Faculty Course Evaluations: Appendix

a. Past FCEs
b. The 2004 FCE
c. Focus, Winter, 2004: Why the University Should Abolish FCEs
d. Focus, April, 2004: Letter to the Editor
e. The 2006 Faculty Senate Survey
a. Past FCEs

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

(a) Mid-term grade
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   A  B  C  D  F  N/A

(b) Per cent class discussion
   10% 20% 30% 50% 70% 90% N/A

(c) Hours of study per week
   1  2  3  5  ?  9  11

(d) Is the amount of work required appropriate for the credit received?
   Much too much work 1 2 3 4 5 Almost no work required

(e) Is this one of your required courses? 1 (YES) 2 (NO)

(f) Informative 1 2 3 4 5 N/A Useless

(g) Interesting 1 2 3 4 5 N/A Boring

(h) Up to date 1 2 3 4 5 N/A Not current enough for the course

(i) Number of major projects 1 2 3 4 5 6 N/A

(j) Number of exams (3 quizzes = 1 exam) 1 2 3 4 5 6 N/A

(k) Do you feel that the exams were a fair test of your knowledge?
   Exams covered material well 1 2 3 4 5 N/A Exams were irrelevant

(l) Teacher's competence with the material
   Highly competent 1 2 3 4 5 Gives misinformation

(m) Teacher's presentation of the course material
   Stimulating and exciting 1 2 3 4 5 Puts you to sleep

(n) Teacher's ability to communicate with the class
   Organized & easy to understand 1 2 3 4 5 Unclear & hard to follow

(o) How is the course fulfilling your needs? (Consider your immediate as well as your future goals.)
   Meaningful, relevant 1 2 3 4 5 Worthless

(p) Overall evaluation:
   (1) Delightful class, never wanted to cut.
   (2) Good professor, good books, classes usually worth going to.
   (3) Typical lecture & discussion routine, Not generally exciting or inspirational
   (4) Dull book, dull class, almost every one sleeps or cuts and probably should.
   (5) Unless required, don't bother to register for this one, as classes don't come any worse.

FCE 1968

Courtesy of Carnegie Mellon Archives
WRITE "N/A" WHERE "NOT APPLICABLE"

A) IS THIS A REQUIRED COURSE?  (DO NOT CONSIDER CHOICE OF SECTION) 1) YES 2) NO.

*** FOR THE NEXT THREE QUESTIONS, "3" IS BEST. ***

E) IS THE AMOUNT OF WORK REQUIRED APPROPRIATE FOR THE CREDIT RECEIVED? VERY LITTLE WORK 1 2 3 4 5 TOO MUCH WORK (N/A)

G) DOES THE COURSE MOVE TOO QUICKLY OR TOO SLOWLY FOR THE BEST UNDERSTANDING? TOO SLOWLY 1 2 3 5 TOO QUICKLY (N/A)

D) DOES THE INSTRUCTOR EXCESSIVELY EXPAND OR IGNORE FACTS, AS COMPARED TO MAIN IDEAS AND CONCEPTS?
   EXCESSIVE DWELLING ON FACTS 1 2 3 4 5 TOO GENERAL; IGNORES IMPORTANT SPECIFIC DETAILS (N/A)

*** FOR THE REST OF THE QUESTIONS, "5" IS BEST. ***

F) DO YOU ENJOY TAKING THIS COURSE? NOT AT ALL 1 2 3 4 5 VERY MUCH (N/A)

H) HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE TEXTBOOKS AND ASSIGNED READINGS TO THE COURSE?
   FOR 1 2 3 4 5 EXCELLENT (N/A)

I) HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE OVERALL QUALITY OF THE OUTSIDE ASSIGNMENTS (LABS, THESIS PAPERS, ETC.)? WORTH THE TIME SPENT ON THEM? DO THEY ACT AS A VALUABLE LEARNING EXPERIENCE? NOT AT ALL WORTHWHILE 1 2 3 4 5 VERY WORTHWHILE (N/A)

J) HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE INSTRUCTOR'S FEEDBACK (THROUGH EXAMINATIONS, COMMENTS ON PAPERS, AND GRADED PROBLEMS, ETC.) IN EVALUATING YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE COURSE MATTER?
   COMpletely Satisfactory 1 2 3 4 5 Very Inadequate (N/A)

K) HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE COURSE DIFFICULTY LEVEL TO CONTINUALLY STIMULATE YOUR THINKING?
   STIMULATING 1 2 3 4 5 CHALLENGING AND STIMULATING (N/A)

L) HOW DO YOU RATE THE PROFESSOR'S PRESENTATION GENERATE INTEREST AND ENTHUSIASM ABOUT THE SUBJECT?
   DULL AND LIFELESS 1 2 3 4 5 INSPIRATIONAL (N/A)

M) HOW MUCH DOES THE INSTRUCTOR ENCOURAGE THE STUDENTS TO THINK AND REASON CRITICALLY AND/OR CREATIVELY ABOUT THE GENERAL SUBJECT MATTER OF THE COURSE?
   STRONGLY DISCOURAGES SUCH THINKING AND REASONING 1 2 3 4 5 STRONGLY ENCOURAGES SUCH THINKING AND REASONING (N/A)

N) HOW WELL DOES THE INSTRUCTOR ANSWER QUESTIONS?
   ANSWERS THEM POORLY 1 2 3 4 5 ANSWERS THEM AND USES THEM AS A MEANS OF LEARNING TOOL (N/A)

O) DOES THE INSTRUCTOR TAKE A GENUINE INTEREST IN HIS STUDENTS? IS HE SINCERELY MOTIVATED TO HELP THEM LEARN?
   SEEMS TOTALLY UNINTERESTED 1 2 3 4 5 GOES OUT OF HIS WAY TO BE HELPFUL (N/A)

IN RESPONDING TO THE FOLLOWING TWO QUESTIONS, SEPARATE IN YOUR MIND, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, THE COURSE ITSELF FROM THE PARTICULAR INSTRUCTOR WHO TAUGHT IT. THE AMOUNT YOU LEARNED AND THE MOTIVATION YOU CAME FROM YOUR CRITERIA IN RATING.

P) IN GENERAL, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THIS COURSE? DEFINITELY INFERIOR 1 2 3 4 5 AMONG THE BEST I HAVE TAKEN.

Q) IN GENERAL, HOW WOULD YOU RATE THIS INSTRUCTOR? ONE OF THE WORST I HAVE HAD 1 2 3 4 5 A TRULY SUPERIOR TEACHER

FCE 1972

Courtesy of Carnegie Mellon Archives
Alpha Phi Omega — Faculty-Course Evaluation
Lecture/Recitation Questionnaire

Instructions to the Student: Please consider your answers carefully. For the first three parts write your answer (1 through 5, or n/a for not applicable) in the space above beside the letter of the question you are answering.

Part I. Evaluation of the Course
a) Are you required to take this course? REQUIRED
b) Is the course description reasonably accurate? INACCURATE
b) How well do the tests (or whatever determines your grade) reflect the material presented in the course? REQUIRED
b) How much did the following contribute to your learning the course material? NOT AT ALL
b) Lectures, 1 VERY MUCH
b) Recitations, 2 VERY MUCH
b) Assignments, 3 VERY MICH
b) Labs, 4 VERY MICH
b) Exams, 5 VERY MICH
i) Is the amount of work required appropriate for the credit given? VERY LITTLE WORK
i) Is the pace of the course appropriate? TOO SLOW
i) In general how would you rate this course? INFERIOR

Part II. Evaluation of the Instructor
i) Clarifies difficult aspects of the course clearly? YES
i) Makes good use of examples and illustrations? YES
i) Conveys his/her knowledge of the subject to students? YES
i) Presents course content in an organized manner? YES
i) Has affected my interest in the subject? INCREASED
i) Presents enriching and informative material in class? YES
i) Has stimulated thinking on the part of the students? YES
i) Gives adequate feedback in evaluating mastery of the course material? YES
i) Answers questions well? YES
i) Takes genuine interest in the students; is sincerely motivated to help them learn? YES
i) Available outside of class to answer questions and to deal with students' needs? YES
i) In general, how would you rate this instructor's teaching? INFERIOR

Part III. Evaluation of the Questionnaire
i) To what extent does this questionnaire effectively convey your overall evaluation of this course and instructor? POORLY

