

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

footnote added
9/15/00

September 5, 2000

MEMORANDUM

TO: Provost Lou Anna K. Simon

FROM: Professor Jeanne Wald, ^{Gwilda M} Chairperson, University Committee on Academic Policy

SUBJECT: Student Public Evaluation System (SPES) Policy

BACKGROUND:

Since 1969, Michigan State University has had a student instructional rating system (SIRS), designed to assure high quality instruction by providing feedback on instructional performance to individual faculty members and to academic units for their use in the evaluation of teaching and to assist in decisions on retention, promotion, salary, and tenure. The evaluation policy permits flexibility in the choice of evaluation instruments by academic units and requires confidentiality of the responses provided by the students and any summaries of faculty performance.

In November 1997, the issue of providing for evaluation of teaching results to students was brought to UCAP by ASMSU. For the past two years, the University Committee on Academic Policy has considered the issue of creating a mechanism for student evaluations of instruction that would be accessible to students as an aid in selecting courses. The public SIRS forms would apply only to faculty and specialists with teaching responsibilities; graduate students are excluded in this system, although they are included in the traditional SIRS, for which confidentiality is maintained. During the spring semester, the Committee agreed upon a set of questions for the SPES and made recommendations as to the format of public presentation of the results. It is the intent of the committee that academic units will have some flexibility in defining the bases for comparisons used in, and other elements they consider relevant for, the presentation of unit data. UCAP also stated its intent to review the process and queries periodically.

These actions were premised upon findings from the University of Minnesota that concluded that a single set of questions did not work for both professional evaluation of faculty and for providing information to students. The decision to support separate forms is intended to reinforce the University's purposes in maintaining a set of forms that are credible for incorporation into faculty reviews while also being responsive to students' expectations for information. Separation of the forms is also



OFFICE OF THE
PROVOST

Michigan State University
Administration Building
East Lansing, Michigan
48824-1046

FAX: 517/355-9601

intended to reinforce the University's commitment to the confidentiality of the traditional SIRS forms, within the limits of the law.

To support the implementation of the public evaluations of instruction (SPES), the University Committee on Academic Policy approved the following policy statement on April 27, 2000. We request that the Executive Committee of Academic Council place the policy on the agenda for consideration by the Academic Council. We would propose that, if approved by the Council, the first administration of the forms occur at the end of the Fall 2000, semester.

RECOMMENDATION:

At its meeting of April 27, UCAP approved the following policy statement on Student Public Evaluation System (SPES).

4/6/99

Amended 4/20/00

Amended and Approved 4/27/00

POLICY ON THE STUDENT PUBLIC EVALUATION SYSTEM (SPES)

Students at Michigan State University have an interest in being able to make informed judgments in selecting courses and faculty members as students pursue their academic programs. To this end, UCAP has framed a set of questions that should provide the type of information that students seek. In order to facilitate the transmission of this information to the students, the following procedures are established:

1. In addition to using standard university or unit-based SIRS forms in every class each semester in compliance with the Student Instructional Rating System policy, faculty members at the rank of instructor or above, and specialists who are assigned to teach, shall administer a standard Student Public Evaluation (SPE) form in all of their regular classes.¹
2. The SPE forms shall be administered at the same time as the SIRS forms. Instructors should leave the room until the forms have been completed and collected. The forms should be collected by a neutral party, turned in to a predetermined location, and not accessible to the instructor until grades are submitted.

¹ By regular classes, UCAP refers to all undergraduate courses. Based on a question regarding the impact of the policy on graduate courses raised by ECAC, UCAP has referred the issue of inclusion of graduate courses to the University Graduate Council for discussion.

3. Results will be disseminated in summary form, according to instructor and department, once per year through a Web site accessible to students with the appropriate identification.

BCS:rp8.31SPES-UCAP.doc