

**Recommendations of the ACE Task Force**  
**Revised July 21st, 2020**

**Executive Summary**

The 19-person ACE Task Force began in Spring 2018 as an effort to revise the end-of-semester Assessing the Classroom Environment (ACE) survey, but the scope of the effort grew. After reviewing initial objectives, the committee agreed that the guiding principle should be *promoting high quality instruction and its continual improvement*. This principle, coupled with the desire to increase student input and minimize well-documented biases in student ratings, demanded that we expand the measures used to assess teaching.

Following 18 months of research, consultation, and discussion, we offer six broad recommendations:

- 1) **Revise end-of-course student ratings.** A shorter set of items is recommended for use across all courses taught at the University. In keeping with student requests to keep the survey short, collegiate units may add up to three additional rating items, but central institution support will not be offered for any additional items. The questions will include six Likert questions: Three instructor-focused questions and three course-focused questions. In keeping with faculty requests, three open-ended items with clear prompts were added. Items were selected to be simple and as objective as possible to minimize impact of implicit bias about instructors. Using these strategies, the desired outcome is to have higher end-of-course response rates, with less bias, which will offer more useful feedback to instructors.
- 2) **Encourage ongoing student feedback.** We offer guidelines and tools to increase its use. Formative assessment of teaching is valuable for faculty and students, but it's not used consistently across campus. We suggest that student feedback results outside of the revised ACE are confidential to the instructor but can be used (if desired) to document teaching effectiveness in personnel reviews.
- 3) **Promote systematic peer feedback.** We offer guidelines and a tool for instructor-initiated use. Peer observation is helpful because it incorporates data distinct from student ratings; peers may have biases, but different than those of students, and they have more expertise to assess the effectiveness of course content and pedagogical practices. Currently, peer observation is used for promotion and tenure rather than as a routine part of improving instruction. Even so, we discovered that it is conducted in different ways across units, some not systematic. We propose peer observation be used more widely and more consistently.
- 4) **Utilize existing campus expertise.** We encourage faculty to make more frequent use of offices on campus including (but not limited to) the Center for Teaching, Distance and Online Education, and Office of Consultation and Research in Medical Education. These offices can offer feedback to improve design and delivery of courses.
- 5) **Offer comprehensive educational resources.** Video-based instructions for student, faculty, and administrators are suggested to increase response rates and reduce bias in responses. Videos will target different audiences based on the way they interact with student ratings. Student resources, for example, will explain how ratings are used and how to provide constructive feedback that faculty can use. Faculty and administrator resources will explain the nature of implicit bias and the limitations of any one source of data about instructor effectiveness.
- 6) **Build a supportive culture and infrastructure.** We propose moving responsibility for all teaching assessment efforts to the Provost's Office, acquiring software with greater functionality, and marketing the changes proposed in this report. The current software lacks important functionality and is supported out of Information Technology Services (ITS).

## **Committee Process**

The 19-person ACE Task Force began in Spring 2018 as an effort to revise the end-of-semester Assessing the Classroom Environment (ACE) survey. The initial charge, contained in Appendix A, was to address the low response rates on the survey. After the second meeting, the committee agreed that the issues at hand were much larger, and more important. We agreed that assessment is a tool to increase the quality of teaching, and that our efforts should be on improving instruction while maintaining student voice and reducing well-documented bias in student ratings of instruction.

To address the broadened scope of the committee, we organized into three subcommittees: Revising the student ratings instrument, advancing peer observation, and improving policies. A summary of the efforts of each subcommittee, including data collected and governance consultations, is appended below. Each subcommittee met monthly until their work was completed, and an expanded committee (with members from other committees who wished to stay on board) on Policies for Assessing and Improving Instruction continues to meet.

### **Revising Student Ratings of Teaching**

This subcommittee was created to gather information, review research articles and attain feedback on the questions that are given to students for the end-of-semester evaluations. Student focus groups/surveys were sponsored by governing bodies at both the undergraduate and graduate levels (See Appendix C).

The proposed question set now includes between 9 and 12 items (See Appendix B for proposed questions). Specifically, six items are proposed as rated items, 3 optional for colleges to add, and 3 open-ended items. These items were selected following much discussion and the adoption of a simple framework on teaching that emphasizes objectives that align with activities and materials, related to assessments via quizzes and assignments. The committee also gathered input from various faculty and administrative groups as well as student focus groups.

This subcommittee also recommended a set of **Formative Assessment Practices** (more colloquially referred to as feedback on teaching) to be added into ICON to encourage assessment while a class is still in session. Ongoing assessment addresses a primary student concern that feedback from students is never used to benefit the students who provide it. By collecting and acting on feedback during a course, instructors are increasing student voice and helping build a culture of continuous improvement. While the long-term goal is having a set of different assessments available, the committee initially created two, one that copied the rated items from the revised ACE and another that included open-ended questions. The open-ended assessment is included as Appendix E.

