**BU Women’s Colloquium**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**February 26, 2016**

**Meeting Participants:** Candi Cann, Adrienne Harris, Sarah Walden, Kristen Pond, Heidi Bostic, Allie McCormack, Jennifer Borderud, Kim Kellison Julie deGraffenried, Robyn Driskell, Charity Anderson, Meghan DiLuzio, Andrea Turpin, Brooke Blevins, Rebecca Sheesley, Deidre Fulton, Brian Raines

**Agenda for Spring 2016**

* March 18 (11:30 AM in the private dining room at Penland):
* Lori Baker, chair of the President’s Advisory Council on Diversity
* If time allows, begin discussing the Faculty Mentoring Program
* April 22 (11:30 AM in the private dining room at Penland):
* Wrap up our discussion about student evaluations and prepare recommendations for Brian Raines to include in his report to the faculty senate
* Continue discussing the Faculty Mentoring Program and create an action plan for the Fall Semester
* May 3 (breakfast)

**Other Announcements**

* Women’s and Gender Studies is hosting a screening of “She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry” on March 1 from 4:00-6:00 pm in Jones 200
* Baby changing stations will be installed in Draper in the women’s restrooms on the first and third floors and in the men’s restrooms on the second floor
* Infants are now allowed in the McMullen-Connally Faculty Center

**Gender Bias in Student Evaluations—Brian Raines, chair of the Task Force on Student Evaluation of Courses**

* The Faculty Senate charged the Task Force with evaluating the effectiveness of the student evaluation questionnaire and suggesting changes or modifications to the questionnaire in order to improve the value of the feedback it provides (full charge on page 1 of attached handout)
* The Task Force is evaluating the effectiveness of the questions, which have not been substantially updated since 1986 (for a list of the current questions, see page 2 of the attached handout)
* 13a (“I learned a great deal from this course”) is generally considered the question of importance and is used to decide on some teaching awards
* In addition to the wording of the questions, the Task Force is considering three main areas of concern (see page 3 of the attached handout):
	+ (A) Response rate
	+ (B) Gender/Racial bias
	+ (C) Inappropriate use (using student course evaluations as the only measure of teaching effectiveness)
* Response rates have fallen since the introduction of electronic evaluations
	+ In order to address low response rates, it has been suggested that university/department wide incentives (e.g., extra credit) be introduced
		- It was suggested that if incentives are going to be used, they should probably be introduced at the discretion of each department
* Could completing an evaluation be tied to student access to their final grades? Yes, but the university probably will not do this. There may be legal issues with tying evaluations to grades.
* The Task Force will recommend that confidence intervals be reinstated in the quantitative section
* Some faculty report achieving an 85% response rate by setting aside class time to allow their students to complete the evaluations on their phones/laptops/tablets
	+ Despite the lower response rate, electronic evaluations have many advantages:
		- Paper evaluations generated approximately 85,000 pieces of paper per semester
		- Chairs now have access to the narrative comments
	+ And some disadvantages:
		- A student who fails a course by absence can still fill out an evaluation
		- Students can change their evaluations until the end of the evaluation period
		- Evaluations are confidential but not anonymous
* The Task Force is aware of recent studies that have shown gender and racial bias in student evaluations
* Students evaluating female faculty tend to comment on appearance, clothes, approachability, helpfulness, etc., rather than on the instructor’s wisdom or knowledge of the subject (see links below)
* Department chairs, administrators, and senior faculty evaluating teaching faculty need to be thinking about gender and racial bias when they read student evaluations
* Jim Bennighof addresses bias in student evaluations during the annual training for department chairs (as well as bias in letters of recommendation)
* It was suggested that chairs and others evaluating teaching faculty could be sent an e-mail each semester reminding them about bias in student evaluations
* It was suggested that Baylor might conduct a self-assessment to determine whether or not we are seeing gender and racial bias in student evaluations
* Students also need to be made aware of gender and racial bias and of the purpose of student evaluations
* It was suggested that students could be prompted to complete a tutorial when they open the electronic evaluation system
* It was suggested that the wording of question 7b (“The instructor had an effective style of presentation”) may encourage gender bias as it is unclear what is meant by “style”
* It was suggested that question 7c (“The instructor treated students with respect”) is also problematic because students are using this question to evaluate how “helpful” they find the instructor (e.g., did the instructor allow the student to take a test a week early so that they could leave for spring break a few days early)
* This question is important because department chairs need to know whether or not faculty are treating students with respect
* It was suggested that the question could be reworded to emphasize appropriate behavior in the classroom (e.g., did the instructor show bias, humiliate students, etc.)
* It was suggested that students could be prompted/required to explain why they gave an instructor a low score for question 7c
* The Task Force created a subcommittee to study how student evaluations are used at Baylor (see page 3 of the attached handout)
* The subcommittee received an explanation from Jim Bennighof (see page 3 of the attached handout)
* For tenure, student evaluations are considered together with the candidate’s reflective summary of teaching and peer teaching review reports
* Peer teaching evaluations currently carry more weight than teaching evaluations
* Associate professors applying for promotion to full professor typically do not have peer teaching reviews
* Peer teaching reviews may also be affected by gender bias
* It was suggested that chairs and senior faculty who evaluate teaching faculty in the classroom receive a regular e-mail reminder about gender bias
* The subcommittee created a survey that they sent to all of the department chairs asking about which measure of teaching effectiveness they rely on
* The Task Force created a subcommittee to study how student evaluations are used at peer/aspirant universities
* Some post student evaluations online
* Our students would like our evaluations to be available online
* Miscellaneous Points
* Question 11b (“The exams were a good measure of my knowledge of the material”) is problematic in courses where assessment does not include exams. It was suggested that the wording could be changed to “exams and assessments.”
* It was suggested that a questionnaire should be developed for team-taught courses that would allow the students to evaluate the content and the teaching independently
* Brian would like to receive specific feedback about the wording of the student evaluation questionnaire (see page 2 of the attached handout) and recommendations for raising awareness about gender and racial bias among students, department chairs, and senior faculty

**Article Links** (with thanks to Natalie Carnes andElizabeth Willingham)

1. The evidence against student evaluations piles up. A [new article](https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/01/11/new-analysis-offers-more-evidence-against-student-evaluations-teaching?utm_source=Inside+Higher+Ed&utm_campaign=63ed73e22c-DNU20160111&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1fcbc04421-63ed73e22c-197637061) appeared today in Inside Higher Ed, reporting on new evidence SET measure gender bias better than teaching effectiveness.

2. This annotated bibliography of studies documents gender bias in the academy.  The article also culls talking points from the studies. I thought the first talking point was especially important:

* In these studies, actors believe, often quite earnestly, that they are making choices or judgments based entirely on the basis of “quality” or “excellence” or “expertise.”  However, several of the studies reveal that changing only the gender identification of the person being judged radically and consistently alters the way others evaluate the quality of the work. Work by “men”—as students, as colleagues, as authors, as experts—is consistently judged to be superior to that by “women”--even when the only difference in is the author’s gender-specific name.

Find the rest of the points and the bibliography here:

<https://www.hastac.org/blogs/superadmin/2015/01/26/gender-bias-academe-annotated-bibliography-important-recent-studies>

3. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/everybody-is-stupid-except-you/201305/do-the-best-professors-get-the-worst-ratings>

4. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/sideways-view/201501/student-evaluations-fudging-the-happy-sheets>