

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 9, 2019

From: Faculty Evaluation Task Force

To: Jon Harbor, Executive Vice President and Provost

Re: Status update and recommendations

The purpose of this memo is to summarize the work we conducted over the course of spring semester 2019 and offer some recommendations for next steps.

In December 2018, we accepted your invitation to join a task force to make recommendations on how to upgrade UM's course and faculty evaluation systems from a paper-based process to an electronic platform, in keeping with the CBA, unit standards, and other UM policies and procedures. Our task force met several times over the course of the spring semester. A brief summary of our work is below:

- We decided not to focus on the course evaluation component of our charge
- A subgroup focused on the IPR component of faculty evaluations
- We discussed the need for a future faculty activity database
- A subgroup focused on the workflow component of faculty evaluations
- A subgroup developed and distributed a survey for those involved in the faculty evaluation process

Course evaluations

As we embarked on this work, we realized that the scope was very large, and that we needed to make it smaller. Separating the course evaluation component from the faculty evaluation process seemed like a logical way to reduce the scope of our project.

We suggest that a different group work on the following aspects of evaluating faculty teaching:

- course evaluations as a measure of faculty performance in teaching
- the role of the Student Evaluation Committee
- suggestions for other measures of faculty performance in teaching / determining achievement of student learning outcomes to be included in unit standards

in addition to studying the pros and cons of using a single, electronic system for all UM course evaluations.

Individual Performance Record (IPR)

The task force supports continuing to promote electronic IPR submission and sharing for the convenience of the different reviewers in the faculty evaluation process. We agreed that having past material readily available in electronic format makes it easier to prepare the IPR each time.

The group discussed the pros and cons of standardizing the IPR format and recommends some form of standardization, but not too much, in order to allow faculty in distinct academic units the freedom to present this material in ways specific to the culture and habits of their units. Perhaps the most logical way to standardize the IPR would be to have each unit base it on the unit standards.

Faculty activity database

The members of the task force agree that a faculty information database where IPR data is stored is a logical next step. We are aware that the Office of the Vice President for Research and Creative Scholarship is designing a way for UM to use a product named Exploro to track the research and scholarly productivity of UM faculty, but that is just one component of the IPR. The task force recommends the University consider needs and objectives more holistically so that it maximizes the investments it makes in systems to serve a greater number of stakeholders.

Workflow

The task force supports making the workflow component of faculty evaluations fully electronic. Currently this takes place on paper forms, which are copied and shared with various parties, including the faculty member, who must sign and return the forms, or add a response in some cases. The same basic information about a faculty member must be provided on several forms, increasing the chances that errors will be made, in addition to being inefficient. The paper forms create busywork for administrative staff, who often struggle to obtain faculty signatures on the forms in time to comply with the CBA deadlines.

Survey results

The task force solicited input from those who have a role in the faculty evaluation process via a survey. Here is a selection of the quantitative feedback collected from individuals with different roles in the faculty evaluation process:

- Of faculty respondents, 92% reported that they prepare their IPRs without the assistance of anyone else;
- Of department staff respondents, 81% said they provided a moderate amount to a great deal of assistance to the FEC chair and members;
- Of FEC Chair respondents, 76% described the assistance faculty receive from their unit's administrative associate in preparing for evaluation as a little or none at all;
- Of FEC member respondents, 45% described overall workload for FEC members as somewhat difficult;
- Of department chair/director respondents, 66% described overall workload as somewhat to extremely difficult;
- Of dean's office staff respondents, 87% described the method their college uses for faculty review and signature of SEC, FEC, and chair recommendations as slightly to moderately effective;

- Of dean respondents, 60% described overall workload as somewhat to extremely difficult;
- Of Office of the Provost staff respondents, 2 out of 3 reported they thought the office processed faculty evaluation files moderately efficiently; the other reported they thought the office didn't process these files efficiently at all.

The task force conducted more quantitative analysis based on themes such as workload involved in the faculty evaluation process, the assistance provided to the process by staff, the efficiency of the review and signature process, reviewers' ability to meet the deadlines stated in the CBA, and the effectiveness of methods for sharing the dean's and the Provost's recommendations with the faculty members being evaluated.

Some of the main themes that emerged from the comments section of the survey include:

- The way the faculty evaluation process is conducted varies from one academic to another; consistency and standardization would help streamline and simplify the process
- The current faculty evaluation process does not provide opportunity for meaningful conversation about faculty performance
- Many respondents would like an electronic faculty evaluation process system that feeds into a digital system to archive faculty records
- Course evaluations and the role of the SEC need to be revisited

Recommendations and next steps

- The task force recommends that departments spend time discussing possible improvements to the ways they conduct faculty evaluation, such as
 - setting clear expectations for the role of administrative staff in the process, and
 - confirming membership of their SEC and FEC well in advance of the fall semester, if possible.
- The task force recommends the Office of the Provost adopt an electronic system for both IPR submission and workflow involved in the faculty evaluation process.
 - If Moodle will no longer be available for electronic IPR submission, the task force recommends use of box or some other online file sharing platform.
- The task force recommends another group be tasked with continuing to explore the data collected in the survey and make additional recommendations if warranted.
 - It would be preferable to ask an existing University committee to undertake this project rather than creating a new group.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Survey quantitative data analysis
- Appendix 2: Survey qualitative data organized by general theme