MEMO

To: **Patti LiWang, Chair, Curriculum Committee, School of Natural Sciences**
Ariel Escobar, Chair, Curriculum Committee, School of Engineering
Jan Wallander, Chair, Curriculum Committee, School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts

From: The Ad-hoc Committee on Course Evaluations
Carolin Frank (GRC)
Laura Martin (SACA)
Nella Van Dyke (DIVCO, chair)

Date: 10/25/10

Re: revised course evaluation proposal

CC: Mark Aldenderfer, Dean, School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts
Maria Pallavicini, Dean, School of Natural Sciences
Dan Hirleman, Dean, School of Engineering
Cristian Ricci, Chair, SSHA
Mike Colvin, Chair, School of Natural Sciences
Tom Harmon, Chair, School of Engineering
Divisional Council

The Ad-hoc Committee on Course Evaluations appreciates the timely and helpful feedback on our proposal provided by the School Curriculum Committees. We have revised the course evaluation and learning outcome questions in light of the Committees' concerns, and have run these changes by DivCo. We are sending you this memo with the modified proposal. We have reduced the number of questions and have come up with a method that will allow learning objectives questions to be matched to course learning outcomes. We also provide further information regarding the relationship between the learning objective questions and UCM's guiding principles. We provide additional detail regarding these changes below.

We request that your Curriculum Committee take this issue up at your next meeting. In order to have a decision ready in time for the WASC EER report, we must hear back from you by **November 5th** at the latest. We apologize for the short turn around time, but unfortunately the WASC deadline is looming. Please send your feedback to Senate Analyst Fatima Paul (fpaul@ucmerced.edu).

Objective 1: Establish Uniform Course Evaluation Questions

All three schools approved the 15 questions for course evaluation, and therefore we did not feel that these required much revision. However, one school expressed concern regarding the total number of questions between the two questionnaires. We have addressed this concern primarily in the learning objective questionnaire, described in the following section, but we did delete one of the 15 course evaluation questions, leaving a total of 14. We have also added space for written comments, which was always our intention to include.

We deleted the item "The instructor answered questions well," because we felt that this information was largely captured by "The instructor's explanations were clear" (Item 2). The revised set of questions follows.

Course Evaluation Form

Please print the name of your instructor and the course title and number.

Instructor:_____

Course title and number:_____

Please indicate how this course fits in with your academic program. It is:

1 in my major 2 in my minor 3 a general education requirement 4 an elective 5 other

Use the scale below to rate the following statements:

Disagree Strongly			Neither Agree nor Disagree			Agree Strongly	Not Applicable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	N/A

	Score
1. This instructor was effective overall.	
2. The instructor's explanations were clear.	
3. In this class, I was treated with respect.	
4. Materials used in this course (text, readings, notes, websites, etc) were useful.	
5. Assigned work was valuable to my learning.	
6. This class was well organized.	
7. I knew what was expected of me in this class.	
8. The instructor was well prepared for class.	
9. There was sufficient time in class for questions and discussion.	
10. The instructor displayed enthusiasm for the subject matter.	
11. Methods of evaluation in this course were fair.	
12. Feedback on my work was valuable to my learning.	
13. The instructor was available for consultation outside of class.	
14. I learned a great deal in this course.	

Please answer the following questions:

1. What do you like most about the course and instructor?

2. What could the instructor do to improve the course, if anything?

3. Other comments or suggestions.

Objective 2: Establish Questions to Evaluate Student Learning Outcomes

Curriculum Committees varied in their response to our proposed questions to evaluate student learning outcomes. One committee approved option 3, where all students get the same set of questions, one approved option 4, where instructors select which of the 12 apply to their course and these questions are given to students, and the third did not find any of the options to be acceptable. Committees raised three issues: 1) that there are too many questions, 2) that it is unclear how the questions map onto UCM's guiding principles, and 3) that with option 3, including questions outside of the course's learning objectives will lead to confusion.

Again, we appreciate the Committee's attention to this matter and have tried to thoughtfully address each of these valid concerns.

1. Reduce the number of questions.
First, we have reduced the number of questions on learning outcomes by 33%, bringing the number down from 12 to 8. With 8 learning objective questions, our total number between the two questionnaires is 22. This is not out of line with the number of questions asked at other institutions that have incorporated assessment into course evaluations (e.g., Duke, which did an extensive study of best practices in evaluations, uses 20-23). We cannot reduce the number of items further and still assess each of UCM's 8 guiding principles of general education.

We cut "gaining factual knowledge" and "understanding fundamental concepts and principles" because we felt that both are subsumed under the objective "learning to apply knowledge, concepts, principles, or theories to a specific situation or problem." Students cannot apply knowledge unless they have it (the first item cut), and they probably can't apply concepts unless they understand them (the second item cut).

