

Diagnostic Practices for Using IDEA Instrument

Guidelines for the use of IDEA

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) requires that all faculty unit employees and administrators who teach shall have a minimum of two courses per year (or all classes if only teaching one or two courses) evaluated by a method which yields quantitative data (Article 15, in Section 15.14). Since 1993 the short form of IDEA has been used by all faculty. What follows are guidelines for the use, interpretation, and application in RPT evaluations of those data collected.

IDEA was developed through the Kansas State Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development and a synopsis is provided of some of the information available from them. If further clarification is needed, technical reports on a variety of subjects pertinent to IDEA are available in the Academic Senate Office, JSRFDC 109.

The Use of IDEA

Nine objectives are outlined in the information packet that comes with the IDEA form and can be rated as Essential (E), Important (I), or Minor (M). While it is not impossible that an instructor might be trying to achieve all nine objectives in one class, it will undoubtedly be difficult to accomplish so much. It is suggested that one only choose 3-5 to be considered "Essential" or "Important." On the report form the instructor receives from IDEA the means of ratings for each objective are listed. The procedure for calculation of the overall evaluation score is to weight the students' responses with respect to the objective categories chosen by the instructor as E or I. For example, student ratings for all objectives marked "Essential" are double weighted, those marked "Important" are single weighted, and those marked "Minor" are dropped. Thus, departments should

advise instructors that it is not in their best interest to rate too many E or I, but that a minimum number need to be chosen to make the ratings useful.

To further maximize what IDEA is designed to measure we suggest that instructors explicitly list their objectives in their syllabi and discuss them with their students at the beginning of the semester and again before evaluations are administered. It is possible to manipulate scores by the way the ratings of objectives are chosen. For example, an instructor may look to items that were rated higher by students one year and choose those as E or I objectives the next year. Departments may want to discuss the list of objectives and assist new and continuing faculty in choosing appropriate objectives. This may also help departments develop RPT elaborations and alternate teaching evaluation methods, a topic to which we will return.

Interpretation of IDEA

For the purposes of the IDEA instrument, "Similar Courses" are courses of similar size (e.g., Small: 1-14, Medium: 15-35) and similar motivation (the motivation level is found by computing the mean score on Question 11 of the Short Form). "Similar" does not refer to discipline, although the three scaled scores of teaching effectiveness in the Summary Profile do. For each question that the faculty member has rated as E or I, the results are compared to similar courses rated the same. Thus, the pool of classes with which a class is compared changes from question to question.

A recent change made by Kansas State has been to replace the terms "High" (90th-99th percentile), "High Average" (70th-89th), "Average" (30th-69th), "Low Average" (10th-29th), or "Low" (1st-9th) with percentile bands (or confidence intervals) in which the faculty member's scores fall. For example, a "High Average" score of 70 might be found within the interval of 54 and 82 and appears

on the print-out as 54-70-82. Here is where the class size has an impact. For small classes the numerical scores are particularly suspect. According to Kansas State: "If about 10 students rated the class, chances are 1 out of 2 that the true score lies within the percentile band. With about 20 student raters, chances are roughly 2 out of 3; with 40 raters, about 3 out of 4."

There is also evidence that the scores are discipline-dependent; certain disciplines historically have higher evaluations than others. Instructors, Department RPT committees and the URPTC should also be aware that teaching is considered to be effective when scores are "at or above the 30th percentile" (see Kansas State University report of 8/94). Reference scores for similar disciplines and information about differential ratings of disciplines are available in Technical Report No. 8.

Applications of IDEA

Given the above information, it should be clear that IDEA evaluations should be viewed with caution. In fact, due to the possibility of errors with small class sizes - a typical situation at CSU, Stanislaus - we concur with Kansas State's caveat "...care should be exercised NOT to over interpret individual scores, especially for personnel decisions." More specifically, the URPTC should exercise special care when comparing ratings of faculty members in different disciplines.

In 1992 the Ad Hoc IDEA Replacement Committee prepared a report to the Academic Senate regarding the use of IDEA. The committee reminded us that student evaluations are only part of a thorough evaluation of teaching. As such, departments are reminded that peer review of teaching competency is important. We affirm this perspective and urge the development and testing of alternate teaching evaluation methods that are appropriate to the

discipline. Testing of alternative instruments should use the currently available IDEA form or other theoretically grounded standards for establishing reliability and validity. Validated instruments may be submitted to the University RPT Committee for approval with an explanation of the process used to validate the instrument. Within individual departments, IDEA ratings should be used as a starting point in discussions on how faculty members might improve their teaching effectiveness. Additionally, we suggest that the Faculty Development Committee continue to provide workshops and seminars on the use of IDEA early in the academic year. **Approved on March 8, 1995 by the Faculty Affairs Committee per (9/AS/93/FAC) June 8, 1993**