### **Advancing Peer and Expert Feedback of Teaching**

This subcommittee was created to gather information from instructors/colleges for processes already in place and create a single framework that could be used no matter the discipline.

A proposed framework for peer observation and feedback was crafted to provide instructors formative feedback on three foundational components of the teaching/learning dynamic: **planning – instruction – reflection** (See Appendix D). To that end, the Framework for Peer Review of Teaching includes guiding questions for a **Planning for Instruction** pre-observation meeting, guiding questions to be considered by the peer evaluator conducting an **Observation of Instruction**, and guiding questions for a **Post-Observation Reflection** meeting. While the Observation of Instruction is central to the framework, the committee suggests that *it is through the planning for instruction and the post-observation reflection that instructional*

*practices are refined.* Foundational elements of teaching/learning for this committee were drawn from the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (inTASC) Model Core Teaching Standards (2011, April).

In later stages of the task force's work, we recognized that the emphasis on peer feedback is useful, but we should also encourage faculty to continue to use outstanding teaching experts on campus in their colleges and across the university in units like the Center for Teaching, Distance and Online Education, and the Office of Consultation and Research in Medical Education. We are working to create a single ICON module that explains both the Peer Tool and the possible expert resources on campus.

### **Improving Policies for Assessing and Improving Instruction**

This subcommittee was created to gather information from instructors/colleges for processes already in place for gathering and interpreting data. This included a survey sent to all Departmental Executive Officers (DEOs).

This committee continues its work to review options for how to successfully integrate these three practices (summative and formative assessment, as well peer observation) into university procedures. The policy subcommittee is working on two critical tasks and will continue to work over the next few months. They are: (1) proposing a set of educational videos that will help explain the value of assessing teaching to students, faculty, and administrators; (2) developing a budget request based on specifications for software that would meet assess teaching in the ways suggested by the task force; and (3) proposing two ongoing committees that will oversee, in different capacities, the continual improvement of teaching practice on campus. The two committees, explained below, include a governance committee with administrators and an action committee with more faculty and student representation.

### **Addressing Concerns about Bias and Supporting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

A theme of the task force's entire work was finding ways to reduce bias in teaching ratings and provide support to instructors who are marginalized at Iowa as a historically and predominately white institution. Our initial intention was to add items about fairness, understanding of the importance of diversity, and commitment to diversity. However, feedback from numerous faculty groups (including faculty of color) warned us against this practice.

Specifically, we took draft items about fairness and about commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion into our first consultations. The concerns raised were based both on experience of women and faculty of color, and on research. First, faculty noted that students from majority backgrounds have been known to react negatively to faculty from marginalized backgrounds, especially in cases when the students' views are challenged, where they receive constructive feedback. Faculty of color in our consultations specifically noted that they see students get defensive and even angry when they receive low grades, which are perceived as "unfair" or biased against the student because the faculty member is a minority. These experiences are consistent with national research which suggests that majority students may question the authority of women and faculty of color, and this may reduce ratings for broadly stated items about instructor effectiveness, including (ironically) items about fairness.

We concluded that adding items on diversity, and in fact any general impression items such as "I recommend this instructor" might have the complete opposite effect intended by increasing opportunities for students to express bias against female faculty and faculty of color. Every effort was made to select items that describe relatively specific course and instructor behaviors or characteristics, rather than student general impressions, which have been shown to be much more subject to both implicit and explicit biases.

In addition, the open-ended questions were designed to provide students with an opportunity to raise issues that are not explicitly addressed in the rating-scale questions (such as DEI concerns) and to provide more detailed feedback. The proposed Action Committee in the Next Steps section will be charged with reviewing questions after an initial trial period and investigating the extent to which these questions provide sufficient opportunities for students to voice their concerns about their experiences in a course.

### Detailed Recommendations

Revise end-of-course student ratings	Encourage ongoing student feedback	Promote systematic peer and expert observation	Offer comprehensive educational resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce new core questions with fewer items, using simple items with low bias</li> <li>• Likert questions: 3 instructor-focused, three course-focused</li> <li>• Add structured, open-ended questions</li> <li>• Limit centralized support for department/program specific items, discourage lengthy end-of-course surveys</li> <li>• Standardized tool for collection of data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage use of formative feedback to instructors</li> <li>• Develop pool of formative assessment tools and share campus wide as ICON modules</li> <li>• Create easy-to-follow instructions to help instructors select, interpret, and report out assessment results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop instruction sheet for pre-observation meeting, observation, and post-meeting</li> <li>• Develop structured form for reporting peer observations</li> <li>• Create a platform for instructor-owned peer feedback of teaching</li> <li>• Encourage use of expert resources on campus including but not limited to the Center for Teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct training programs for DEO and AD-Faculty on multi-faceted nature of teaching effectiveness and biases in measures</li> <li>• Create videos for students (to show in class), instructors (to show good practice), and DCG/CCG/Dean (to explain biases)</li> </ul>
<b>Build Supportive Culture &amp; Infrastructure</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select rating software that support API, allows customization to drop redundancy and add college optional items</li> <li>• Partnership with Provost Office (policy and ongoing oversight) and ITS (infrastructure and software implementation), creation of standing steering committee</li> <li>• Conduct extensive marketing efforts to build awareness and support for the new programs across all colleges</li> </ul>			