Part IV. Comments
1. What was the most effective activity (lect., demonstrations, project, lecture, etc.) done in this course?
2. Least effective?
3. Additional comments?
## Evaluation Questions

1. Did the instructor state clearly the goals of the course?  

2. Was the course well planned?  

3. Did the instructor state clearly the criteria for grading?  

4. Did the instructor provide adequate feedback concerning performance?  

5. Did the instructor respond to questions adequately?  

6. Did the instructor show concern for the needs of individual students?  

7. Did the instructor communicate clearly and effectively?  

8. Did the instructor present material and activities at an appropriate level of difficulty?  

9. Did the instructor stimulate critical or creative thinking about the subject?  

10. Overall, how would you rate this instructor's teaching?  

11. What was the overall quality of this course?  

Indicate other comments and/or suggestions you have concerning this course on the back of this sheet.
b. The 2004 FCE

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**Course Evaluation-10-6-03**

**Course Evaluation: Student Information**

On average, how many hours per week have you spent on this class, including attending classes, doing readings, reviewing notes, writing papers and any other course related work?

[ ]

From the average hours you reported in the previous question, how many hours per week were valuable in helping you learn in this course?

[ ]

What grade do you expect to earn in this course? (If your course uses + and - grades, please select the appropriate letter grade.)

- [ ] A
- [ ] B
- [ ] C
- [ ] D
- [ ] R
- [ ] Other [_________]

[Next](#)
Course Evaluation-10-6-03

Course Evaluation: Student Effort

Describe your behaviors in this course by marking the appropriate response. If the question is not relevant to the course, or not relevant to you, select N/A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I attended class.</td>
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<td>I prepared for class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I attended class, I was actively engaged</td>
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<td>(e.g., listened attentively, contributed to class discussions,</td>
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<tr>
<td>answered questions, etc.).</td>
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<td>I stayed up-to-date in the course work.</td>
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<td>I sought help when I needed it.</td>
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</table>

If you sought help, what people or other resources did you use?

Please feel free to write any comments you have concerning your effort and participation in the course.
### Course Evaluation: Learning Outcomes

**In this course, to what degree have you...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Relevant to Course</th>
<th>None/Not at all</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>An Exceptional Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gained factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, or trends).</td>
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<td>learned fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories.</td>
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<td>learned to apply course material (e.g., to improve thinking skills, problem solving, or decision-making).</td>
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<td>developed creative capacities (such as writing, inventing, designing, or performing in art, music, or drama, etc.).</td>
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<td>developed skills in expressing yourself orally (through class or group discussions, presentations, etc.).</td>
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<td>developed skills in expressing yourself in writing (through papers, essay exams, lab reports, poems, etc.).</td>
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<td>developed skills in interpreting or expressing concepts using visual or mathematical representations (graphs, pictures, 3-D models, flowcharts, tree diagrams, etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td>learned to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>learned to analyze and/or critically evaluate ideas, arguments, or points of view.</td>
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<td>gained a greater appreciation for this field of study.</td>
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<td>understood how different parts of the course fit together.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Please feel free to write any comments you have related to your learning in the course.**
# Course Evaluation-10-6-03

**Course Evaluation: Instructor Behaviors**

Rate the performance level of your instructor on each of the following teaching procedures or behaviors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not relevant in this course</th>
<th>R-Poor</th>
<th>D-Fair</th>
<th>C-Good</th>
<th>B-Very Good</th>
<th>A-Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Displaying an interest in students' learning</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing a clear explanation of the course requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing a clear explanation of the learning objectives or goals of the course</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing feedback that helped students to improve their performance</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduling course work (class activities, tests, projects, etc.) in ways that helped and encouraged students to stay up-to-date in their course work</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrating the importance and significance of the subject matter</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using examples to illustrate concepts</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explaining the subject matter of the course (e.g., concepts, skills, techniques, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Designing tests, projects, etc. that covered the most important concepts of the course</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introducing stimulating ideas about the subject</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Showing respect for all students</td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>C</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Overall, how would you rate this instructor's teaching?**

- R=Poor
- D=Fair
- C=Good
- B=Very Good
- A=Excellent

**Please feel free to write any comments you have concerning the instructor's behaviors in this course.**
### Course Evaluation-10-6-03

