

2017-2018 Year-End Committee Report

Committee:	Educational Affairs
Charge:	recommends best practices in academic organization, research, and teaching in order to shape the Northwestern educational experience.
Chair:	Claudia Swan
# of Meetings:	4 committee meetings; numerous other meetings of Chair with relevant persons on campus

Completed Business and/or Accomplishments

The primary charge of the Educational Affairs committee was to review and propose reform of the content and administration (not the delivery) of Northwestern's student-teacher evaluations, CTECs.

Committee chair met with relevant stakeholders, including Registrar (Jaci Cassazza); Director of the Searle Center for Teaching Excellence (Bennett Goldberg); CTEC Committee (convened by Jenny Chen, Assistant Registrar); representatives of the ASG and convened four committee meetings to assess the use of CTECs at Northwestern; in addition, and along with the committee, reviewed research on Student-teacher Evaluations compiled by Beth Healey. Coordinated our efforts on behalf of the Senate with the efforts undertaken by Goldberg and proposal submitted by the ASG to the CTEC Committee for reform of CTECs.

Presented to the Senate a Proposal, passed unanimously on 18 April, as follows:

Proposal to Revise CTECs

Student teaching evaluations (CTECs) are used throughout the Northwestern community by undergraduate and graduate students weighing their choices; by faculty in order to assess and improve their performance; by department chairs, program directors, and deans in the course of annual faculty review and curricular matters; and by faculty committees and members of the administration in promotion and tenure deliberations. There is substantial variation across academic units in design and administration of the CTECs, as well as a wide range in faculty satisfaction with the instrument. In order to ensure that CTECs optimally serve the several purposes of course evaluation, the Senate proposes that the University should review the CTECs and suggest revisions for improvement. This process should involve stakeholders across the university, including the Senate, and take into account current research on implicit biases in teaching evaluations. The review should also consider best practices in administering the questionnaire, and revised CTECs should aim to offer a reliable and fair source of feedback on pedagogy and professionalism. Specifically, we propose that,

where appropriate, the questions be reformulated to better reflect learning objectives and student experience.

Unfinished/Continuing Business

An item we discussed but did not take action on is the matter of stress levels for students. “And is in our DNA”; is AND (accumulating more and more activities, obligations) for the best?

Ongoing: monitor changes to the calendar (as per 2016-17 committee work) and revision/reform of the CTECs. Ideally, ensure Faculty Senate participation in the process.

New Business for Next Year

Two additional items I (chair) would propose for consideration: (1) assessment of benefits and drawbacks for instructors and students of team-taught courses; (2) examination of the extent of adjunct instruction at Northwestern, and transparency around it. How many courses at what levels are offered to our undergraduates by contract instructors?