### Next Steps

- Approval from sponsors to move forward with recommendations. – *(Approved)*
- Complete and report back on two ongoing pilot projects – College of Nursing and College of Education. *(Appendix F)*
- Relocate control and funding of software and policies related to teaching assessment to the Provost’s Office, under shared responsibility of Associate Provosts for Undergraduate, Graduate, and Faculty. *(on hold due to budget constraints with COVID-19, partnership and co-ownership between ITS and Provost Office)*
  - Software to be supported by ITS-Administrative Information Systems (AIS), Mike Noel
  - ITS Help Desk to perform Tier1 support for faculty and students (ACE questions only)

- Support for questions not about the software will be divided up across the University College technical liaison and the Associate Provosts.
- Formal request for proposals issued for new software to replace CollegeNET. *(on hold due to budget constraints with COVID-19, partnership and co-ownership between ITS and Provost Office)*
  - Estimated software annual cost up to \$100k with one-time implementation fee of \$55k (non-negotiated), pending details from the final proposal from two firms that meet preliminary specs
    - Information Technology Services (ITS) will provide the current \$24k, in addition to technical backend support for the newly improved service.
- One-time funding allocation of approximately \$10k for video production (could be local company or work with Student Video Production or academic department).
  - Current committee has drafted video talking points and could oversee completion of the videos which will contain a variety of students and instructors in different locations around campus helping to promote a sense of inclusion and belonging.
  - Include both undergraduate and graduate perspectives, emphasize students talking to students and faculty talking to faculty based on the target audience for the video.
- Begin communications effort by announcing these changes to faculty, including the recommendations and links to the new ICON tool. *(In Progress)*
- Continue work on the ICON tool kit that explains various methods of collecting formative feedback. *(In Progress)*
- Create two committees to offer recommendations and decision making for ongoing oversight *(Committee work continuing)*

**1) Executive Steering Committee** including faculty administration to meet twice a year, with proposed membership of:

- Associate Provost for Faculty
- Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education, Dean of University College
- Associate Provost for Graduate Education, Dean of the Graduate College
- Associate Vice President and CIO
- Representative from Faculty Senate
- Director for Assessment, Provost Office (ex officio)
- Representative from General Counsel
- Technical liaison and Project Manager (University College/Provost Office, ex officio)

**2) Action Committee** including faculty teaching representatives to meet monthly for first year, with a proposed membership of: *t (Committee work continuing)*

- Two associate deans with responsibility for oversight of teaching planning and assessment
- Four faculty representatives from four different colleges including at least one from healthcare focused college with heavy clinical presence and at least one from College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Undergraduate student representative appointed by UISG
- Graduate student representative appointed by GPSG
- Representative from Center for Teaching (ex officio) Director for Assessment, Provost Office (ex officio)
- Subject Matter Experts, as needed
- Technical liaison and Project Manager (University College/Provost Office, ex officio)
- Technical liaison (ITS) Administrative Information Systems (AIS), (ex officio)

## Appendix A: Original Charge and Membership

### Purpose

This Committee exists to proactively:

- Review current ACE Online faculty evaluation program:
  - Response rates
  - Questions
  - Policies
  - Best Practices
- Recommend new and improved, user-friendly (for instructors and students) practices and policies

### Responsibilities of the Committee

The Committee is responsible for guiding the efforts of the ACE Online faculty evaluations where academic impact is present. This guidance is as follows:

- Be personally responsible
  - solicit feedback from community members
  - come to meetings and share and discuss findings
  - actively participate in the planning of major goals from a faculty/student perspective

### Focus

Support the efforts of the overall faculty evaluation strategy by participating in one or more sub-committees related to:

- Collect needs analysis from all colleges whether they are currently using ACE Online (CollegeNET) program or not
- Explore what peer institutions are doing and how it impacts their students
- Help solicit and guide input to revamp policies related to overall University faculty evaluation strategy
- Recommend and develop better questions related to teaching and learning
  - Create more student focused questions related to student learning
  - Help to develop communication processes for administrators and faculty to understand the importance of their role in this process
- Help create Best Practices
  - Explore summative and formative assessments throughout semester
  - Recommendations for promoting ACE online best practices, including increasing response rates
- Help create new or revised policies
  - Share issues in a supportive environment and recommend and review policies
  - Support and leverage activities of the administrative staff in colleges to help them understand and follow policies

## Membership and Terms

Team membership will include Associate Deans and faculty members, as well as the Director for Enterprise Instructional Technology and a student representative.

