Tasks Accomplished in Academic Year 2014-2015

Developed a survey that can be used by faculty to evaluate their Dean. The goal was to obtain survey results that would lead to formative feedback for the Dean. Questions focused on the following general areas: promotion of the school’s profile, faculty, management, budget, program support and growth, vision/leadership/mission, and fundraising.

Administered the survey of faculty for Deans Zhan Li (who joined SMC in June 2010) and Roy Wensley (who became Dean in January 2011). This was to be the first faculty review conducted for these Deans since they became SMC Deans. The surveys were administered in May 2015 with a response rate approaching 70%. Survey results are being compiled by the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) and will be provided to the Deans and Provost Dobkin while maintaining the confidentiality of the respondents.

Process followed by the AAEC Committee:

- The committee first met in March, 2014. The membership consisted of those listed at the bottom of this report, with Chairs of the Academic Senate Keith Ogawa participating through May 2014 and Valerie Burke participating during the 2014-2015 academic year. None of the members had previously served on the AAEC committee. Members were told that surveys previously conducted by the AAEC had quite a few questions for which respondents had answered “not enough information” rather than providing informative responses. Also, some of the questions were not tailored to Dean responsibilities. With the goal of making the results more relevant to administrators, we reviewed old AAEC surveys and a faculty survey conducted by the University of Minnesota. We then created our own survey containing approximately 35 questions.
- We checked each Dean’s job description and reviewed the survey questions with the Provost to ensure that the questions were consistent with the Deans’ responsibilities before administering the survey.
- We discussed which faculty would be surveyed and whether administrators from outside the school would be surveyed. We decided to survey all full-time faculty in the relevant school, ranked and adjunct, and to exclude other administrators due to potential confidentiality concerns and the fact that the questions were aimed at faculty members from the specific school. We also considered doing a “360 Degree” survey but felt we did not have the time or capacity to do it well. Our first priority was to administer faculty surveys for Deans Li and Wensley.
- In May 2014, we applied to the Senate for a change in the faculty handbook language as it pertains to the AAEC. For example, the current language does not specifically give the AAEC the authority to review Associate Deans. It also does not provide clarity regarding roles and responsibilities of AAEC, nor the evaluation process. The revised handbook language was not accepted by the Provost. AAEC decided not to revise the revision, but instead will make a new attempt to revise the handbook language. This is likely to be
more effective following an additional year of discussions and completion of two survey processes.

- After the survey was assembled and before it was administered, Deans Li and Wensley were given the opportunity to review the questions and to contribute up to three additional questions to the survey. We also provided the Deans with the opportunity to write a reflection (no more than 300 words) which would be included at the start of the survey. Deans Li and Wensley both wrote reflections.

- We sent a “Survey Alert” email to faculty members informing them the survey was coming soon, explaining the confidentiality procedures, and assuring them that the survey results would not be seen by AAEC members.

- The Office of Institutional Research then sent an email to appropriate faculty members: SEBA faculty for Dean Li’s survey and SOS faculty for Dean Wensley’s survey. Faculty members were initially given one week to complete the survey, but were later given a one-week extension with the hope of increasing response rates. When a faculty member submitted the survey, s/he then received a brief follow-up questionnaire asking for comments about the survey instrument.

- As stated above, survey results are being compiled by the OIR and will be provided to the Provost and the respective Deans.

- Comments about the survey instrument (submitted by faculty in the follow-up questionnaire) were provided to AAEC members to improve future survey instruments.

Other discussions/decisions made by AAEC:

- We discussed the role of AAEC in creating, administering, and evaluating surveys. We considered an approach similar to R&T wherein the AAEC would write a letter to the administrator under review with our summary of the survey results; however AAEC members were not comfortable with this process, nor was it appropriately analogous to the R&T process. Instead, we felt the role of AAEC was to facilitate evaluations and to ensure opportunities for faculty to provide feedback about administrators, but the assessment of the survey responses was best left as a discussion between the administrator and his/her supervisor.

- We discussed with Gregg Thomson, the Director of the Office of Institutional Research as to whether the survey should be anonymous or confidential. After careful consideration, we opted for a confidential survey based on the rationale provided by Director Thomson (see below).

The committee confirmed that the evaluation surveys would be administered by the campus Office of Institutional Research and that the survey results would be compiled by IR Director Gregg Thomson who would then transmit the results directly to the administrator being evaluated and his or her supervisor. The AAEC itself would have no access to the results.

