

August 19, 1976

TO: George T. Matthews, Vice Provost

FROM: Michael J. Wozny, Chairman
Senate Teaching and Learning Committee

RE: Annual Report, 1975-76

The Teaching and Learning (T/L) Committee addressed four major problems during the 1975-76 academic year and four working subcommittees were established to resolve them. The motions resulting from these investigations are given in Appendices I and II. I request that the Steering Committee place these motions before the Senate in the fall.

Subcommittee #1 (Andreas, Lilliston, and Zepelin) concerned itself with the selection of a set of common items for questionnaires on student perception of teaching effectiveness. This effort continued the work begun the previous year when the Burke, Easterly, Wozny subcommittee of T/L compiled all questionnaires used by the various departments at Oakland and obtained some preliminary results. In addition, Mr. Obear's memo of October 15, 1975 to Wozny reinforced the Committee's efforts. The memo stated, in part, "that the members of the Teaching and Learning Committee, or subcommittee thereof, turn its attention this year to the matter of developing a procedure and a mechanism to assure greater standardization of the assessment of student perception of teaching effectiveness."

Working toward this goal, subcommittee #1 analyzed the content of existing departmental questionnaires for "similarity, dissimilarity, and commonality of traits." The subcommittee also surveyed the current research literature and various questionnaires external to Oakland. Their conclusion was, "It is possible to develop an instrument to measure student perception of teaching effectiveness, and such an instrument can provide some meaningful information to the instructor and to instructional review committees." This report also states that "The resources and skills for such an endeavor exists in abundance here at Oakland, and we should now move directly on toward the development of the instrument." The subcommittee concluded its task with a draft of 11 proposed items to serve as a common core of questions for all departmental questionnaires.

Using this draft as a starting point, a task force chaired by Wozny was assembled and charged to develop a final set of core questions which are constant and which reflect the majority of traits common among existing university questionnaires. The task force consisted of Andreas, Lilliston, Barron, Burke, Hough, Schillace, and Stern and represented a broad expertise and interest across Oakland. I am grateful to these members who worked through the spring and into the summer to generate the final version which appears in Appendix I.

Subcommittee #2 (Burke, Easterly, Schillace) was charged "to examine other options available in the evaluation of teaching." This subcommittee concluded that "there are several important aspects of university teaching

that students are not in a position to evaluate, some of which can only be evaluated through visits to the instructor's classes," and recommended that a "Colleague Evaluation of Teaching" procedure be established. The subcommittee notes further, "In this area we must be very sensitive to the variety of teaching styles and problems, and to creativity in meeting those problems. We feel strongly, however, that when two or more expert judges, familiar with the particular teaching situation and its problems, agree that an instructor handles these problems extremely well, fairly well, or poorly, this judgment is as 'objective' as the average of a group of student questionnaires, or the most conscientious evaluation of faculty research. And the combination of all three judgments is more 'objective' than any one of them." A motion from this subcommittee appears in Appendix II.

Subcommittee #3 (Easterly, Pino, Stern) looked at finding ways of promoting effective teaching. Its efforts culminated in two workshops on creative approaches to teaching.

The Gaming and Simulation workshop (February 20, 1976) organized by Easterly and Stern allowed participants to play and evaluate any one of five different games. The evaluation included "... the applicability of the game played to other courses and disciplines, as well as examination of the inherent value of the content and structure of the activity." The leaders of the sessions were Anctil (Education) - Global Futures; Easterly (Education) - Modified Policy Negotiations; Hirschfeld-Medalia (Speech Communications) - An Approach to Systems: The Living-Talking Model; Stern (New Charter College) - Modified Delphic Futuribles; and Tower (Economics and Management) - Management Game. The participants worked "with enthusiasm through the practice and theory of gaming as an approach to instruction."

The workshop on Critical Factors for Learning (March 26, 1976) was organized and conducted by Mr. S. Miller (Chemistry). After opening statements by panelists Liddle (Education) - Course Presentation as Extension of the Instructor's Personality; Heston (Philosophy) - The Instructor-Student Feedback Mechanism; Schillace (Psychology) - Accountability and Student Control of the Learning Process; and Miller (Chemistry) - Pacing and Mastery, the audience and panelists entered into a lively discussion. I thank Mr. Miller for his willingness to handle this workshop.

Subcommittee #4 (T. Lyons) was charged with the dissemination of information on available academic support services. Mr. Lyons' activities centered on the compilation of a list of university owned 16 mm instructional films available from the Audio/Visual Center, and on the circulation of this list throughout the university community. The Audio/Visual Center is ready to offer advice and assistance to anyone "planning any media programs, considering the purchase of new equipment or supplies, and building new facilities to incorporate media use."

