

*This message is sent on behalf of Jeremy Haefner, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs*

**Announcement to RIT Faculty about Student-Designed Questions for SRATE  
November 16, 2015**

Dear Colleagues,

You may remember that last spring a separate student-designed rating of instruction system was proposed by Student Government. The purpose of that separate system was to provide students with information for course planning. However, given concerns raised by faculty and because such a separate system would compete with the current SRATE survey and had the potential of reducing SRATE response rates, I put a Task Force together in conjunction with Academic Senate and Student Government that worked over the summer to examine this request and recommend a proposal that would not compromise our current SRATE process.

The Academic Senate voted on Thursday, November 5 to endorse a proposal from the SRATE Task Force to add six questions designed by students to the current SRATE system.

The purpose of this communication is to provide you with additional background information regarding the questions and the parameters within which these new questions will be used. Before I do that, however, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Student Government and the Academic Senate for their careful deliberation of this proposal and the collaboration that characterized this effort. Voices on both sides of this proposal were heard. I feel that the solution that was arrived at is a good one and takes into account both the needs of the students as well as the faculty.

The following six questions are to be added to the SRATE survey with an explanation as to how the questions will be released. These questions were drawn from similar questions developed through the shared governance system at the University of Minnesota as well as questions developed by the IDEA Center. The questions were voted on by RIT's Student Government:

## **I. Academic Support**

1. The instructor was available for appropriate consultation (online and/or face-to-face) outside of class (RIT Scale)
2. The instructor provided timely feedback on assignments and tests. (RIT Scale)

## **II. Course Expectations**

3. The course was well organized (RIT Scale)
4. This course advanced my understanding of the subject. (RIT Scale)
5. The amount of work (reading, writing, etc.) in this course was
  - a. Much less than most courses
  - b. Less than most courses
  - c. About average
  - d. More than most courses
  - e. Much more than most courses
6. Overall, I would recommend this course to other students. (RIT Scale)

The following are the parameters that will govern the use and implementation of the above questions:

- Only the data from these six student-developed questions will be shared with students. All other questions on the SRATE survey will remain as originally intended for faculty and supervisor use only.
- Each individual faculty member will, however, be able to view their own results from these six questions but supervisors, deans, or tenure committees will not have access. No qualitative data will be released.
- No data will be released for faculty in their first two terms at RIT, excluding summer and intersession.\*
- No data will be released for a faculty member teaching a course for the first time.\*

- The threshold of a 65 percent response rate will be in place so that no data will be released for any given section unless that threshold is met. This ensures that the data are reliable not only for the six student questions, but for the other questions that are used for evaluative and formative purposes. Response rates are the biggest single concern about student ratings in general, so this measure, combined with a robust publicity campaign by Student Government, should help boost response rates considerably.
- We are working with SmartEvals to develop a protocol which designates the RIT core seven questions as “required questions” on the survey. Therefore, the goal will be that in order for students to submit their ratings, they must first fill out these questions.

*\*The threshold used for determining this will be the start of the semester calendar: fall 2013.*

And finally, an interim administrative policy that formalizes these parameters will be established as soon as possible. Academic Senate expressed the desire to see student ratings governed by a formal governance policy, and so over the course of the next few weeks, a group will be charged with drafting such a policy for Academic Senate’s review.

My thanks again go out to Student Government and Academic Senate for their work in tackling this ongoing and emotive issue, and I wish all of you a well-deserved and relaxing Thanksgiving break.

Jeremy Haefner  
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

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