

CEPP Meeting Minutes
08.10.2020

Zoom Conference 11:00-12:12 pm.

Scribe: Feryaz Ocakli

Attendees: Steve Ives, Feryaz Ocakli, Michael Orr, Leigh Wilton, Rachael Borthwick, Jina Mao, Peter von Allmen, Pat Hilleren, Sean Heaney, Riley Filister, Mahesh Shankar

- 1) Discussed student comments and critiques regarding Student Ratings and Feedback. Student members of CEPP are concerned about how the college handles issues of bias, racism, and sexism in the classroom. In the current Bias Response system, the onus is on the aggrieved student to bring a bias claim against a faculty member, which the student may fear could potentially result in retaliation. Student members were skeptical about eliminating Student Ratings and Feedback for the Fall 2020 semester. However imperfect our system of student evaluations may be, they do provide an additional avenue through which students are able to document their experiences in the classroom.
 - a. We discussed the need to have a robust system of accountability which enables students to bring up issues of bias, racism, and sexism without the fear of retaliation. This system has to reach beyond the Student Ratings and Feedback forms. The administration is currently in talks regarding how our bias response procedure could be improved. CEPP believes that this is an important issue, and student and faculty voices should be included in the process.
 - b. We noted that there is one question on the Dean's Card relevant to teasing out issues of bias in the classroom. Item 3.9 asks if "the instructor fostered an environment of respect in the classroom." This is a relatively vague question, which cannot accurately capture issues of bias. We may need to update the Dean's Card with more specific questions. In that case, we would need to follow the regular procedure for making qualitative changes to the Student Ratings forms, which includes a faculty vote.
 - c. We noted that Student Long Forms are likely to document student concerns about bias more clearly than the Dean's Cards. Dean Orr updated CEPP that initial consultations at the administration level indicate that we may be able to distribute the Long Forms in Fall 2020 with the help of IT and Department Administrative Assistants.
 - d. The current thinking at CEPP is that students deserve to have a voice in their own education, and that Student Ratings and Feedback play an important part in that. We think that bias response should be a broader concern that may have a place in student evaluations, but it must not be limited to student evaluations.
- 2) We discussed what it would mean for student evaluations to be "fair and honest" under the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Faculty who reached out to CEPP raised a number of concerns, primarily that none of us are trained as distance learning instructors, and that online instruction is something that is thrust upon us by necessity. Having student evaluations play a part in tenure, promotion, and contract renewal processes when

we are teaching a mixture of in-person and online courses may be against the Faculty Handbook language that requires evaluations to be fair and honest.

- a. CEPP shares these worries. On the other hand, we are also concerned about faculty accountability, and the students' right to have a voice in their own education via the Ratings and Feedback instruments. Students have been very clear that they should have the right to provide their feedback, and that their ratings and feedback should be viewed by more than just the individual faculty member.
- b. CEPP does not see a clear-cut, technocratic solution that will satisfy all constituencies equally. We believe that the college should commit to holding Student Ratings and Feedback in Fall 2020. However, CEPP may recommend that the evaluation results should only be seen by the faculty member and their chairperson. This would mean that the administration, ATC, and PC would not receive Student Ratings and Feedback results in Fall 2020.
- c. CEPP is planning to extend an invitation to meet with the members of ATC and PC, as well as the Skidmore Bias Response Group, to hear their perspectives on the evaluations question. This meeting will be planed for the week of August 17-21, 2020.
- d. FEC has organized a faculty-only meeting on Friday, August 14 2020. CEPP members who will be present at that meeting will update the faculty regarding the deliberations we have had at CEPP. Our tentative recommendation is that:
 - i. We hold Student Ratings and Feedback, including the Dean's Cards and the Long Forms, online.
 - ii. Individual faculty members and their department or program chairs have access to the evaluation results.
 - iii. Evaluation results should not be used for the purposes of tenure, promotion, or contract negotiation.
- e. We will update our tentative recommendations, and arrive at a more solid conclusion, after consulting with the faculty at large, student representatives, and other relevant committees such as the ATC and PC.

We concluded the meeting at 12:12 pm.