

Annual Report to the University Senate

Academic Year 2024-2025

Faculty Standards Committee

Committee Charge: This committee shall continuously review University policies and practices relating to tenure, academic freedom, equitable distribution of work, rank and promotion, remuneration, retirement, and other matters affecting the faculty and shall propose any desirable expression of Senate opinion on these matters, including proposals to the Trustees for modifications in their rules and regulations.

2024/2025 Faculty Standards Committee Members:

- ***Betsy McCoach, Chair, Neag School of Education**
- *Robert Bird, Business
- *Joseph Crivello, CLAS
- *Kelly Herd, School of Business
- *Horea Ilies, Engineering
- *Elizabeth Jockusch, CLAS
- *Anastasios Tzingounis, CLAS
- Gladis Kersaint, Office of the Provost (Ex-Officio)
- Kylene Perras, Office of Outreach & Engagement
- John Richardson, Fine Arts
- Martina Rosenberg, CETL, Faculty Development

*Senate Member 2024/2025

Summary:

During the 2024–2025 academic year, the Faculty Standards Committee (FSC) conducted an extensive review of the Student Experience of Teaching (SET) instrument, establishing a regular five-year review cycle, creating specialized subcommittees, and conducting comprehensive surveys with department chairs and deans to inform potential revisions. In addition to the SET initiative, the FSC addressed other significant issues, including incorporating community-engaged scholarship into the Promotion, Tenure, and Reappointment (PTR) process, exploring the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) in education, discussing the integration of teaching portfolios within the Interfolio system, reviewing the Provost's Office initiative on low-enrollment programs, and considering a proposal to include Student Learning Outcome (SLO) assessments within SET evaluations for General Education courses. The FSC continues to advance these critical issues and will provide formal recommendations to the University Senate in the upcoming year.

To the University Senate: The Faculty Standards Committee (FSC) is pleased to present this annual report summarizing its activities and accomplishments for the 2024–2025 academic year. Throughout the year, the FSC engaged in significant initiatives – most notably an extensive review of the Student Experience of Teaching (SET) instrument – and addressed several important topics related to faculty standards. This report highlights the committee’s major work on the SET review, as well as other key discussions, in a formal and concise overview for the University Senate.

Student Experience of Teaching (SET) Instrument Review and Revision

Our largest and ongoing task for this year was to review the current SET instrument, which has not been formally reevaluated since its inception over 10 years ago.

Overview: The FSC undertook a comprehensive review of the Student Experience of Teaching (SET) instrument, recognizing the need to evaluate and potentially revise this important tool for teaching evaluation. Early in Fall 2024, the committee identified that changes in teaching modalities (e.g. increased online instruction post-pandemic) and ongoing concerns about the SET’s effectiveness and fairness warranted a thorough reexamination of the instrument. A timeline and plan for the review were established in September and October 2024, outlining the scope of inquiry and data collection needed. The committee pinpointed several focus areas for investigation – **faculty perspectives, student feedback, internal historical data, and external benchmarking** – to determine whether revisions to the SET are necessary and how best to implement them.

Formation of Subcommittees and Data Collection: To manage this extensive review, the FSC formed dedicated subcommittees and initiated data-gathering efforts. In December 2024, the committee formally approved a **policy establishing a regular review cycle for the SET instrument (every five years)** and created two subcommittees to carry the review forward. The first subcommittee, led by Dr. Martina Rosenberg, focused on developing and administering a **survey to department heads and deans** to gather input on how SET results are used and to solicit suggestions for improvement. The second subcommittee, led by Prof. Betsy McCoach, concentrated on examining research on teaching evaluations. The committee also coordinated with the Office of Institutional Research (BPIR) to obtain and review relevant data from past SET administrations. These efforts ensured that the review would be informed by both local experience and broader evidence on student evaluations of teaching.

Survey of Department Chairs and Deans: In early 2025, the FSC’s survey subcommittee developed a Qualtrics survey targeting all department chairs, school/college deans, and associate deans. The survey, reviewed and refined by the full committee in February and March 2025, asked academic leaders how they currently use SET data (for merit, annual reviews, Promotion, Tenure & Reappointment (PTR) decisions, feedback to instructors, etc.), which parts of the SET instrument they find most useful, and what changes or improvements they would recommend. After consulting with the Senate Executive Committee and the Provost’s office for proper distribution, the survey was disseminated via the University Senate email account. A one-week response window was provided, and **robust participation** was achieved from units across the university. By April 2025, the FSC had collected and compiled the survey data for analysis.

Review of Survey Results and Next Steps: At the April 2025 meeting, the committee reviewed the aggregated survey results and discussed their implications for the SET instrument. The data provided valuable insights into common uses of SET scores in evaluative processes and highlighted concerns and suggestions from the perspective of department-level leadership. **Key findings** included, for example, that most chairs and deans report that they rely on the full SET results (not just overall scores) in annual faculty evaluations and PTR.

The FSC also noted issues around **open-ended student comments** (including instances of inappropriate or threatening remarks) and discussed how such feedback is managed and who has access to it. The committee considered ideas for making the SET more adaptable to different course contexts – for instance, possibly incorporating tailored questions or modules for laboratory courses, online courses, courses with teaching assistants, or experiential learning classes – while **keeping the overall length of the survey reasonable** to avoid survey fatigue.

As **next steps**, the Faculty Standards Committee charged its members to examine the current SET questionnaire in detail. Using a Qualtrics survey, committee members are identifying which questions might be removed or revised to streamline the instrument and make it as useful and relevant as possible. Over the summer and into early Fall 2025, the FSC will continue this work, using the evidence gathered (survey data, literature review findings, and internal analysis) to draft recommendations for whether and how to update / revise the SET instrument. The ultimate goal is to ensure that the SET serves both instructional improvement and personnel evaluation needs.

