University Committee on Academic Policy
Minutes
April 29, 1999

Present: B. Ames, H. Bossen, J. Chartkoff, R. Fisher, C. Gibbons, D. Imig, F. Jacobs, L. Martin, C. McHugh, J. Patterson, J. Radma, J. Sticklen, M. Stefaniak, J. Wald, W. Wilkinson, R. Zimmerman

Others: B. Steidle

Minutes prepared by: J. Wald

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:23 a.m. by J. Chartkoff.

2. The agenda and minutes were approved.

3. J. Chartkoff will be going to the ICCEL Laptop Conference at Wake Forest University.

4. Jon Sticklen and Jeanne Wald were elected as co-chairs for 1999-2000.

5. There was extensive discussion on SIRS and the proposed new public student evaluation forms.

I) **New public student evaluation forms**:
Work on a public student evaluation form began in the Spring '97. In Spring '98 there was a small pilot study (7 faculty members), and a larger pilot study (40 faculty members) was conducted in the Fall '98. Analysis of the results is available, but some felt it was incomplete and not as informative as it could have been regarding whether the questions were effective. It was suggested that the percent of students responding be added to the report.

The students constructed questions based on what they felt students wanted to know. Much discussion followed on the questions and how they were framed. In an earlier discussion, some UCAP members had suggested that only two global questions were really necessary. The Fall 1998 pilot included the six original questions and the two global questions. Steidle observed that the responses to the two global questions were not as informative as the others. Others believed that the set of questions would not, in fact, tell the students what they wanted to know since instruction can change substantially from year to year (depending on feedback and other factors). In fact, they felt as though the evaluations might encumber courses from changing in a positive direction due to a possible class predisposition based on previous negative evaluations. Others questioned the wisdom of adding another evaluation form to be filled out. They felt students already did not take seriously the evaluation forms they were doing.

II) **Current SIRS**:
The Business College has gone to 2 forms; Social Science has several forms. In general individual colleges and departments often have different approaches to which forms they use.

Ninety percent of the departments use SIRS (or their teaching evaluations) as the sole criteria for evaluation of teaching. Several question whether the teaching evaluations do an adequate job of evaluating teaching. There is evidence both for and against the conclusion that students factor in what they have learned from a course when evaluating the instructor.

III) **Discussion on both**:
The purpose of the public evaluation forms was simply to get useful information, as defined by the students, to the students. The purposes of the current evaluation forms include feedback to the individual faculty member and evaluation of the faculty member's teaching. As with other factors involved in promotion and annual evaluation of faculty, there is a policy of confidentiality. Rather than changing the current policy and combining these purposes in order to come up with a single evaluation form, the option of developing a second evaluation form, the results of which would be public, was selected.

Of the CIC institutions, currently 3 have no public evaluations available, 5 have an optional public evaluation form and 4 have some form of public evaluation.

If UCAP votes for the motion to approve the public evaluations, the next step would be for the policy statement to go to Academic Council.

IV) C. McHugh moved to vote on the motion and M. Stefaniak seconded it. R. Zimmerman moved to table the proposal and B. Ames seconded that motion. The motion to table carried.

6. UCAP continued discussion on a resolution regarding providing feedback to students before the course drop deadline:

It was moved that UCAP officially recommend the following resolution be presented to Faculty Council and to Academic Council at the opening meetings of the 1999-2000 academic year:

While UCAP recognizes that graduate and undergraduate evaluation must be consistent with the goals and structure of individual courses, UCAP strongly encourages faculty to provide significant feedback to students regarding progress in the course prior to the drop date in the middle of the semester.

There were 2 abstentions and the motion passed.

7. The final item discussed was the laptop recommendation to the Provost.

J Sticklen moved that UCAP approve the following recommendation. C. McHugh seconded.

UCAP strongly supports the concept of universal access to current technology and universal competency in computing at MSU.
1) UCAP urges CCSAC to revise the proposal with due regard to comments in the UCAP report and to announce broadly to the university community proposed refinements of the student laptop proposal. In addition, UCAP urges CCSAC both to encourage and to allow full and open feedback on the proposal from the university community.
2) Because of the broad impact of the implementation of the student laptop proposal, UCAP requests that future refinements of the proposal be brought back to UCAP for comment before implementation of the plan.

The motion passed.

8. The Faculty Work-Life Issues were tabled. Bob Banks and his committee are getting a report ready.

9. The meeting was adjourned at 12:13 p.m.

UCAP4.29.99.doc