



Faculty Senate Office

Room 306 Green Hall, 35 Campus Avenue, Kingston, Rhode Island 02881-1303
(401) 874-2616 <http://www.uri.edu/facsen/>

April 20, 2005

Dear Colleagues:

With this letter, you will be receiving the second distribution of the Murphy Program Assessment Survey, an instrument designed initially by Tom Murphy, a consultant hired by President Carothers. This instrument was born out of faculty concerns regarding previous assessment tools used by the administration to compare degree programs, specifically the Program Contribution Analysis (PCA) and the Program Quality Review (PQR). From the perspective of many faculty, the PCA was based too heavily on tuition income financial contribution to the University, and did not weight research, service, quality or value to the University sufficiently. The PQR (Program Quality Review) was long and cumbersome and lacking any ability to make quantitative comparisons among departments or programs. Those of us who have worked on this new survey have labored long and hard to ensure that the model incorporates all of those elements both faculty and administration value:

- 1) Research
- 2) Teaching
- 3) Service
- 4) Outreach
- 5) Quality
- 6) Income to the University.

In January of 2004, Mr. Murphy held focus groups among various constituents of URI to gain consensus on what should be measured by an assessment instrument. The result is an instrument composed of value measures and success measures reflecting faculty perspectives of the overall mission of a Land Grant University, as well as a financial section on gross income and costs that satisfies upper administration's need to have some data that can be quantified in actual dollars to arrive at net cost. Mr. Murphy tested the first version of the survey last year when he personally interviewed key faculty in a few departments. Since that time, the survey has been refined and revised, and can now be self-administered on the web by all faculty in a department.

This survey instrument has been reviewed, throughout its development, by several faculty knowledgeable about survey methods and the diversity of URI programs we are trying to assess. The vast majority of the faculty who have seen the most recent version of the survey feel that, although not perfect, (the consensus was that no assessment tool could be deemed appropriate by all

factions of the university) it is a vast improvement over the PCA, as well as being clearer and more definitive than the former PQR for assessing quality.

Based on all of these recommendations, we three signatories have adjusted the language over a period of four months, to eliminate vagueness and to reduce subjectivity of responses, to serve the best interests of all parties involved, and to ensure that the language is inclusive of all disciplines and all endeavors within those disciplines. What you have before you represents many iterations of this survey instrument. It has been altered in accordance with suggestions about the language after each of the following occurred:

- 1) review by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee,
- 2) negotiations with administration,
- 3) Input received after the survey was reviewed by faculty with expertise in modeling, statistics, or creation of surveys.

It is our belief that what you have before you represents the sincere efforts of both administration and faculty to create an academic assessment tool which, though not flawless, serves all parties well. We would urge that departments interpret the language and specific terms used in the survey in a manner appropriate to their discipline—in other words, a broad rather than a literal interpretation is encouraged. For example, the phrase “resources needed for teaching and research” might mean the following:

- a) Laboratories and equipment for science or engineering,
- b) Computer and/or seminar-style classrooms for writing,
- c) Practice rooms, stages, or studios for the performing arts,
- d) Boats for Marine Biology, GSO, or other applicable disciplines.

Finally, we urge that you answer the questions honestly, ***as it is in your department's best interest to do so***. One purpose of the survey is to identify and assess future departmental needs and long term plans; for this to be effective, a truthful report of the current state of the department is needed. Please understand that there is no need to “pad” one’s own scores. There is no expectation that departments will score highly on all questions. In preliminary testing, no departmental scores thus far have come close to 100% as departments excel in some (but not all) of the areas of Teaching, Research, Outreach, Quality, and Income generation.

Thank you for your participation. We look forward to results that are useful and beneficial to all.

Sincerely,

Celest Martin (College Writing Program)
Faye Boudreaux-Bartels (Electrical and Computer Engineering)
Michael Rice (Fisheries, Animal, and Veterinary Science)
Sub-Committee of FSEC on Murphy Survey Assessment Program