Faculty Development and Evaluation Committee  
Minutes of Meeting, October 7, 2011

Members present: William Abbott, Mike Andreychik, Jessica Davis, Joel Goldfield, Meredith Kazer (Chair), Mary Frances Malone, Valeria Martinez, Aaron Perkus.  
Guests Present: Tracy Immerso, Larry Miners, Roben Torosyan

The meeting was called to order by Chair Kazer at 8:16 a.m.

Minutes of Previous Meeting
Bill asked for clarification of Meredith’s comments from the end of last month’s meeting. Mary Frances replied that those comments applied to the University self-study plan.
Joel clarified that on page 3 in the next to last paragraph, he was speaking of an online survey administration tool called SurveyMonkey (and not an actual monkey).  
Brief general laughter followed.
Mary Frances moved to accept minutes as amended. Jess seconded.
Minutes unanimously approved as amended.

Update on Workshops
Roben related the schedule of upcoming IDEA workshops. There will be two weeks of workshops in November (November 1 through November 11). Over this period, two workshops—one on “getting started with IDEA” and another on “Unpacking the data”—will be repeated 3 times each. Tracy has graciously agreed to attend all of the workshops and Bill and Meredith will each attend 3. There will also be at least 1 CAE representative at each workshop.
Larry noted that Cynthia Delventhal will be in touch with the workshop participants to set up any necessary pre-workshop meetings and to review the powerpoint workshop slides.
Meredith added that the decision to have her and Bill represent the FDEC at the workshops was not arbitrary. She and Bill have received relevant training at past IDEA training workshops.
Meredith noted that the CAE has agreed to pay for one FDEC member to attend the IDEA training in Florida this year. Jess volunteered to attend. Cynthia Delventhal will be notified of this so she can get the ball rolling for Jess.
Meredith noted that she sent an email to the Deans about the availability of aggregate IDEA reports and the possibility of notifying faculty that these reports are now available. She also noted that the Deans had not yet responded to this email and asked for input as to what this non-response might indicate.
Mary Frances felt sure the Deans had read the email and that their lack of response was likely an indication that the email raised no objections.
Meredith also notified the Deans that FDEC would be willing to do IDEA training for interested parties.
Larry remarked that he had also contacted the Deans about discussions and training surrounding the IDEA process. Dean Gibson of DSB and Dean Franzosa of
GSEAP responded favorably to this communication and Larry met with both. Dean Beal of SOE responded that he’d like to hold off before meeting.

Larry met with Dean Gibson of DSB and spoke about the IDEA form and about approaches to training. This was a fruitful discussion. A meeting has also been scheduled with the Dean Franzosa of GSEAP to discuss the same issues.

Bill remarked that he felt we should consider forming a subcommittee to start talking about preparing the report for Academic Council on IDEA that is due in the Spring. This issue was revisited later in the meeting with Bill, Meredith, Mary Frances, and Joel volunteering for the subcommittee.

Bill also remarked that IDEA is equipped to evaluate administrators as well as faculty and that this option was currently being investigated.

Tracy suggested that she or a member of CNS should be included in plans for implementing administrator evaluation using the IDEA forms. Their involvement at an earlier stage of the process could help avoid some of the implementation problems that arose with the first runs of the faculty evaluation forms.

Bill remarked that Tracy would likely be invited to the first meeting.

Lenny remarked that in his conversations with the Dean Gibson, an issue arose about how to interpret the department reports (nor the individual faculty reports). Dean Gibson also asked about getting reports for the whole school (seeing, e.g., how their data compare to business schools at other colleges/universities). Larry remarked that it is possible to do this. Dean Gibson also related that the business faculty are adamant about continuing use of the yellow forms and about keeping the paper forms as an option.

Meredith asked if DSB faculty wanted paper as the default option or just as an option?

Larry replied that they said nothing about paper being the default, but they did want it as an option. Larry said that he emphasized to Dean Gibson the importance of encouraging DSB faculty with questions to attend one of the on-campus training sessions. He also offered to get someone from DSB to the official IDEA training in Florida.

Meredith asked if we need a university-wide workshop on interpreting departmental reports.

Larry said there may be some interest in that. He also replied that Suzanna Klaf said they don’t spend too much time at the official IDEA training on that particular issue.

Bill noted that there are a wide range of people at the official IDEA “train the trainer” sessions and that you can ask any question you want. It might be good for us to ask about interpretation of departmental reports.

Jess offered to get a list of questions we might want answered that she can then ask at the train the trainer session. All agreed this was a good idea.

Meredith commented that she knows SON wants to have more information about how you match the IDEA objectives with program objectives. Can the IDEA objectives be used for program evaluation/assessment?

