Rec. #2016-04-07: UNIVERSITY SENATE RECOMMENDATION TO THE PROVOST

The University Senate strongly encourages the Provost to endorse the following recommendations related to SITEs extracted from the Academic Quality Committee reports dated February 18, 2016 and March 28, 2016 and report back to the Senate on these matters during its next meeting.

1. AQ recommends that the SITE booklet be resurrected and regularly maintained within the Faculty senate and in consultation with WKU Academic Affairs and WKU IR. This document should be used by faculty and administrators as a set of best practices guidelines for analyzing SITE response data.
(*Recommendation, February 18, 2016 AQ report*)

2. AQ recommends that online SITE report format be modified (or amended by an appropriate information resource) to include sufficient data and instructions so that statistically equivalent (or distinct) response values can be easily identified.
(*Recommendation, February 18, 2016 AQ report*)

3. In light of the discussion at the March meeting of the University Senate and feedback from WKU IR and the Registrar's Office, AQ recommends that the 3-week online SITE administration window be shifted one week later in the semester. The schedule for final grade submission should be adjusted to ensure that final grades may not be entered during the SITE administration window and to allow sufficient time for WKU IR to collect required data. The recommended term for implementation is Spring 2017.
(*Recommendation, March 28, 2016 AQ report*)

Agreed - Dr. Doug McElroy and Institutional Research will oversee implementation for Spring 2017.

Western Kentucky University
Academic Quality Committee Report to the SEC and Faculty Senate

February 18, 2016

The Academic Quality Committee (AQ) met on January 13 and February 11, 2016 to discuss a response to the following SEC motion:

Motion from the Senate Executive Committee requesting the Academic Quality Committee look at the following issues related to SITES: (1) the timing of the SITES; (2) a recommendation on how to use/interpret the SITES for promotion and tenure (in addition to making sure that the links work and compiling in one place); and (3) reviewing the formatting of the report (in changing from paper to online, the standard deviations are different (mean/median).

1) Timing of SITE administrative window

AQ has reviewed correspondence from Dr. Tuesdi Helbig to Provost Lee and forwarded to the Faculty Senate regarding the timing of the SITE administrative window (**AQ Item a)**. This document describes the criteria used by WKU Institutional Research (WKU IR) for determining the administration window, and several scenarios for adjusting this timing are also presented.

AQ concurs with Dr. Helbig's warning that shortening the duration of the SITE administration window could be detrimental to response rates. Furthermore, AQ concluded that moving the three-week window forward in time (i.e., one week later in the semester) would likely have no significant impact on the evaluations (response rates, quality of the responses, etc.).   Therefore, the committee makes no reccomendation on this issue.

2) Interpretation of SITE response data

AQ has reviewed the booklet entitled, *Guidelines for using the Student Input to Teaching Evaluation (SITE)*. This document—hereafter referred to as the SITE booklet (**AQ Item b**)—was originally prepared by the 1997 SITE Committee (**AQ Item c**), and has since been maintained by Dr. Sally Kuhlenschmidt until Fall 2012. The SITE booklet discusses how to interpret and compare student response data.

AQ further examined whether any WKU benchmark or other Kentucky public institutions have similar guidelines associated with their respective course evaluation instruments (**AQ Item d**). This study also examined how these institutions use student course evaluations to assess teaching performance (tenure and promotion, merit, etc).

Most of the institutions studied do not appear to have (or at least do not publish) explicit guidelines for interpreting student course evaluation data. University of Kentucky is one

exception and has guidelines posted on the UK IR website (**AQ Item e**). Most of the institutions studied do appear to have some type of published guidelines for tenure and promotion. Of course, these vary considerably from institution to institution and also among colleges and departments within a given institution. Such guidelines typically include a reference to student course evaluations as one of several components for the evaluation of teaching performance. WKU tenure and promotion guidelines are no different in this regard.

AQ members are concerned that (i) SITE data can be easily misinterpreted or even abused, and that (ii) academic units can place too much emphasis on SITE data in measuring teaching effectiveness. There is a rather large literature on the subject of student course evaluations. Two recent articles highlighting these issues are attached to this report (**AQ Item f and g**).

Recommendation

AQ recommends the SITE booklet be resurrected and regularly maintained within the Faculty Senate and in consultation with WKU Academic Affairs and WKU IR. This document should be used by faculty and administrators as a set of best practices guidelines for analyzing SITE response data.

3) Format of SITE reports

AQ discussed differences between the older paper-based and newer online SITE report forms. The paper-based report forms contained instructor, Department, College, and University response distributions as well as median, mean, and upper/lower reliability boundaries. The following statement was also included on the paper-based reports:

The reliability limits of the University-wide items are reflected by the boundaries surrounding the item means. When the ranges defined by the upper and lower bounds of any two means overlap, those two means are statistically equivalent. That is, if the ranges of two instructors overlap on a given item, then the actual means cannot reliably discriminate between them.

The online report forms contain response distributions for only the instructor and mean values and standard deviations for the instructor, Department, and College. There are no guidelines for interpretation included within the online report.

AQ believes that the value of the online report forms would be enhanced if a statement were included describing how to identify statistically equivalent (or distinct) SITE response values. The committee noted a caveat here—the boundaries reported in the paper-based forms are not equivalent to the standard deviations in the online forms. It will likely be necessary to evaluate how statistically meaningful comparisons can be made using the online SITE report data.

<u>Recommendation</u>

AQ recommends that online SITE report format be modified (or amended by an appropriate information resource) to include sufficient data and instructions so that statistically equivalent (or distinct) response values can be easily identified.

Western Kentucky University
Academic Quality Committee Report to the SEC and Faculty Senate

March 28, 2016

The Academic Quality Committee (AQ) met on March 24th to respond to the following Senate motion:

Motion for the Academic Quality Committee to reconsider their position on the timing of SITEs in light of discussion at the March meeting of University Senate.

AQ has requested SITE response rate data from WKU Institutional Research (IR) (**AQ Item a-c**) and also solicited comment from the Registrar's office regarding the rationale for the scheduling of final grades submission. The data from WKU IR indicates a steady rate of online SITE submissions over the entire 3-week administration window during both the Fall 2012 and Fall 2015 terms; hence, shortening the SITE administration window is not recommended.

According to the Registrar's Office, final grades are open for submission one week prior to finals because the faculty requested that it be made so, "many, many years ago." However, only a small number of faculty submit grades during the week before finals. It should also be noted that the Fall 2016 schedule is already published, such that changes to the final grades submission window for Fall 2016 are not recommended.

Recommendation

In light of the discussion at the March meeting of the University Senate and feedback from WKU IR and the Registrar's Office, AQ recommends that the 3-week online SITE administration window be shifted one week later in the semester. The schedule for final grade submission should be adjusted to ensure that final grades may not be entered during the SITE administration window and to allow sufficient time for WKU IR to collect required data. The recommended term for implementation is Spring 2017.

Information Item

AQ heard a presentation from Dr. Jerry Daday (Center for Faculty Development) and Dean Neale Chumbler (CHHS) regarding an ongoing pilot study to test a new student course evaluation instrument. The stated objective of the instrument is two-fold: (1) to provide faculty with feedback for improving teaching and (2) to provide faculty with evidence of teaching effectiveness. In Fall 2015 the initial study involved 10 CHHS faculty, 18 sections, and 427 students/respondents. Additional data will be collected during the Spring 2016 term. Dr. Daday and Dean Chumbler are interested in presenting the full-year results to AQ and the Senate in Fall 2016.