Member	Role	Email Address
Ken Brown, Tippie College of Business	Co-Chair, Associate Dean	<a href="mailto:kenneth-g-brown@uiowa.edu">kenneth-g-brown@uiowa.edu</a>
Annette Beck, Director of Operational Services for University College	Co-Chair, Project Manager	<a href="mailto:annette-beck@uiowa.edu">annette-beck@uiowa.edu</a>
Nancy Langguth, College of Education	Associate Dean	<a href="mailto:nancy-langguth@uiowa.edu">nancy-langguth@uiowa.edu</a>
Anita Stineman, College of Nursing	Associate Dean	<a href="mailto:anita-stineman@uiowa.edu">anita-stineman@uiowa.edu</a>
Anne Zalenski, Distance and Online Education	Associate Dean	<a href="mailto:anne-zalenski@uiowa.edu">anne-zalenski@uiowa.edu</a>
Lily Garcia, College of Dentistry Michelle Krupp (added Sept. 2019)	Associate Dean Interim Associate Dean	<a href="mailto:michelle-krupp@uiowa.edu">michelle-krupp@uiowa.edu</a>
Emily Hughes, College of Law	Associate Dean	<a href="mailto:emily-hughes@uiowa.edu">emily-hughes@uiowa.edu</a>
Maureen Donovan, College of Pharmacy	Faculty	<a href="mailto:maureen-donovan@uiowa.edu">maureen-donovan@uiowa.edu</a>
Nicole Grosland, College of Engineering	Associate Dean	<a href="mailto:nicole-grosland@uiowa.edu">nicole-grosland@uiowa.edu</a>
Kathy Hall, Director, Curriculum & Academic Policy, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences	Administrator	<a href="mailto:kathryn-hall@uiowa.edu">kathryn-hall@uiowa.edu</a>
Jean Florman, Director, Center for Teaching, Office of Teaching, Learning & Technology	Administrator	<a href="mailto:jean-florman@uiowa.edu">jean-florman@uiowa.edu</a>
Wayne Jacobson, Director, Assessment, Office of the Provost	Administrator	<a href="mailto:wayne-jacobson@uiowa.edu">wayne-jacobson@uiowa.edu</a>
Cornelia Lang, Associate Professor, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences	Faculty	<a href="mailto:cornelia-lang@uiowa.edu">cornelia-lang@uiowa.edu</a>
Russ Ganim, Professor, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences	Faculty	<a href="mailto:russell-ganim@uiowa.edu">russell-ganim@uiowa.edu</a>
Patrick O'Shaughnessy, Professor, College of Public Health	Faculty	<a href="mailto:patrick-&lt;br/&gt;oshaughnessy@uiowa.edu">patrick- oshaughnessy@uiowa.edu</a>
Paul Hanley, Associate Professor, College of Engineering	Faculty	<a href="mailto:paul-hanley@uiowa.edu">paul-hanley@uiowa.edu</a>
Nicholas Yablon, Associate Professor, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences	Faculty	<a href="mailto:nick-yablon@uiowa.edu">nick-yablon@uiowa.edu</a>
Angeline Vanle, UISG Student Representative	Undergraduate Student	<a href="mailto:angeline-vanle@uiowa.edu">angeline-vanle@uiowa.edu</a>
Emily Waddle, Graduate Student Representative	Graduate Student	<a href="mailto:emily-waddle@uiowa.edu">emily-waddle@uiowa.edu</a>

## **Sponsor**

### Executive Sponsorship:

Sue Curry (former Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of University College)

Tanya Uden-Holman (Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of University College)

Kevin Kregel (Executive Vice Provost & Senior Associate Provost for Faculty)

John Keller (Associate Provost for Graduate Education, Dean of the Graduate College)

In December 2019, Montserrat Fuentes, (Executive Vice President and Provost), was briefed and added.

In addition, Lois Geist, (Associate Provost for Faculty, November 2019), will be briefed and added to executive sponsorship.

The sponsors are responsible for establishing the team, approving this charge for the team, and appointing members to the team. The Director of Enterprise Instructional Technology is permitted and expected to participate and assist co-chairs in scheduling and facilitating meetings as the technology liaison.

**Appendix B: Proposed Set of Questions**  
***Currently being piloted in Colleges of Education and Nursing***

*Likert scale 1-6 as currently exists (will not change except the addition of N/A), N/A is default option with 1-6 following in order*

**Instructor**

Organization—The instructor used class time well

Clarity – The instructor communicated course material clearly

Learning Focused – The instructor’s teaching methods helped students learn

**Course**

Learning Materials—The assignments, readings, and activities facilitated student learning

Assessment— Assessments (such as quizzes, papers, and exams) aligned with course objectives

Support—Help was available for students

**College Optional (using Likert Scale, no more than three questions)**

**Overall (Open Ended)**

What aspects of the course were most useful for your learning?