Aaron replied that the English department has done exactly this. They chose specific objectives for all of their faculty to use so that they could then use the IDEA data for program evaluation purposes. There was not a perfect match in all cases between the IDEA objectives and the program objectives, but there was a good enough match to make IDEA objectives useful for program assessment purposes. Aaron said he will share what the English department learns in this process.
Mary Frances noted that the Board of Trustees report on accreditation spoke of using IDEA objectives, or at least examining connections between IDEA objectives and departmental and university goals, for purposes of accreditation. The primary question that came up here was how do we translate IDEA data to speak to objectives for each of the schools?

Larry remarked that in his discussion with Dean Gibson he had suggested the DSB might want to devise some of their own questions to put on the IDEA form for assessment purposes. He noted that up to 20 questions can be added to the form and those questions can be anything you’d like.

Mary Frances replied that there might be validity concerns with this technique. As such, it might be important to talk about what specific questions will be added at a department or even a university level.

Jess asked if SON is talking about actually changing the IDEA objectives themselves here or just about adding new ones.

Meredith replied that to her knowledge, the IDEA objectives themselves can’t be changed, but discussions can be undertaken about whether IDEA objectives fit with departmental or school objectives. Her experience was that there was a fair bit of overlap between IDEA objectives and department/school objectives.

Roben commented that a good example of using IDEA objectives for program evaluation purposes can be seen in the science departments. The sciences have a common goal of evaluating scientific claims. There is a question on the IDEA form that gets at the notion of evaluating claims, *but* it’s critical that if you want to use the IDEA question to get at precisely what the science departments want it to assess, you have to make clear to students that the question is specifically asking about evaluating claims in science.

Larry noted that an important consideration here is that conversations like these surrounding using IDEA for departmental assessment purposes aren’t yet occurring on any wide level. A first step is that departments need to meet and decide what courses should be evaluated with respect to what goals.

Aaron noted that now is a particularly good time to push for these conversations since accreditation is approaching. It would make sense for us to try and emphasize to people how IDEA could be helpful in the accreditation process.

Jess asked if we should ask to be invited to department meetings to relay some of the information about using IDEA in this way.

Mary Frances said this was a good idea but that we might want to have a set template of points that we can then disseminate to each department. That way we don’t end up providing different messages to different departments. She suggested we might want to form a subcommittee to discuss this.

Jess remarked that the process might go more smoothly if you present to departments within your school or discipline so that department members are more comfortable with the process.

Mary Frances asked if Aaron could provide a copy of forms used for accreditation purposes. We can then see how program objectives used for accreditation mesh with the IDEA objectives.

Meredith solicited volunteers to serve on a subcommittee to look into this further. Aaron, Jess, Roben, Meredith, and Mike volunteered.
Meredith cautioned, however, that we don’t want to fire too much at faculty all at once. The IDEA form is still in its early stages of use and faculty already have a great deal of questions and issues. We want faculty to understand the usefulness of the form but also to not feel overwhelmed.

Bill noted that the form is quite useful in that it adds a lot to what we can offer in terms of evaluation. In addition to artifacts, we also have these IDEA objectives!

Emily suggested that it would be a good idea if we could bring examples of “what it looks like” to use IDEA data for departmental assessment when we speak with departments. She noted her hesitancy to ask faculty to adopt the use of IDEA data for accreditation, development, program assessment, etc., before faculty have really been convinced of the validity of the IDEA.

Regarding the validity issue, Mary Frances asked what could be at the root of not getting data from students.

Jess offered that the only data she got from students was from those students to whom she gave dedicated time to complete the evaluations on computers. She noted that students doing it online on their own time just aren’t motivated to do it and asked what we might be able to do to encourage students to fill out the online form.

Bill suggested that we might poll the faculty regarding problems they saw with administering the form last semester. Asking about how much their students responded, strategies they used to encourage students to respond, etc.

Aaron replied that we should look at overall response rates from the Spring before we go to individual faculty with questions.

Tracy replied that she believed the overall response rate for the spring was 68% for the entire university among classes that used the online option.

Aaron remarked that 68% is a fairly good response rate and noted that response rates over 60% are considered good by the IDEA people.

Mike noted that there may be a necessary tradeoff between response rates and having students complete the form away from class on their own time (vs. at a dedicated time during class).

Larry offered that we may want to think about differentiating between faculty who really need the data and reports and those who don’t. Perhaps we could consider a system where junior faculty use the paper forms and more senior faculty the online.

Mary Frances said that it wasn’t uncommon with the old paper form to have low response rates, but there simply had no data regarding whether the response rates were high enough to provide reliable measures or not.

