

September 18, 2017

**To: Tim Gallagher, Chair, Faculty Council**  
**From: Matt Hickey, Chair, Committee on Teaching and Learning**  
**Subject: Appropriate Uses of the ASCSU Student Course Survey**

The Committee on Teaching and Learning submits the following motion:

MOVED, THAT SECTION I.8 OF THE *ACADEMIC FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONAL MANUAL*, BE AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:

Deletions ~~Overscored~~ Additions Underlined

### **I.8 Student Course Survey (~~last revised June 21, 2011~~)**

The Student Course Survey is designed to provide feedback to course instructors and is to be used for course improvement. In addition, it is designed to provide information for students to make informed choices about courses. If used for teaching mentoring or as part of the evaluation of teaching, the student course surveys must be used ONLY in conjunction with other sources of evidence (see section E.12.1). Thus, these surveys may not be used, in whole or in part, as the primary source of evidence for an instructor's teaching effectiveness and must be treated as one element of limited weight alongside a range of evaluative tools (as mentioned in E.12.1). The use of course feedback as a stand-alone tool is not a credible means of evaluating the quality of teaching.

Each term, course instructors shall conduct at least one student survey of all the courses they teach through a system administered by the University utilizing the standardized University-wide instrument. ~~At the end of each term, survey forms shall be digitized and responses shall be tabulated.~~ Summaries of responses for each course surveyed shall be posted at <http://coursesurvey.colostate.edu>. Access to the summaries shall be granted to anyone with a CSU eID. Access to digital copies of the survey forms shall be granted only to the course instructor(s), to individuals explicitly granted access by the instructor(s), and to any other persons granted access by the department code. Costs for conducting and providing access to survey results shall be shared by the University and the Associated Students of Colorado State University (ASCSU). ASCSU's financial contribution shall not exceed half of the required financial resources to operate this program.

The Committee on Teaching and Learning is responsible for making recommendations regarding the survey instrument and its use. Changes to the Student Course Survey shall be approved by Faculty Council.

**Rationale:** The ASCSU Student Course Survey has been used for more than three decades, in various forms, as a source of information in annual evaluations of faculty as well as in tenure and promotion processes. A steady accumulation of research on the use of student course surveys indicates, however, that student responses to such surveys, in isolation, cannot substitute for the judgment of peers and the careful examination of course materials, classroom activities, and student learning outcomes. A recent review article by Stark & Freishtat (2014), for example, concluded that although students can offer valuable information about student experiences in a class, particularly in the areas of “*clarity, pace, legibility, audibility, and their own excitement (or boredom)*,” they are poor judges of teaching effectiveness (p. 13). In their review, Stark and Freishtat also reported, “*Controlled, randomized experiments find that SET [student evaluations of teaching] ratings are negatively associated with direct measures of effectiveness. Importantly, SET seem to be influenced by the gender, ethnicity, and attractiveness of the instructor*” (p. 19).

In August 2013, the Faculty Council approved changes to section E.12.1 of the manual that direct departments to ensure that their codes, “within the context of their disciplines, (1) define effective teaching and (2) describe the process and criteria for evaluating teaching effectiveness.” Providing coherent guidance in both I.8 and E.12.1 of the Faculty Manual on the appropriate use of student course surveys will help to ensure that information gathered through them will not constitute the sole or primary basis for judging teaching effectiveness. Making this change in policy will help lead departments to adopt evaluation strategies that can support fairer and more accurate evaluations than is possible through use of student course survey results alone.