#### Course Evaluation: The Course copy

**Why did you take this course? (Check all that apply)**

- [ ] Required in my major
- [ ] Required in my minor
- [ ] General Education requirement
- [ ] An elective
- [ ] Interested in topic
- [ ] Wanted to take a course from this instructor
- [ ] Other (please specify)

**Rate each of the following resources or activities in terms of their usefulness to your learning in this course.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Not part of course/I didn't use it/them</th>
<th>Not at all Useful</th>
<th>Slightly Useful</th>
<th>Somewhat Useful</th>
<th>Very Useful</th>
<th>Extremely Useful</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching assistant(s)</td>
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<td>Textbook(s) and/or required readings</td>
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<td>Additional or supplementary readings</td>
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<td>Short, periodic assignments (e.g., problem sets, short papers, designs, drawings, programs, etc)</td>
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<td>Course-long assignments (e.g., group or individual projects, term papers, performances, etc)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
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<td>Class discussions</td>
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<td>Class demonstrations</td>
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<td>Labs or Studios</td>
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<td>Audio-visual materials</td>
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<td>Web-based tools (e.g., Blackboard, course website, etc.)</td>
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</table>
For me, the difficulty level of this course was:
- Easy
- Pretty Easy
- Reasonable
- Difficult
- Very Difficult

For me, the pace at which the instructor covered material during the course was:
- Very Slow
- Somewhat Slow
- Just about Right
- Somewhat Fast
- Very Fast

Based on your observations or knowledge, how often did cheating occur in the course?
- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often

How would you rate the overall quality of this course?
- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent

Please feel free to write any comments regarding the materials, activities, difficulty or pace of the course.
Course Evaluation-10-6-03

If you have any other comments regarding your course that you wish to bring to your instructor's attention, please feel free to include them.

[Text box for comments]
Why the university should abolish faculty course evaluations

In company with several other university bodies, the Faculty Senate has recently approved a new Faculty Course Evaluation (FCE) instrument, to be filled out online. Both for students and for faculty the decision is unfortunate, and quite possibly for some faculty, sometime, it will be very unfortunate. What the Faculty Senate ought to have done was to recommend investigation of a more serious process for estimating the quality of instruction, leading toward the end of university sponsorship of Faculty Course Evaluations forms. Students should be entirely free to organize and publicize their own online evaluations of courses and faculty, but the results should not have the imprimatur of the university itself. I will start my argument with some anecdotes.

In 1969 Princeton University for the first time admitted about 20 African American students, and nearly half of them enrolled, with 60 other students, in my Introduction to Mathematical Logic. Every one of these smart, brave, ambitious students failed my course. I thought hard over the summer about why, and formed this hypothesis: the lecture course had based grades on a midterm and a final and homework. If the African American students were missing some background, or not good at test taking or at judging how well they understood the material, the course structure offered no way for them to make up for those disadvantages by extra effort.

The next year I changed the structure of the course. Using a text that divided the material into a great many short chapters with many problems, a student could take a test on a chapter at any time during regular work hours and have it graded immediately; if the test was passed, the student could go on to the next chapter; if the student failed, another test on the same chapter could be taken after a two-day wait; tests on a chapter could be taken repeatedly until one was passed. Lectures were replaced by scheduled problem-solving sessions, in which the students asked me how to do problems in the text, and I worked the problems out for them; mini-lectures were given spontaneously when students asked about particular material. In addition, I met privately in my office with every enrolled student every other week. Grades were based entirely on how many chapters were successfully completed—how many tests were failed did not matter.

The results were interesting: A students mastered almost twice the material I had presented in the previous year; B students somewhat more than the previous year. (For those readers to whom it matters: A students completed propositional proof theory, semantics and completeness theorem; S5 modal logic proof theory, semantics and completeness theorem; first-order quantification theory rules, semantics and soundness proof.) I had about the same number of African American students as the previous year. Every one of them passed the course with a grade of C or better, and half of them received A grades. Having written as many as 15 exams for each of about 30 chapters, and spent many hours each week meeting with students and grader and reviewing student progress, I was exhausted but exhilarated. Then the FCEs came back, the lowest I have ever received. The student consensus was that I had contrived the arrangement to save the trouble of preparing lectures.

Moral: Student evaluations are more influenced by formats meeting their expectations than by how much they and their classmates learned.

