

Revisions to Student Evaluation of Teaching: Two Years of Experience and Some Remaining Challenges

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Two years ago, Wayne State University launched a revised Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) process, including an updated process for collecting and reporting data, marketing to improve response rates, and a revised instrument. We previously reported on the revisions at the 2014 and 2015 Lilly Conferences. This paper will report additional results of the new process, after two years of experience and the remaining challenge, the use of SET reports in P&T and Personnel processes.

Outcomes:

Discuss issues surrounding Student Evaluation of Teaching, including roles of SET in promotion and tenure and annual reviews, and evaluating teaching in different settings

Explore best practices in measuring teaching effectiveness

Reflect on how the experiences of one institution may apply to their own setting

Apply their knowledge and experience to the presenters' institutional questions and goals

Category: Innovation

Describe the planned innovation addressed in your paper and what motivates it. Describe what you see in your students', colleagues', or institution's behavior that you want to change. Describe the learning objectives you want students or colleagues to better achieve as a result of your innovation.

Changing any part of the P&T process is politically fraught. Those on the tenure track fear any change. Those administering the process want stability. At the same time the committee of faculty and administrators charged with revising the SET are concerned that the current use of global items is indefensible in high stakes personnel decisions, including granting or withholding tenure and awarding merit raises (Basow & Martine, 2012; Berk, 2013)

In the past year, we have experienced these changes:

A new video to support improved response rates and use of SET data. The video features well-respected faculty and students, promoting the value of SET to students and faculty.

Use of SET reports by students during registration

Confronting the global items as insufficiently reliable and problematic in the ways they are used (Berk, 2013)

Responses that we hope will improve as a result of the changes we made

Revisions to the global items

Support for P&T and Personnel committees to make more defensible use of SET data

Student response rates

Student use of SET reports, e.g., students report that having access to the SET helps them make choices in their courses

Still to do

Improve instrument (get rid of or revise global items)

Reduce time from collection of data to reports being available

Improve use of instrument as a way to raise the quality of instruction.

As a baseline, we have extensive data for decades of prior experience with SET. Our goals are

to improve SET response rates, raise the validity of the instrument, especially for a broader range of teaching and learning contexts, increase the utility of SET for students, faculty and administrators, and improve confidence in the data reported by the SET process.

If your innovation involves a particular course or curriculum, briefly describe it, its students, and its place in the curriculum or program.

University wide, undergraduate and graduate, online and face-to-face. The wholesale changes were brought about by recognition of weaknesses in the previous SET process (Berk, 2006; Stark & Freishat, 2014).

How is your innovation different from ones that others have tried?

The scope of the innovation sets it apart from others. To some extent, the prior SET process could be seen as dysfunctional, with widespread faculty mistrust, low levels of student engagement and response, and the use of SET as the major, if not only, measure of teaching quality for merit raises, promotion and tenure (Basow & Martin, 2012). It is an indication of the extent of the problems that negotiators were unable to resolve contentious issues during regular contract talks.

Assessment and baseline: Indicate how you plan to determine the success and effectiveness of your innovation. If outcomes are not yet available, indicate when they will be (by the time of the session?).

This paper reports the first year of the revised process. As a baseline, we have extensive data for decades of prior experience with SET. Our goals are: to improve SET response rates, raise the validity of the instrument for high stakes teaching evaluations, increase the utility of SET for faculty and administrators, and improve confidence in the data reported by the SET process.

References:

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Berk, R. A. (2006). *Thirteen strategies to measure college teaching: A consumer's guide to rating scale construction, assessment, and decision making for faculty, administrators, and clinicians*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Berk, R.A. (2013). Should global items on students rating scales be used for summative decisions? *Journal of Faculty Development*, 27(1), 64-67.

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Organization:

In a participatory format, presenters will outline the revisions and results of the revised SET process and the changes over the past two years, the history and charge to the 2N (administrators and faculty) committee, with an updated report on actions and results. Participants in the session will share their experiences with SETs, comparing and contrasting their history and challenges, so that all will come away with a broader understanding of the issues and some ways of proceeding to resolve them

Keywords:

Ethics
Evaluation of Teaching
Graduate Education
Promotion and tenure