



TO: Members of the Council of Deans

FROM: Ann E. Cudd, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor *Ann E. Cudd*

DATE: February 16, 2021

SUBJECT: Assessment of Teaching

In the fall of 2018, I charged the [Advisory Council on Instructional Excellence](#) (ACIE) with providing a recommendation for assessment of teaching at the University of Pittsburgh. ACIE comprises faculty across all Pitt campuses, including a representative from the University Senate, and is supported by the University Center for Teaching and Learning (Teaching Center). Specifically, I requested that ACIE provide recommendations to me and to the Teaching Center about expanding the ways in which we as a University assess teaching. Research suggests that experimenting with additional ways to measure and assess teaching—beyond student opinion surveys—can be valuable, helping instructors to improve and refine their teaching practices.

Following a thorough process, ACIE submitted to me its July 10, 2019, [Recommendations to the Provost on the Assessment of Teaching](#), which recommended that “Pitt should continue to encourage ongoing improvement and reinforce the high value of excellence in teaching and learning. Units should foster a culture of teaching excellence and improvement by providing resources, tools and support to faculty.” A set of guiding principles supporting these recommendations is summarized here:

- A culture of continuous improvement that recognizes the value of a multi-faceted assessment process should be a central component of the teaching practice of all academic units.
- Assessment efforts should focus on pursuing excellence at the individual and unit levels.
- Assessment efforts should recognize the value of student input.
- Multiple forms of assessment, including input from students and from peers, should be used.
- Discipline-specific implementations will be needed. Approaches may vary for faculty at different career stages, and for full-time and part-time faculty. Units need flexibility to design their own assessment approaches.
- Faculty engagement is critical.

ACIE specifically recommended that each academic unit develop a plan for evaluating teaching performance that goes beyond sole reliance on Student Opinion of Teaching Surveys, and also includes broader input from faculty colleagues, an instructor self-assessment, and teaching artifacts. Each school and campus will begin the development of “its own processes, criteria and an action plan to be used in the evaluation of the teaching performance of its faculty” (ACIE *Recommendations*, page 6, point 1).

The full set of ACIE Recommendations was discussed by Council of Deans on January 10, 2020 and was endorsed on January 30, 2020. The *Recommendations* were discussed and shared with the Senate Educational Policies Committee on May 18, 2020 and were accepted by the Faculty Assembly at the November 4, 2020, meeting.

Therefore, I request that **each dean and campus president work with your faculty to develop action plans for your unit, and submit your unit's plan via email to me at provost@pitt.edu, with a copy to teaching@pitt.edu by the end of the Spring Term 2021 (April 30, 2021)**. I recognize that some units already have well-established plans for assessment of teaching that conform to the recommendations, while other units are earlier in the development of their teaching assessments. During the development process, each unit is strongly encouraged to consult the Teaching Center, whose staff is available to provide [resources](#) and guidance as needed.

Please note that the recommendations as approved also state that:

“[a]ll deans and campus presidents should be given access to their school or campus Student Opinion of Teaching Survey results for all instructors of all ranks. Further, deans and campus presidents, in conjunction with their faculty and in accordance with each unit's governance practices, will determine how the data are shared within their unit. These determinations should be conveyed to the Teaching Center on a regular basis (annually or upon personnel changes) so that system access can be granted to the appropriate individuals. This applies to the schools and campuses that use the services of OMET to administer their student surveys.” (*ACIE Recommendations*, page 9, paragraph 7.)

Accordingly, all deans and campus presidents who do not already receive this content will be given access to their school or campus Student Opinion of Teaching Surveys administered by the Office of the Measurement and Evaluation of Teaching (OMET) for all instructors in their unit, beginning with surveys for the Spring 2021 semester.