The T/L Committee is gratified to see some movement by the University toward the establishment of an Educational Development Fund. This fund is vitally needed to address and resolve questions regarding teaching effectiveness. As a matter of record the original motion was proposed by the

Teaching and Learning Committee and endorsed by the Senate in 1973-74, stating "The University Senate Teaching and Learning Committee recommends the establishment of an annual Educational Development Fund to be used to support, with small grants, a variety of instructional innovations and learning experiments at Oakland. The size of the fund should be equivalent to the Faculty Research Fund and administered through the Office of Research and Instructional Services in collaboration with the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee."

The publication of T/L Reports was suspended for this year due to many pressing issues facing the Committee. However, I recommend strongly that it be continued in the future.

Finally, I wish to thank the members of the Committee for their dedication and interest, including students Don Carr, Mary Williams, and Laura See.

MJW/ak

APPENDIX I.

MOVED, THAT THE SENATE ADOPT THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:

That all departmental questionnaires on student perception of teaching effectiveness include the set of questions listed below for a period of two years. That the results of this set be available to a duly constituted ad hoc committee strictly for the purpose of determining whether or not this set can be used for making reliable assessments of student perceptions of teaching effectiveness on a university-wide basis.

- I. (The scale for the following questions is
rarely - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - almost always)

The professor teaching this class:

1. Is available to students outside the regularly scheduled classroom hours.
2. Seems enthusiastic about the subject matter.
3. Makes changes to meet new situations.
4. Gives feedback so the students know how they are doing in the course.
5. Makes clear why the ideas in this course are important.
6. Attempts to adapt teaching methods to the background of the students in the course.
7. Gives clear explanations of the course material.

II.

8. Compared to the other instructors at Oakland University, I perceive this instructor to be
(one of the worst - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - one of the best).
9. Compared to all the courses I have taken at Oakland University, I would rate this course as
(one of the worst - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - one of the best).
10. The amount of work done for the grade expected was
(extremely light - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - extremely heavy).
11. I had a strong desire to take this course.
(strongly agree - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - strongly disagree)

III.

12. My student status is:

- a. Freshman
- b. Sophomore
- c. Junior
- d. Senior
- e. Graduate

13. My GPA prior to this semester is _____ .

Comment: Our current system of assessing student perception of teaching effectiveness across departments is similar to equating apples to oranges. No common baseline exists for comparing the teaching effectiveness of individuals from different departments. This motion will establish procedures for testing the validity of such a comparison by analyzing student responses to the proposed set of questions for two years.

This set of questions is the culmination of a long and intense investigation of all departmental questionnaires, many external questionnaires, all the research literature, of student opinions, and a consensus of local experts working in this research area. The research literature has shown that all other types of questions correlate highly with this set and that this set explains more than 50% of the traits which have been isolated as being important for effective teaching. In addition, the majority of questions in this set are also those which Oakland students rate as being important.

This resolution represents the first step of a rational approach toward achieving a sense of fairness and uniformness in dealing with the highly complex process of the evaluation of effective teaching.

APPENDIX II.

MOVED, THAT THE SENATE ADOPT THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:

That each departmental evaluation of a faculty member for reappointment and/or promotion should include an evaluation of his teaching effectiveness by a committee of his colleagues, based on criteria adopted publicly by the department, and containing at least these three components:

1. A thorough discussion with the faculty member of his goals and methods in teaching;
2. A carefully administered student questionnaire from each of his courses;
3. Reports of visits to his classes by at least two colleagues on at least two separate occasions each.

Comment: Oakland University is committed to good teaching as one--perhaps the most important one--of its three main criteria for reappointment and promotion of faculty members. However, our present methods of evaluating teaching vary so much from one department to another, and are so indirect in some cases, that the evidence may not be given the weight it deserves in overall decisions. This proposal aims to give some uniformity to the process, while leaving departments plenty of autonomy in defining their criteria and precise procedures appropriate to various teaching situations. The above recommendations incorporate four general principles in the evaluation of teaching:

- a. There are two groups from whom primary data on teaching effectiveness should be sought--students and colleagues--each of whom can contribute important data not available to the others. These can either confirm or qualify each other, and data from both groups is therefore essential.
- b. Whatever data is used should be as complete as possible (hence questionnaires rather than random interviews with students).
- c. Whatever data is used should be as direct as possible (hence class visits by colleagues rather than hearsay).
- d. All evaluations should be in terms of the stated goals and criteria of the department and of the individual faculty member (hence both of these should be explicit).

The Teaching and Learning Committee has further suggestions for the implementation of this resolution if adopted, and stands ready to help all committees, departments, and individual faculty members to develop better methods of evaluating teaching as an ongoing project.