

4/22/21 Allunit: Teaching Evaluations Update

Hi colleagues,

We know that there is a lot of confusion about the status of teaching evaluations this semester. The MSP had assumed that teaching evaluations would be completely optional, as they were for the past two semesters during COVID-19. The administration, however, decided that it was essential to administer SRTIs this spring. The MSP objected and we demanded that the administration negotiate with us. The agreement we reached was that departments could choose to administer either the SRTI or the Forward Focus this semester, that the results cannot be compared to any other semester, and that faculty must be held harmless if the pandemic-era results are sub-optimal.

The agreement covers this semester only. The language says:

- Academic departments may elect to administer either the SRTI or Forward Focus student evaluation instruments. If Forward Focus is used the faculty member administering it must share the results with their department.
- Evaluators will be instructed not to compare the Spring 2021 student evaluations with past or future student evaluations.
- No adverse personnel action shall be based on the results of Spring 2021 student evaluations.

Some departments are thinking that this is a good time to try a non-SRTI method, since the results of these evaluations must be non-comparable to past semesters anyway, and many instructors strongly prefer the Forward Focus. Others are doing the SRTI because it's familiar and centrally administered. The administration was not willing to allow individual faculty to make the choice about evaluations. The MSP contract (Article 33) has longstanding language that departments can choose their own method of teaching evaluation: "Each department, program or other analogous unit shall develop or adopt one or several modes appropriate to the process of evaluating teaching in that unit..." As always, MSP believes that faculty must be consulted in this process.

The MSP believes in holistic evaluations at every level. MSP has worked hard to document the problems with the SRTI – we feel strongly that the SRTI is biased and its data are misused regularly in faculty evaluations. For several years, MSP committees have researched holistic teaching evaluation methods and the MSP has presented proposals on holistic evaluation at the bargaining table. Please let us know if you would like to speak to this issue during contract negotiations or during our upcoming Listening Tour with the administration.

In solidarity,

Eve