In the May 2025 meeting, Faculty Standards Committee passed a motion to recommend that the Senate Executive Committee charge a new Task force to recommend potential modifications to the SET. Included below is a draft to create a SET Instrument Modification Task Force.

Proposed draft of a charge for a Task Force to suggest modifications to the SET instrument:

We would like the University Senate Executive Committee to create a task for to review the current SET instrument and suggest potential modifications/revisions, keeping in mind the many different types of classes and instructional formats (e.g. - online classes, hybrid classes, service classes, Lab classes, etc.) that use the instrument. We ask that the task force include members with expertise in measurement/instrument design and education, as well as representation from CETL. The task force would report back to the Faculty Standards Committee / University Senate by the end of the 2025-2026 academic year.

Other Key Topics Addressed in 2024–2025

In addition to the SET review, the Faculty Standards Committee discussed and advanced several other important issues related to faculty standards and academic policy:

- **Community-Engaged Scholarship in PTR:** The FSC received an update from the *Community Engagement in Promotion and Tenure Task Force* on efforts to incorporate

community-engaged scholarship into the Promotion, Tenure, and Reappointment (PTR) process. The committee discussed how the criteria for faculty scholarship and creative activity might be broadened to recognize community engagement work, which often yields outcomes different from traditional research. Recommendations under consideration include developing new evaluation categories and guidelines for departments to **acknowledge societal impact and community partnership activities** in faculty reviews. The FSC expressed support for these efforts to ensure that community-engaged scholarship is valued appropriately in PTR decisions.

- **Artificial Intelligence in Educational Settings:** The committee initiated preliminary discussions on the role of **artificial intelligence (AI) tools in teaching and learning**. In October 2024, the FSC, in collaboration with the Scholastic Standards Committee, proposed forming a joint working group to explore the implications of AI (such as content generated by AI like ChatGPT) on academic integrity and pedagogy. The committee sought clarification on the charge and timeline for this initiative from the Senate Executive Committee. It was noted that current university policy on academic integrity does not explicitly mention AI, leaving it to individual instructors to define acceptable use of AI in their courses. Going forward, the FSC is open to working with relevant committees to develop guidance or policy recommendations regarding AI usage in coursework, balancing innovation with academic honesty and learning outcomes.
- **Interfolio and Teaching Portfolios:** The FSC discussed the recent implementation of the **Interfolio Faculty Activity Reporting system** (used for managing faculty dossiers, including teaching evaluations and portfolios) and its impact on the PTR process.
- **Low Enrollment Program Reviews:** In November 2024, the committee was briefed by the Vice Provost (Gladis Kersaint) on the Provost's Office initiative to review **low-enrollment academic programs**. This university-wide review had raised concerns among faculty about potential program closures or impacts on faculty positions. The Provost's representative explained that the review was motivated by data stewardship, accreditation requirements, and long-term academic planning – noting that some programs with zero or few students had remained open in name only, skewing data. The committee discussed the criteria being used (including enrollment thresholds) and emphasized the importance of transparent communication. It was **assured that the process was not intended as a precursor to faculty layoffs**, and that any decisions about program consolidation or closure would be made with input from the affected academic units and deans. The FSC will continue to monitor this issue and advocate for faculty involvement in academic program reviews.
- **Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) in SETs for General Education:** The FSC considered a **pilot proposal to include Student Learning Outcome assessment questions** in the SET instrument specifically for General Education courses. A presentation in late Fall 2024 suggested that, starting in Fall 2027, students in Gen Ed (Common Curriculum) courses could be asked to evaluate how well the course met its stated learning objectives, as part of their end-of-semester teaching evaluations. The committee learned about a teaching assessment strategy used at some international universities (e.g., a successful model from Germany) that integrates learning outcome feedback. The FSC discussed the potential benefits of gathering direct student input on learning outcomes – such as providing departments with data on general education goal attainment – while also considering

practical concerns. Members raised questions about survey fatigue and whether adding SLO questions to SET might overwhelm students or dilute the core purpose of the SET. Some ideas were floated to **decouple SLO assessment from the main SET** (for instance, using a separate instrument or sampling approach) to keep evaluations manageable. This conversation is in early stages; the FSC will continue to consult with relevant stakeholders (such as the University General Education Oversight Committee) on how best to implement SLO assessment without adversely affecting response rates or evaluation quality.

Annual PTR Forum: Due to popularity, the PTR and PR forums have been updated to annual events. The Tenure-Track Promotion, Tenure & Reappointment Forum was held on Friday, April 11th, 2025, from 9-11 am via WebEx. The AAUP leadership was invited to provide introduction and recommendations. The Clinical, In-Residence, Extension (CIRE) Promotion & Reappointment Forum was held on Friday, April 11th, 2025, from 1-2:30 pm also via WebEx. The AAUP leadership was again invited to provide introduction and recommendations. Follow-up sessions with individual schools and colleges for specific questions were also scheduled.

Conclusion

In summary, the Faculty Standards Committee had a productive 2024–2025 academic year, addressing a range of issues vital to faculty evaluation and academic standards. The **extensive review of the SET instrument** was a central focus and is ongoing, with significant progress made in gathering data and laying the groundwork for potential improvements. Additionally, the committee engaged with emerging topics and administrative initiatives – from recognizing community-engaged scholarship in faculty advancement to grappling with the impacts of AI in the classroom – ensuring that faculty perspectives are represented in university policy discussions. The FSC is committed to continuing these efforts in the coming year and will bring forward any formal recommendations or proposals to the University Senate for consideration. The committee thanks the Senate and the Provost’s Office for their support and collaboration and respectfully submits this report to the University Senate as a record of its activities and accomplishments for 2024–2025.