Bill suggested that we might want to consider forming a subcommittee to start thinking about the preparation of the April report to academic council. It’s not too early to start doing this and there is a lot to cover before we present the report in the Spring.

Mary Frances asked whether we can tell from the data itself, without polling individual faculty, what the response rates were.

Tracy replied that we can certainly get response rate data for individual faculty members. She cautioned against using the data to assess departmental response rates since the department classifications are based on faculty entries for discipline codes and some faculty members could have entered those codes incorrectly.

Aaron spoke in favor of the online form. He suggested the need for a more in-depth discussion about how to get reliable and valid online data. For example, the
problem might be solved by bringing laptops to class and having students complete the online form during class time. We just haven’t adequately discussed potential solutions yet. He argued that we should put more resources into solving the problems associated with the online form, not fewer.

Bill suggested that if we do consider polling faculty, we don’t need to get overall favorability judgments regarding the IDEA form. Rather, we need to get specific information about what works, what doesn’t, and what we can do to address problems.

Joel offered that the minutes of the FDEC meeting from January reported that we had a 70% online response rate. A select few classes had very low rates (below 20%) but most were over 80%. He asked if we have any specific information about why students don’t use the online form.

Meredith remarked that IDEA has a huge number of resources on how to encourage student responding to the online forms! Faculty may not know about these resources, but they exist. She also noted that Fairfield is much higher than average in terms of online response rates.

Roben pointed to the IDEA resource regarding best practices for online responses. Here there are six major points about how to encourage quality student responses online. Roben provided the link to this information later via email (adapted from Best Practices for Online Response Rate<http://www.theideacenter.org/OnlineResponseRates>)

**Update from Tracy**

Tracy: An indicator has been successfully added to banner where faculty can indicate whether their individual courses should be evaluated or not. The local codes have been properly loaded and everything is set for the dissemination of a link to faculty where they can choose the online or paper version of the form. A note has been sent to the Deans so that they can notify faculty about the window for choosing the paper vs. online option.

Tracy also noted that faculty should now be able to see (1) courses where they can choose the paper vs. online form, and (2) courses for which there is no evaluation. Having all of this information available should help faculty to fix any discrepancies.

Testing for the new class urls (for the online form) has been successfully completed.

One test that is scheduled, but yet to be completed, involves making sure that the correct course evaluation urls get sent to the correct faculty members. This testing should be completed in the next few weeks.

Overall, Tracy noted that we are in good shape for this semester and are far beyond where we were at this time last semester.

Chair Kazer reordered the agenda. Discussion re: the report on “top chosen IDEA objectives” among faculty members was tabled until the next meeting. Discussion moved to talking about a possible change to our meeting time.

There was some discussion of stipulating a specified meeting time for the committee in new member elections.

Meredith agreed to send out a “meeting wizard” inquiry to check for common available times for the final 2 meetings of the semester.
Peer Review of Teaching Workshop

Bill reported that things are going well on this front so far. The August workshops went quite well, although some events had to be postponed due to Hurricane Irene. History, Religious Studies, Visual and Performing Arts, and Nursing got together on September 30th to exchange ideas. RS and History are in the midst of presenting ideas about peer review programs to their departments. History has sent a plan to the chair, but not yet to the full department. VPA is moving very quickly with their plan. Bill noted that it’s likely there will be very positive feedback on the process to discuss at the December workshop on peer review.

The CAE offered 1,000 per department to put together peer review plans at the department level (e.g., class observations, review of syllabi, etc.).

Larry noted that GSEAP is also a part of this initiative. A number of FDEC members are part of this initiative as well. From the perspective of the CAE, the program is going quite well and they are thrilled with the progress that is being made.

Meredith asked if the CAE needs anything from the FDEC for the December 13th workshop (e.g., rooms, food, communicating with faculty).

Roben replied that helping to communicate with the faculty would be helpful.

Emily agreed, noting that it would be helpful to have a common message coming from both CAE and FDEC. It would be good to let people know this is a joint effort.

Larry remarked that he sees the peer review initiative as seamlessly integrating with IDEA. This is all about assessment of teaching just like IDEA is. We need to really disseminate the message that these are both efforts aimed at assessment!

Larry also informed us that Cathy Nantz wants the CAE to speak directly with the Deans about progress on the peer review of teaching project. SVPAA Fitzgerald and the Deans will sit with the CAE soon to do so.

Other Business

Jessica suggested that improving a mentoring program for new faculty may be a nice way to improve faculty recruitment and retention. Larry agreed and felt that this could be facilitated through existing work of the CAE. This will be discussed further at the next meeting.

Mike Andreychik