Several years ago I served on a committee established by the dean of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh to review the case for tenuring a young mathematics professor there. The man in question had been promoted to associate professor without tenure, an entirely anomalous position at Pitt, as at many other universities (but not, of course, at Carnegie Mellon.) The chair of the mathematics department made the case for promotion to the committee: the fellow had not been given tenure previously because, although his scholarship was excellent, his FCEs were unacceptably low, but they had since improved, and so he should now be tenured.

Committee heads nodded as the chair went on about how the mathematics department valued teaching. I asked the chair these questions, with the following answers: Was there any evidence other than FCEs that the fellow was a poor teacher? There was not. Prior to the previous decision to promote him without tenure, what had the professor been assigned to teach? Sections of calculus and of differential equations. Were there many such sections? There were. Did they use the same texts and give the same examinations? They did. On average, how did students in his sections do on the final examination compared with students in other sections of the same courses? Here was the give-away: On average, they did better than students in other sections.

Moral: FCEs have little to do with learning, and they can seriously, and unjustly, affect careers.

From 1984 until 1989 I was head of the new Philosophy Department at Carnegie Mellon. A newly hired assistant professor consistently received the lowest FCEs in the department, and I was concerned for his career. I knew the man and his outstanding scholarly work well, and I could guess the problems. He was not charming or funny or good looking, and he had a deep and formal view of philosophical topics, and in his classes he tended to emphasize logical structures and problems imbedded in traditional philosophy. I met with him and urged him to go to the Teaching Center to get advice on how to improve student responses to his...
Why the University Should

continued from page one

teaching. He refused point blank, but assured me his evaluations would improve dramatically. They did. The next semester he had the highest overall course evaluations in the department, and naturally I asked him how he did it — had he changed how he taught, or what he taught?

"Not at all," he said, "before the evaluations were given out almost all of the students knew they were going to get A's. I see no reason to sacrifice my career to the cause of grade deflation."

Moral: FCEs are substantially influenced by the grades students expect to receive. Basing promotions even in part on faculty course evaluations invites grade inflation and creates an incentive to pander.

For one year during my headship, John Modell was acting dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. He was concerned about FCEs in the college, and sent around to the various heads a ranking of the average FCE scores for each department in the college for the previous couple of years. Statistics was at the bottom of the ranking; history, as I recall, at the top. I took the list of departments, but not the rankings, to members of several departments and asked them to rank order the departments by the amount of mathematical content they believed to be typical of courses in each department. In every case, the rank ordering by mathematical content was the same as Dean Modell's ranking by FCEs.

Moral: Unless students are committed to a mathematical curriculum (as are, for example, majors in mathematics, computer science, statistics and physics), the more mathematical content a course has, the less students tend to like it.

For my first five years at Carnegie Mellon, each semester I taught a required introductory philosophy course to about 250 students in one big lecture class. I was interested in whether the course improved students' reasoning abilities, which had not been directly addressed in any way in the course. I asked Jay Devine, director of advising for H&SS, if there was some principle by which students were enrolled in the course in fall rather than spring semesters, for example, if some judgment was made about students' readiness for the course. He said there was not, that enrollments were driven by scheduling convenience. So I thought students in the course at the end of the fall semester and at the beginning of the winter semester were probably roughly comparable groups. I selected a number of general reasoning questions from the Graduate Record Examination and from the Law School Admission Test, and scattered them through the final examination in the fall term. I gave the same questions scattered through a first examination, before mid-term, in the next winter semester. Despite the obvious limitations of the comparison, to my pleasure the fall term students scored about 20 percent better than the winter term students. I reported the results to the dean, who tended acrobatics in FCE — thus FCE of the study the i


FCEs are heavily biased against faculty with formal approaches, who know their grading will suffer, while those who aren’t comely, who use original methods of instruction, took no interest whatsoever. He did send me a letter congratulating me for high FCE ratings.

One year, instead of giving FCEs, my colleague, Richard Scheines, did a careful study in an introductory logic course of the effects on learning of an automated logic tutorial program. He received a reprimand from Dean Starns for failing to give FCEs. (The dean later apologized.) In my years on the College and University Promotion and Tenure Committees, I saw few cases in which learning was evaluated by anything other than selected letters from students, an occasional anecdote if someone on the committee had observed a class or talked with students, and the overall instructor and course evaluations on the FCEs. The annual reports required of H&SS faculty ask about courses taught, new courses created and overall FCE ratings, but nothing about serious evaluations of learning.