When this class is taught again, what changes would you suggest?

What else would you like the instructor to know about your experience in this course?

## Appendix C – Student Focus Groups

The below questions were prepared with the help of students on the committee and undergraduate and graduate student representatives. Student feedback was an important part of our overall strategy for change. Though the number of questions was an overwhelming concern, the content of the questions was also important to our students who wanted to give more open-ended feedback to instructors.

### Student Focus Groups – undergraduate

*Angeline Vanle, one of our students on the committee, helped plan focus groups with the help of UISG representatives. Two sessions were held and the most common feedback given was there were too many questions, the delivery of the evaluations was inconsistent from course to course and it was hard for students to see if any suggested changes were made since the evaluations happened at the end of the course.*

1. Perception of ACE
2. Do the current questions, do they get at all important issues?
3. What aspects about the ACE evaluations discourage you or someone you know from answering fully/honestly/at all?
4. Do you feel you can be open/honest?
5. Are you **motivated** to be open/honest?
6. When would you want to answer questions? Week 11, Before Finals, After Finals
7. How many questions seems reasonable? How much time is reasonable to answer these?

Revised Core Question set, get feedback

1. Do the current questions, do they get at all important issues?
2. What is missing, what would you edit, change?

### Student Focus Groups – graduate

*Emily Waddle helped plan the survey and sent the survey to peers in the Graduate College but very few returned the survey. She also hosted one focus group and reported much of the same feedback as the undergraduates provided. In addition, graduate students also gave feedback on trying to understand their work as both students and instructors and felt like the two contradicted sometimes because of the amount of questions and the wording of the questions.*

1. As a graduate student, do you find the course evaluation system useful? If so, explain in what way. If not, explain why not.
2. As a graduate student, if you could see how the rest of the class rated a course after all evaluations were done, would you want that ability? Why or why not?
3. As an instructor, how (if at all) do the course evaluations impact your ability to obtain a job?
4. As an instructor, how (if at all) do the course evaluations impact your ability to improve your pedagogical skills?
5. If you have any other comments or feedback about the online course evaluation system, either as a student or as an instructor, please share it now.

## Appendix D: Framework for Peer Observation of Teaching

### Process Guidelines and Instructions

#### Recommendations/Timing for Observations:

*A new course is being taught, an instructor is teaching a course for the first time, course structure/content has been largely redesigned or upon instructor request.*

#### I. Planning for Instruction

*Instructor and Peer Observer:* Consider the following guiding questions related to *Planning for Instruction* (could be submitted in writing or discussed at a pre-observation meeting, or both).

- How does your course ICON site and course syllabus support instruction?
- What do you want students to be able to do, to think about, to know, to use as a result of this class session/lab/seminar?
- What instructional strategies will you be using in this class session/lab/seminar to facilitate students' understanding of the content associated with the class session/lab/seminar?
- How will you know whether students understand the content?

#### II. Observation of Instruction

*Peer Observer:* In order to provide formative feedback to the instructor, give thought to the following questions while conducting the Class Session/Lab/Seminar *Observation of Instruction*.

##### • Learning Environment

In what way is the instructor creating a teaching/learning environment that supports individual and collaborative learning, and that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation?

##### • Instructional Strategies

What instructional strategies are being used to encourage students to develop deep understanding of content and its connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways?

##### • Application of Content

How is the instructor demonstrating an understanding of how to engage learners in applying content to their life experiences, preparation in their field of study, and "need to know"; creating learning experiences that make aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners?

##### • Assessment

What methods of assessment does the instructor have in place to appropriately support, verify, and document learning, including guiding the instructor's real-time decision making while the Class Session/Lab/Seminar is in progress?

#### III. Post-Observation Reflection and Discussion

*Instructor and Peer Observer:* Consider the following guiding questions related to *Post-Observation Reflection* (could be submitted in writing or discussed at a post-observation meeting, or both).

- What modifications did you make to your plans for instruction over the course of the class session/lab/seminar?
- Are there things you will change in your future instruction *of this group of students* based on what you learned about your students during the teaching of this class session/lab/seminar?
  - Why do you think these changes would improve student learning?
- What would you change if you were to re-teach this lesson to *a new group of students* in a future semester?
  - Why do you think these changes would improve student learning?

## Peer Observation of Teaching

Name of Instructor being observed:

Name of Peer Observer:

Date:

Context for observation (e.g., course title, number, type):

### I. Planning for Instruction

(Instructor) In the space below provide written responses, if any, to the guiding questions related to this pre-evaluation step of the peer observation process.

