, and departmental staff will request paper-pencil forms from the AAA office and oversee course evaluation administration for those classes
- ✓ Departmental *IDEA administrators* will be able to track *faculty information forms*, student response rates, and the list of class to be evaluated; they can provide faculty with periodic updates (through email) on the status of evaluations, including response rates for each class.