Moral: There is a Gresham's Law in teaching evaluations—FCEs drive out more serious measurements of learning.

Educational research confirms most of these morals, and others equally dismaying. Basically similar instruments are given in hundreds, probably thousands, of colleges and universities, and they have been repeatedly
should Abolish FCEs

The FCEs: A Campus Conversation

D. Focus, April, 2004:
Letter to the Editor

The objections are without merit. Portfolios of lecture notes, syllabi, etc. and videotapes can give evidence of the quality of content and presentation; pre and post tests can give evidence of skill acquisition; student essays at the beginning and end of a course can give evidence of writing improvements; and no doubt if we troubled we could think of a variety of other ways of estimating learning, and we could begin to introduce them into assessments. Just about any CMU student in just about any afternoon can put up a Web page for voluntary reports on classes and instructors. Sometimes they appear spontaneously (at one time, years ago, a student formed a site called Assassinateglymour.acl; I lived with it.) Students can send praise or complaint to the head or dean, and (in my day!) before FCEs, we did. Finally, misunderstanding of what one knows, or has learned, is the human condition, and it is no insult, only truth, to say that CMU students are quite as human as everyone else.

FCEs may have some marginal value in identifying really dreadful or negligent instructors, but they exist because they are a double convenience. They allow the university to claim to students and parents and even to itself that teaching — and learning — are taken seriously, and they save the time and trouble more serious assessments would require. A dean or department head or committee can glance at overall evaluations of course and instructor and form a judgment. Serious evaluation of learning is a lot more trouble, and probably a lot more intrusive. Faculty should welcome some intrusion if it is rationally aimed at assessing their effectiveness as instructors.

Susan Ambrose presented many of the objections to FCEs summarized above to the faculty and to the Faculty Senate, hoping at least to rid the new evaluation instrument of the "overall course" and "overall instructor" ratings that go into the manila folders that influence faculty careers at promotion and tenure time. False hope. The faculty, the student body and the administration alike would do better to heed her counsel and reconsider the installation of yet another Faculty Course Evaluation instrument.

CLARK GLYMOUR
Alumni University
Professor of Philosophy

FOCUS welcomes

JIM HOBURG
Professor of ECE

biased instruments: faculty who have
tested will be rigorous, y, who adopt
of instruction.

me — influences FCEs. (I especially object to that.) Some of these effects have been demonstrated not just by correlations but also by experimental interventions of various kinds. I know of no good studies that show that the courses in which more learning actually goes on — or more that is worth learning is taught and measured, for example, by pre-test and post-test performances are more highly valued by students for that reason than are less instructive courses. But even if that were so, the FCEs are heavily biased instruments biased against faculty who have formal approaches, who let students know their grading will be rigorous, who aren’t comely, who adopt original methods of instruction. No student would agree to be evaluated by such criteria. No promotion committee would explicitly count such considerations against promotion of a faculty member, but implicitly it is done all the time.

I have heard three objections to these arguments. First, that there is nothing to replace FCEs; second, that without them students will have no way of communicating their collective praise or dismay with courses or instructors; and third, that Carnegie Mellon students are perfectly capable of accurately estimating how much they have learned in a course, and to claim otherwise insults them.
Results from a survey of CMU faculty on FCEs

Administered electronically
February 18 to 25, 2006

- 1705 electronic submissions
- 604 respondents
- Response rate = 35.4%
Do you think the university should administer FCEs?

- **College**
  - CIT
  - CFA
  - HSS
  - MCS
  - SCS
  - Tepper
  - Haiz
  - Other
  - Total

- **Faculty Rank**
  - Assistant
  - Associate
  - Full
  - Total

- **Faculty Track**
  - Tenure
  - Teaching
  - Research
  - Adjunct
  - Other
  - Total
The Value of Current FCEs in Providing Feedback About:

1. The amount of effort students put into your course?

2. The content of your course?

3. Your teaching practices?

The charts above illustrate the distribution of responses across different colleges, categorized into four levels of value: not valuable, a little valuable, moderately valuable, and very valuable.