### II. Observation of Instruction

(Peer Observer) Provide formative feedback to the instructor using the instructional areas noted below as a framework. The attached "Peer Observation Supplement" provides observation points for each area that may be used to guide this observation of instruction.

Learning Environment:

Instructional Strategies:

Application of Content:

Assessment:

### III. Post-Observation Reflection

(Instructor) Provide written responses, if any, to the guiding questions related to this post-observation step of the peer observation process.

**Peer Observation Supplement:** As you prepare for the classroom observation of a colleague, please consider the following as *possible* observations that might be included in your assessment of each area listed below. Not all points may be relevant to every observation.

## **Suggested areas for consideration when appropriate to course**

### **Learning Environment**

- The objectives of the class are clearly stated
- Provides a logical organization for the lesson
- The instructor was well prepared for class
- Shows enthusiasm about the content being taught
- Gains student attention about the topic
- Describes the session topic in terms of students' previous knowledge
- Provides an outline for the class session
- Gives students adequate opportunities to ask questions
- Receives student questions politely and when possible enthusiastically
- The instructor stimulates independent thinking
- The instructor helps students to learn from each other
- The instructor affirms student effort

### **Instructional Strategies**

- Maintains students' attention throughout the lesson
- Promotes an appreciation of diverse thoughts and perspectives
- The instructor stimulates interest in the course subject(s)
- Covers an appropriate amount of material for the time allotted
- The class remains focused on its objectives
- Asks questions appropriate for the level of the learner
- The instructor responds to questions with clarity
- The instructor's choice of teaching techniques is appropriate for the goals
- The instructor explains the subject matter clearly
- Repeats and emphasizes major points
- Speaks loudly and clearly
- Speaks at an appropriate pace
- Varies voice pitch and tone
- Visuals are clear and easily seen
- Visuals represent a manageable amount of information.
- Asks questions of varying difficulty
- Waits at least 5 seconds after asking for a response before resuming
- Asks questions that require more than a one- or two-word response
- Periodically summarizes points

### **Application of Content**

- Uses appropriate examples
- Points out practical or "real world" applications
- Provides opportunity for students to practice using the content
- Actively involves learners
- Provides a "link" to how this lesson relates to subsequent ones

### **Assessment**

- Asks probing questions if a student's answer was incomplete or superficial
- Encourages students to answer difficult questions by providing cues or rephrasing
- Uses a variety of strategies to determine student understanding of content

## Appendix E: Open-Ended Formative Assessment Survey (being used in pilot)

*In fall 2019, the Colleges of Nursing and Education have piloted one formative assessment survey. Not all instructors used this assessment and we will gather feedback from those who did. We continue to work on building out an ICON site for Formative Assessment with the Center for Teaching to give instructors multiple assessment options.*

### 3 Question Survey for Students

#### ***For In-Class Assessment: Print***

enough copies of the Three-Question Assessment for your class. You can access the assessment via the link at the top of this page.

#### ***For Online Assessment: Publish***

the Survey inside the Modules section of your course. Once complete, here is how you get survey results.

**OVERVIEW:** This formative assessment asks three key questions about students' learning, a subject on which each student will have a unique perspective:

- What aspects of the course are helping you to learn?
- What aspects of the course are making it more difficult to learn?
- What are you, as a student, currently doing or planning to do to enhance your own learning?

This short, open-ended survey works well when you want to find out more about students' learning (as opposed to what they find enjoyable or disagreeable) as well as about specific aspects of the course that are most impactful.

Consider using this formative assessment at least after the first few weeks of the semester, when students will have experiences on which to base their feedback, but early enough in the semester that you will have the opportunity to use the feedback. This assessment could be repeated multiple times during the semester.

#### **TIME COMMITMENT:**

In-class time for collecting feedback: 15 minutes or more

Instructor reflection time: Varies based upon the number and kind of responses

In-class time for responding to feedback: 10 minutes

**Appendix F: Summary of Pilot - ACE Task Force  
March 2, 2020**

**Executive Summary**

The 19-person ACE Task Force began in Spring 2018 as an effort to revise the end-of-semester Assessing the Classroom Environment (ACE) survey, but the scope of the effort grew. After reviewing initial objectives, the committee agreed that the guiding principle should be *promoting high quality instruction and its continual improvement*. This principle, coupled with the desire to increase student input and minimize well-documented biases in student ratings, demanded that we expand the measures used to assess teaching.