We have combined the two communication items into one, which now reads "Developing communication skills (oral or writing)." Previously oral and writing skills were in separate questions, however, they are combined in the guiding principles and therefore we felt it reasonable to combine them here.

We cut "developing leadership skills," because we felt that "Acquiring skills in working with others as a member of a team" could include leadership, and because leadership and teamwork are included in the same single guiding principle.

The revised proposed learning outcomes questions are provided on the following page.

2. Explain how the learning objectives map onto UCM's guiding principles.
Before we detail how the learning objectives questions map onto UCM's 8 guiding principles, we want to note that these are the learning objectives for general education on our campus. They also currently serve as the institution's learning objectives. Assessing whether students feel that they have made progress on these objectives in their courses will help us refine the

general education outcomes. In developing these items, we largely used language from those learning objectives. If some of the wording is less than optimal, then it can be revised, however, we must assess the current institutional learning objectives. It is also possible that one or two of these are achieved not through coursework, but through student involvement in campus activities. If, after conducting assessment, we find that courses are not successfully accomplishing a given objective, the learning objectives can be revised. Thus, if one of these items is unlikely to be achieved in the classroom and more often occurs through student affairs, then the general education objectives can be revised and the item can be retained as an institutional learning objective. Assessment can guide us in improving our general education and institutional learning objectives.

The revised 8 items correspond to UCM's 8 guiding principles as follows:

ITEM	Guiding Principle(s)
1. Learning to apply knowledge, concepts, principles, or theories to a specific situation or problem.	Scientific literacy and decision making
2. Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments or points of view.	Decision Making
3. Developing communication skills (oral or writing).	Communication
4. Learning to value diverse perspectives in both global and community contexts.	Self and society
5. Following ethical practices in the profession or discipline.	Ethics and responsibility
6. Acquiring skills in working with others as a member of a team.	Leadership and teamwork
7. Gaining a broader appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity (music, science, literature, etc.)	Aesthetic Understanding and Creativity
8. Gaining skills that will help me realize my full potential.	Development of personal potential

3. Including items that are not a part of the course's learning objectives will lead to confusion. One of the Committees pointed out that if students are presented with every learning outcome, some students will select "not applicable" while others will select "not at all." It will be unclear which were actual course objectives, and may appear as though an instructor did very poorly at helping their students achieve an objective. In order to address this valid concern, we propose a modified system which basically combines options 3 and 4 that we presented earlier. Thus, we propose that each student be given the same questionnaire, with all 8 objectives, but that the instructor also complete a form to indicate which of the 8 learning objectives are a part of the course's desired learning outcomes. The questions that were not part of the course plan can then be deleted after students have completed the evaluation, perhaps by a staff person as they enter the written comments (implementation can be decided by the schools). This method will prevent the preparation of the course evaluation forms from becoming too difficult -- it would be extremely cumbersome to require that each class be given a different questionnaire, while also allowing some customization of the evaluation.

Appraisal of Progress (Note: only to be included with primary instructor evaluation)

How much did this course contribute to your progress on the following learning objectives?
Use N/A if the learning objective was not relevant to this course.

Not at all			Moderately			Very highly	Not Applicable
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	N/A

Statements	**Score**
1. Learning to apply knowledge, concepts, principles, or theories to a specific situation or problem.	
2. Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments or points of view.	
3. Developing communication skills (oral or writing).	
4. Learning to value diverse perspectives in both global and community contexts.	
5. Following ethical practices in the profession or discipline.	
6. Acquiring skills in working with others as a member of a team.	
7. Gaining a broader appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity (music, science, literature, etc.)	
8. Gaining skills that will help me realize my full potential.	

Instructor Form:

Please indicate which of the following are desired learning outcomes for your course by putting an X by each relevant objective. If the objective is not one that is applicable to your course, then leave it blank.

	1. Learning to apply knowledge, concepts, principles, or theories to a specific situation or problem.
	2. Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments or points of view.
	3. Developing communication skills (oral or writing).
	4. Learning to value diverse perspectives in both global and community contexts.
	5. Following ethical practices in the profession or discipline.
	6. Acquiring skills in working with others as a member of a team.
	7. Gaining a broader appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity (music, science, literature, etc.)
	8. Gaining skills that will help me realize my full potential.

COMMENTS ON THE AD-HOC COMMITTEE ON COURSE EVALUATIONS REVISED PROPOSAL

Natural Sciences Curriculum Committee:

From: Patti Liwang [mailto:pliwang@ucmerced.edu]
Sent: Monday, November 01, 2010 2:13 PM
To: fpaul@ucmerced.edu
Cc: Patti LiWang
Subject: Course evaluation comments

Hi Fatima,

This info was sent to the Nat Sci Curr Comm, and our overall comment is that the document could recommend that faculty inform their students, e.g. by writing on the board, which of the 8 "appraisal of progress" questions actually apply to their course. This would focus student attention on the truly important questions. [Recall that we commented more at length about a month or so ago when this subject was initially brought up.]