With the completely anonymous survey mode survey participants are directed to a generic link to the survey and survey responses are collected without any information identifying who is responding. The advantages of a completely anonymous survey are obvious: individuals cannot be linked to their survey responses. Disadvantages include not being able to send survey reminders to just non-responders and the inability to assess response rates and check for possible differences by type of respondent (for
example, tenured versus pre-tenured faculty or across departments within a school). With the anonymous survey mode, it is possible to add questions to the survey itself (e.g., faculty rank, department) that would then permit analysis of possible differences by subgroup. However, this lengthens the survey and ironically having these questions on an anonymous survey calls attention to respondent characteristics, suggesting that this is a focus of the evaluation when it is not.

With the **confidential but not anonymous** survey mode each participant receives a personal email invitation to a customized link to the survey. This allows the Director of Institutional Research to keep track of who has responded and then send reminders only to non-respondents. This approach can then use institutional information about respondents (e.g., faculty rank, department) to more precisely determine response rates and to check to see if there are significant differences in survey responses by type of respondent. The survey responses are thus likely to be substantially more useful than if they were completely anonymous. The clear disadvantage with this approach is that survey responses are not anonymous at the point of collection, i.e., within Institutional Research. Therefore, it is incumbent upon Institutional Research to ensure survey respondents that their responses are complete confidential when the results are transmitted to the administrator being evaluated and his or her supervisor. This includes being sensitive to the possibility of identification both because of very small numbers in the presentation of the results and the content of open-ended comments. With this guarantee of confidentiality, however, survey responses are in effect anonymous at the point at which they are transmitted to the administrator being evaluated.

After very careful consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of each of these two survey modes, the committee elected to use the confidential but not anonymous mode of survey administration.

- We discussed the appropriate schedules for evaluation of administrators, considering the ideal time for first review and appropriate timing for subsequent reviews. We decided that a two-year review would be the goal for new administrators; this provides some time for administrators to get things done balanced with providing feedback early enough for the administrator to improve performance. These surveys may include questions tailored to be formative (e.g. “shows potential for…”) more than summative (e.g. “demonstrates effectiveness at…”). We also discussed the possibility of a longer time frame for experienced administrators; however we felt that given the ever-changing landscape in higher education, and the ever-changing needs of students, faculty, and programs, a regular schedule of formative assessment would be most valuable. Therefore, our target will be an initial survey after two years of service, followed by surveys every three years thereafter.

- We developed a tentative calendar for administering the surveys. We administered surveys for Deans Li and Wensley in Spring 2015 because they were the most overdue for evaluation. The next administrators in line for evaluation are Vice Provosts Richard Carp and Chris Sindt during the Academic Year 2015-16. Also during 2015-2016, we can complete President Donahue’s initial two-year evaluation, and Provost Dobkin’s next evaluation. Additional evaluations include Chris Sindt as Dean of KSOE (began fall 2014) and Sheila Hassell Hughes as Dean of SOLA (beginning July 2015).
We recommended that each Dean “report out” to the faculty (e.g. to the faculty of the school or at a meeting of the Academic Senate). A “report out” is expected but not required.

Ongoing Projects To Be Continued in 2015-2016 Academic Year

- Create opportunity for Deans Li and Wensley to report out at Academic Senate meeting in the fall (unless they have chosen to report out at a SEBA or SOS meeting).
- After Deans Li and Wensley have discussed survey results with the Provost, request additional input about the survey instruments.
- Revise the language in the Faculty Handbook related to the AAEC, making committee responsibilities clear. Request (from Academic Senate) authority to administer evaluations of Associate Deans.
- Revisit the calendar of evaluations, and update as needed. If AAEC is to facilitate evaluation of Associate Deans, determine the schedule, and include in general calendar for evaluations. Also, clarify timing of evaluations, and determine whether the target should be during or after the 2nd/3rd year of service.
- Decide on a policy regarding AAEC membership. We recommend that membership be staggered so as to maintain committee memory.
- Analyze comments about the survey instrument with the goal of improving future surveys.
- Revise the Dean survey we developed to be relevant for evaluations of other administrators. Use all available resources (e.g. job postings) to tailor questions for each administrator.
- Summarize procedures for conducting future surveys in order to establish institutional memory and consistency of procedures, and in order to ensure administrators are evaluated on a regular and timely basis.
- Consider updating website to include details of process, and calendar of evaluations.
- Consider how to do a “360 degree” evaluation. The surveys conducted were distributed to the faculty of each Dean’s school. Consider doing an evaluation that also includes people across SMC (including other administrators and staff), the community, Deans at other schools, community partnerships, etc.

AAEC Committee Members:
Valerie Burke, Chair of the Academic Senate
Catherine Finger, SEBA Representative
Raina Leon, KSOE Representative
Gregory Smith, SOS Representative
Elena Songster, SOLA Representative
Staff Support: Gregg Thomson, Director of Institutional Research