Following 18 months of research, consultation, and discussion, we offer six broad recommendations:

<b>Revise end-of-course student ratings</b>	<b>Encourage ongoing student feedback</b>	<b>Promote systematic peer and expert observation</b>	<b>Offer comprehensive educational resources</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce new core questions with fewer items, using simple items with low bias</li> <li>• Likert questions: 3 instructor-focused, three course-focused</li> <li>• Add structured, open-ended questions</li> <li>• Limit centralized support for department/program specific items, discourage lengthy end-of-course surveys</li> <li>• Standardized tool for collection of data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage use of formative feedback to instructors</li> <li>• Develop pool of formative assessment tools and share campus wide as ICON modules</li> <li>• Create easy-to-follow instructions to help instructors select, interpret, and report out assessment results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop instruction sheet for pre-observation meeting, observation, and post-meeting</li> <li>• Develop structured form for reporting peer observations</li> <li>• Create a platform for instructor-owned peer feedback of teaching</li> <li>• Encourage use of expert resources on campus including but not limited to the Center for Teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct training programs for DEO and AD-Faculty on multi-faceted nature of teaching effectiveness and biases in measures</li> <li>• Create videos for students (to show in class), instructors (to show good practice), and DCG/CCG/Dean (to explain biases)</li> </ul>
<b>Build Supportive Culture &amp; Infrastructure</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select rating software that support API, allows customization to drop redundancy and add college optional items</li> <li>• Partnership with Provost Office (policy and ongoing oversight) and ITS (infrastructure and software implementation), creation of standing steering committee</li> <li>• Conduct extensive marketing efforts to build awareness and support for the new programs across all colleges</li> </ul>			

**Student Response Rates**

The student response rates didn't increase but remained flat during the pilot. However, in some of the larger classes in each college, the student response rates did increase. As part of the review with each college, it was determined that some courses that were having ACE evaluations assigned to them, weren't really a good fit for the system. For instance, in Nursing, the Clinical Simulation Laboratory II course is very small and very lab focused. Another example is Pathophysiology Advanced Clinical Practice. In Education there are also examples such as Observation & Lab Practicum in Secondary Schools and Directed Study.

After discussing with Associate Deans in both colleges taking part in the pilot, Colleges must review their curriculum and determine which courses should be eliminated from this process. In our current software, this would be a manual process for each course and cannot currently be automated.

The ACE Task Force does believe that after broad communication, offering comprehensive educational resources and the possibility of purchasing new software, the task of assigning end-of-semester evaluations can be specifically targeted to courses that will benefit from gathering this type of feedback.

Other courses will be strongly encouraged to use more formative and subjective feedback from students.

Included in the Pilot feedback section of this document are remarks from Education and Nursing.

In departmental meetings with Education and Nursing, anecdotal feedback includes comments like:

- The new open-ended questions made the feedback from student much more constructive with less biases
- ACE end-of-semester can also be used to help mentor instructors to improve teaching, paired with other suggestions from the Task Force
- The most popular and useful feedback was from the open-ended question about “what would you change about this course”
- Participation rate from undergraduates was higher

### **Advancing Peer and Expert Feedback of Teaching**

Several persons took advantage of the new Peer Observation Framework designed by the Task Force. Included in the Pilot feedback section of this document are remarks from different departments.

### **Additional Governance Feedback**

Ken Brown and Annette Beck presented the final recommendations of the ACE Task Force to several groups after meeting with the Executive Sponsors:

- January 23<sup>rd</sup> – Uden-Holman, Geist
- February 5<sup>th</sup> – Thein, Langguth (Education)
- February 12<sup>th</sup> – Stineman, Nicholson (Nursing)
- February 17<sup>th</sup> – Executive Sponsors: Uden-Holman, Keller, Geist, Fleagle
- February 27<sup>th</sup> – Gilbertson-White, Rhodes, Wesemann, Dirks, Nicholson, Daack-Hirsch, Stineman (Nursing), all attendees stated we should move forward with all recommendations
- February 27<sup>th</sup> – Associate Deans for Faculty
- March 3<sup>rd</sup> – Faculty Council
- March 13<sup>th</sup> – College of Education Executive Committee Meeting
- March 24<sup>th</sup> – Faculty Senate (if needed)
- March 27<sup>th</sup> – College of Education Faculty Meeting
- April 7<sup>th</sup> – College of Nursing Faculty Meeting

Feedback from these groups has been positive.

## **Appendix: Feedback from Pilot Users**

### **College of Nursing**

ACE Pilot - Fall 2019

Perspectives on ACE responses

The College of Nursing was a pilot site for testing the new proposed course evaluation questions. In the past, our course evaluation consisted of 10 items and an open ended 'Other Comments'. Many of our courses have multiple faculty who teach/manage a large number of students. Students completed the entire assessment on each faculty. Often it was difficult to discern which faculty their comments were referencing.

Although our response rate did drop slightly, the feedback that I have received from both faculty and administrators responsible for mentoring/evaluating faculty performance, has been positive. The separation of questions (3 instructor specific and 3 course specific with 3 open ended) has decreased student confusion - each student completes course evaluation once and instructor evaluation for each of the instructors that worked with the student during the course. The responses have provided greater insight into the strengths/weaknesses of the course and instructor. The student narrative responses to the structured open-ended items have much richer feedback instructors verbalize that will be valuable for them as they work to continually improve the quality of their instruction for students.