Thanks,
Patti

Comments Sent on Behalf of NS Faculty Chair Mike Colvin:

From: Jennifer Manilay [mailto:jmanilay@ucmerced.edu]
Sent: Monday, October 25, 2010 4:08 PM
To: fpaul@ucmerced.edu
Subject: Adhoc Committee on Course Evaluations - Revised Proposal (on behalf of Mike Colvin)

Dear Fatima,

The course evaluation proposal is largely the same as that currently used by SNS, and in my opinion has worked well in the past to help evaluate my teaching as well as the effectiveness of the course.

I also feel that the assessment of the student learning outcomes is applicable to my current courses and a good point of guidance for the design of future courses.

_____
Jennifer O. Manilay, PhD
Assistant Professor
School of Natural Sciences

School of Engineering Curriculum Committee:

From: tharmon.ucmerced@gmail.com [mailto:tharmon.ucmerced@gmail.com] **On Behalf Of** Thomas Harmon
Sent: Friday, September 24, 2010 11:55 AM
To: Fatima Paul
Cc: Shannon Adamson; aescobar4@ucmerced.edu
Subject: Fwd: Fwd: Ad-Hoc Committee on Course Evaluations-Request for Comments

Fatima,
From our CC regarding Professor van Dyke's request for comments.

--Tom
---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **Shannon Adamson** <sadamson@eng.ucmerced.edu>
Date: Fri, Sep 24, 2010 at 11:50 AM
Subject: Re: Fwd: Ad-Hoc Committee on Course Evaluations-Request for Comments
To: Thomas Harmon <tharmon@ucmerced.edu>
Cc: aescobar4@ucmerced.edu, Linda Zubke <lzubke@ucmerced.edu>, Dan Hirleman <dhirleman@ucmerced.edu>

Dear Professor Harmon,

The Curriculum Committee reviewed the Committee on Course Evaluations proposal at their last meeting on Tuesday, September 21. For Objective 1, they unanimously approved Option 2. For Objective 2, they unanimously approved Option 3. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Shannon Adamson
Manager of Academic Support
School of Engineering
University of California, Merced
(209) 228-4022
(f) (209) 228-4047

SSHA Curriculum Committee:

From: Jan Wallander [mailto:jwallander@ucmerced.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, November 03, 2010 4:57 PM
To: fpaul@ucmerced.edu
Cc: Linda-Anne Rebhun; Megan Silva
Subject: RE: Ad-Hoc Cttee on Course Evaluations - Revised Proposal

The SSHA CC met today and formulated the following response:

Objective 1:
The SSHA CC has no further comments about objective 1. We approve the current questions and course evaluation form.

Objective 2:
The SSHA CC feels that reducing the number of questions on institutional learning outcomes is important, but we propose that questions regarding the following two outcomes be added back to the form as they are fundamental to most SSHA disciplines and courses:

- "gaining factual knowledge"
- "understanding fundamental concepts and principles."

We suggest slight changes in the wording of the introduction to the Institutional Learning Outcome assessment (red font = to be added):

"How much did this course contribute to your progress on the following UC Merced institutional learning objectives"
"Use N/A if the learning objective was not ~~relevant to~~ specifically addressed in this course

The SSHA CC approves the remainder of the proposal pertaining to Objective 2.

However, as a point of information, we discussed that some disciplines may want to establish which institutional learning objectives will be assessed as a base for all courses in that discipline. As we understand it, this will be a matter to be decided in the School.

Jan Wallander, Co-chair

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October 26, 2010

From: Cristián H. Ricci, SSHA Faculty Chair

To: The Ad-hoc Committee on Course Evaluations
Carolin Frank (GRC)
Laura Martin (SACA)
Nella Van Dyke (DIVCO, Chair)

First, I'd like to recognize the hard work The Ad-hoc Committee on Course Evaluations has invested in crafting the memorandum on course evaluations. I believe that the number of Course Evaluation Questions is adequate. However, I'd suggest four changes/amendments: Question 7) I'd rephrase it. Instead of "I knew what was expected of me in this class," I'd write, "The syllabus clearly defined what was expected of me in the class." Please, note that there is no reference to syllabi in the Course Evaluation Form. Question 10) I think the question is very relativistic. How can one measure the level of enthusiasm of an instructor? I find Question 8 more appropriate. Question 13) "The instructor was available for consultation outside of class." I'd rephrase it. My suggestion: "The instructor was available for consultation during her/his office hours and by appointment." Question 14) "I learned **a great deal** in this course." I'd rephrase it. My suggestion: "This course fulfilled my learning expectations."

Regarding "Questions to evaluate Student Learning Outcomes," I find the 8 guiding principles appropriate. The "Appraisal for Progress" and "Instructor Form" are also very well crafted.