

## **University Senate Ad Hoc SITE Review Committee Report November 2007**

The University Senate Ad Hoc SITE committee was charged with the tasks of (1) reviewing the existing SITE instrument and procedures to determine whether changes to the system are indicated, and (2) if changes are indicated, developing a plan to begin the revision process. At its meeting on October 31, 2007, the committee determined that there are multiple problems with the current SITE.

The SITE system at WKU is intended to serve three purposes: (1) to help faculty evaluate their teaching skills and improve their teaching effectiveness; (2) to provide administrators with an assessment of faculty teaching effectiveness for tenure and promotion decisions; and, more recently (3) to aid students in class selection by providing information on relevant teaching practices of faculty. It is the conclusion of the committee that the current SITE is ineffective at serving the first two purposes and the reasons for this conclusion are given below. We have no knowledge of its success at meeting the third purpose and ask the SGA to provide input on this issue.

**The SITE instrument provides little information that faculty can use to improve their teaching.** The questions on the current SITE instrument do not adequately reflect the multidimensionality of teaching. Moreover, the questions are ill-constructed. Some are ambiguous and/or subjective (e.g., “My instructor is well-prepared for class”; “Overall, my instructor is effective”) and some ask for an assessment that is beyond the students’ level of knowledge (e.g., “My instructor displays a clear understanding of course topics”; “Performance measures (exams, assignments, etc.) are well-constructed”). The only questions that are clear and behaviorally-based are those used by the SGA, but the data from these questions are not provided to the faculty. Finally, the general comments that students are prompted to provide are either flattering, mean-spirited, or irrelevant and do not offer faculty any useful or specific feedback for course improvement. These factors prevent faculty from using the current SITE instrument to assess and modify their teaching skills and practices.

**The validity of the SITE instrument is unknown.** As far as we know, there has been no attempt to establish the validity of the current SITE instrument for the assessment of teaching effectiveness. From the viewpoint of the faculty, the instrument has no face validity because it provides little or no information they can use to improve teaching effectiveness. Moreover, the content validity of the current instrument is in doubt because there was no effort to define effective teaching in the WKU context and to develop indicators for the range of behaviors needed to assess this construct. Finally, the criterion-related validity of the instrument is unknown. Despite the fact that the SITE is used for decisions about tenure and promotion, we have no evidence that scores on this instrument accurately discriminate different levels of faculty teaching effectiveness.

**Faculty have little confidence in the outcome of the SITE process.** This is due, in part, to the problems listed above, but also to the way the SITE is currently administered. There is no standard procedure across campus for administration of the SITE. This is

especially problematic for on-line courses. In many cases there are very small numbers of students completing the SITE and yet these evaluations may be used by administrators as measures of faculty performance. Finally, there has been no attempt to account for known sources of bias (e.g., grading leniency, class size, gender, ethnicity) in students' evaluations of teachers.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the severity of the problems with the current SITE system, the committee recommends a complete revision of the system. Moreover, the committee recommends the following actions be taken as part of this process:

1. Obtain the support and backing of the Provost for the project.
2. Evaluate existing standardized measures of teaching effectiveness for use at WKU.
3. Review the scientific literature on student evaluation of teaching to obtain information on current thought and practice in this area.
4. Develop focused, open-ended questions that can augment the information obtained from the typical Likert-type questions.
5. Design and implement an on-going study to establish the validity of the new SITE instrument.

(Note: Items 3-5 will require considerable faculty time and effort. The committee therefore suggests that the faculty working on these aspects of the project should receive reassigned time to this project to ensure its success.)

6. Develop policies for administration of the new instrument.
7. Develop guidelines for the interpretation and use of SITE data.

### **SITE Review Committee Members**

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