As administrators have reviewed fall 2019 ACE responses to identify trends that need to be addressed in our academic programs, they have indicated that the quality of feedback will allow them to have more focused discussion with instructors during their mentoring/performance reviews.

We view these new questions as a definite step in the right direction in keeping a focus on quality improvement in our educational offerings to students. Having a system that would allow tailoring of the evaluation period to fit the needs/workload of the students would be ideal and would help to increase the response rate.

### **College of Education**

ACE Pilot - Fall 2019

Perspectives on ACE responses

The College of Education was happy to participate in a pilot of new items for end-of-course student evaluations. Although response rates have not improved, we found that participation in the pilot was useful on several levels.

First, the pilot provided the college with the opportunity to carefully examine our response-rate data. In that examination, we noted that many courses with very few students had no responses. In the future we hope to eliminate course evaluations for independent studies, practicum courses, and other courses with very few students. Practicum courses and independent studies do not have traditional course structures that can be evaluated via a universal survey. Very small courses are

not conducive to anonymous surveys. Eliminating course evaluations will provide a more accurate assessment of our response rates and better data for continuous improvement.

The pilot also allowed us to provide students with an end-of-course evaluation that was not only streamlined and simplified, but also focused explicitly on a) the delivery of the course (via the three “Instructor” questions) and b) the course itself (via the three “Course” questions); the former providing instructors feedback on their instruction, and the latter providing useful information to be taken into consideration relative to the course itself. The shorter set of six specific and concrete items allows far fewer opportunities for implicit bias, guiding students toward a focus on the delivery of instruction associated with the course as well as the structure of the course itself, rather than the personal attributes of the instructor. The new open-ended items similarly request that students provide specific and tangible feedback relative to course objectives. In examining students’ responses to the open-ended items, we noted that the first two items were especially useful in generating specific and actionable suggestions for improved instruction – in course delivery and course design. Once implemented and a culture of continuous improvement is fostered across campus, we believe that the revised end-of-course evaluation will provide instructors and supervisors with more robust and generative data for continuous improvement of courses and instructional skills.

## **Perspectives on Peer Observation Pilot**

### **Department of Physics and Astronomy**

Pilot Fall 2019

Feedback from Instructor being reviewed

Reflection on Teaching Review:

Meeting prior to my teaching evaluation was a helpful first step in the evaluation process. For one, it let me contextualize the classroom period that was about to be observed. After the first day, no classroom period is a stand-alone experience for students– the previous content covered, established classroom dynamic, and the course structure/schedule form the learning context for each class period. A one-on-one conversation conveying these elements broadens the observer’s perspective beyond that single class period, getting closer to what students experience holistically as a course.

Moreover, during that initial evaluation, I was able to share some of my prepared materials: assignment descriptions, syllabus, etc. Preparing for class and constructing learning activities constitute the bulk of the teaching load. Hence, a teaching evaluation based solely on the classroom experience is divorced from a significant fraction of the practice of instruction.

Meeting following my teaching evaluation served to offer immediate feedback on my instructional practices. Without this meeting shortly after the class period, feedback can linger for months before the review process is completed. After this period of time, connecting the observation to specific, actionable practices would be much more difficult.

Finally, a meeting following my teaching evaluation let me triage the class period alongside the observer, rather than have them provide an independent critique. There were, of course, aspects of

my classroom period that fell short of my intentions. For a given class period, I would normally reflect those shortcomings by myself, and adjust the next class period accordingly. With the post-observation meeting, I had the opportunity to unpack: (1) what worked well, (2) what didn't work well, and (3) bounce ideas off of the experienced observer as to ways to improve. This makes my teaching evaluation feel collaborative, rather than remedial.

In short, meeting with the observer and discussing the classroom visit afterwards not only improved my classroom practices with specific, actionable feedback, but offered practice in being more reflective about my own teaching by working through the experience with a practiced instructor. I would happily have my review structured in this manner again.

## **Management & Entrepreneurship**

Pilot Fall 2019/Spring 2020

Feedback from Instructor Reviewer

Yes, I have used it three times, and it has been very useful for me. I've sent it out to other faculty as well but haven't heard if anyone else used it. I can ask if you would like. Here's a "brief report" about my experience using it.

I used the teaching observation structure provided by Ken Brown for observation of three faculty members in fall 2019 and spring 2020. The structure allowed me to provide feedback on consistent dimensions across multiple types of classes. I also commented on a broader range of dimensions than I had in previous evaluations. I provided the teaching observation structure to my faculty as well because I believe that it provides a good set of dimensions for self-evaluation as well.

As a DEO, I have seen annual reviews and promotion decisions impacted by the scope and quality of teaching observations. By providing a more standardized approach, the evaluation process is more consistent, and the outcomes are fairer.