

**Course Learning Evaluations Committee Final Report (2023-2024)**  
**Faculty Senate**  
**University of Tennessee at Chattanooga**

*Submitted May 2024 by Ethan Mills, 2023-24 Committee Chair*

## **1: Members**

Ethan Mills, CAS (year 2) – chair  
Andrew Bailey, CHEPS (year 1)  
Meredith Barbee, CAS (year 1)  
Kristen Black, CAS (year 1)  
Mark Buzbee, CAS (year 1)  
Deborah Cantrell, CHEPS (year 1)  
Jodi Caskey, CAS (year 1)  
Parthasarati Dileepan, RCOB (year 1)  
Ron Goulet, CECS (year 1)  
Matthew Guy, CAS (year 1)  
Monica Miles, CAS (year 2)  
Josh Parks, CAS (year 1)  
Charlene Schmidt, CHEPS (year 1)  
Steven Shelton, LIB (year 1)  
Prashant Srivastava, RCOB (year 1)  
Jessica Taylor, CHEPS (year 1)  
Bethany Womack, CHEPS (year 1)  
two students: Nathaniel Kroll and Emma Davis  
Cindy Williamson (ex officio)  
Anna Liu (ex officio)

## **2: Executive Summary**

The 2023-24 Course Learning Evaluations (CLE) Committee, chaired by Ethan Mills (PHIL, CAS), met its responsibilities as outlined in the Faculty Senate Bylaws, which include “recommending policies and procedures for evaluation of faculty instruction and for using evaluation results to improve instruction.”

Main committee accomplishments for 2023-24:

- Created [a Sharepoint Folder](#) for all committee documents.
- Held four meetings (via Zoom as determined by committee vote): Sept. 29, 2023, October 18, 2023, February 16, 2024, and March 22, 2024. See minutes for each meeting below under section 3: Meeting Minutes.
- Helped implement (along with Cindy Williamson, Jennifer Boyd, and Lauren Ingraham) a fall semester trial at UTC of the University of Nebraska-Omaha Course Evaluation System from the faculty side (F-IMPACT). Results can be found in the committee [Sharepoint Folder](#). The student side (S-IMPACT) is not yet ready to be

tested, so the committee voted to forego another trial until both faculty and student sides are ready.

- Developed a proposal for Website Resources/Info for Interpreting Course Learning Evaluations in consultation with Cindy Williamson (Director of Assessment and ex officio member), Anna Liu (Walker Center and ex officio member), and Victoria Bryan (Walker Center). This site will also include a resource for faculty to show students in class (an idea from the Committee on the Status of Women in consultation with the chair of that committee, Susan Eckelmann). See the specific proposal below under section 4: Supplemental Materials.
- A Faculty Senate Resolution on this proposal was presented at the April 18, 2024 Faculty Senate Meeting. The resolution passed: 29 in favor/ 1 against / 3 abstentions.
- The committee chair will meet with Cindy Williamson, Anna Liu, and Victoria Bryan on May 15, 2024 to discuss the next steps for implementing this proposal now that it has been approved by Faculty Senate.
- Discussed and tabled for next year's committee recommendations for helping faculty to increase their CLE response rates.

### **3: Meeting Minutes**

#### **Course Learning Evaluations Committee**

**Fri. 29 Sept. 2023**

**11am**

**Zoom**

**Present:** Ethan Mills (chair),

**Minutes by:** Bethany Womack

#### **Introductions:**

Bethany, Social Work, no preference re: meeting

Dileep Dileepan, Management 37 years!, Zoom preference

Jodi Caskey, BGE, 11 years, Zoom

Debbie Cantrell, Education, 11 years, Zoom

Prashan Srivastava, Management, Zoom

Kristen Black, Psychology 7 years, no preference but Zoom on Fridays

Steven Shelton, Digital development Librarian, Zoom

Jessica Taylor, Learning and Leadership, Zoom

Josh Parks, English, Zoom

Emma Davis, student Junior Bio and Psych

Matthew Guy, English, no preference but lean toward Zoom

Cindy Williamson, Director of Accreditation, ex officio, no preference

Nathaniel Kroll, student, no preference

Ethan Mills, Philosophy 9 years – Chair

Anna Liu, Walker Center for Teaching and Learning, no preference

**What does this committee do?** make recommendations to campus about what is in the best interest of UTC v. course evaluations. Last year's committee did a department head survey so we have some information from that available.

## **2. Information about the U. of Nebraska-Omaha CLE system: Should UTC be involved?**

High IMPACT Teaching at UNO: Lauren Ingraham and Chancellor went to a conference and heard from UNO on their pilot program to study use of high impact practices. Pilot and style of measurement designed to minimize impact of implicit bias in evaluations.

On the UNO Trail website, there is a survey we can take that inventories high-impact practices, and then the evaluation component is about what you actually do in class (activities). Ethan's take – has you conceptualize what you plan to do in the course and then what is implemented. Student evaluations are based off of a list of what faculty said they would do and then whether or not they recognized faculty doing them. UNOs work geared toward STEM and social sciences, and gen ed course levels, but at UTC we might expand that to all faculty.

Our participation would be as part of the study, so only our STEM and social science info would be sent to UNO as data for their study.

Questions: have any of the faculty at UTC who have tried it out shared what they learned from it? How do we use it to change teaching practice?

No one has used the S-Impact (student feedback) side yet, only the faculty one, so we really don't know about that yet.

\*If we tried it out with students, they would have to do two for awhile since we couldn't let go of the others.

We could add things that are not on the list if we wanted to, just not for the part that goes to UNO.

Does this system evaluate the quality of education? This is a “did you do these things” more than a “did you do these well” – an option might be to use more peer evaluations to gather quality information (this is a down the line prospect).

The earliest we could implement would be 2 or 3 years down the line, because of the study requirements etc. This committee needs to decide if we want to recommend a voluntary trial of this, and to what courses/faculty groups.

Each course, rather than each faculty member, would have its own survey

Student participation – maybe we would have to do this in class/Canvas or task in MyMocsNet

Score incentivizes variety and to do more – is that what makes teaching more effective? Or doing one or two really well? One thing to think about in implementing/assessment

Rubric for UNOs program looks a lot like QM rubric – they are not officially related

Link for website to learn more and take the F-Impact is: <https://www.unomaha.edu/academic-affairs/stem-trail-center/research/impact.php>

EDOs – participating in the UNO trial could be something (but not required) to include on EDOs.

Group voted 9-1 to spend a week or so thinking about whether to recommend a trial run, so Ethan will send out a survey next week. One more meeting to consider what we are recommending (who participates, how to seek feedback, etc)

**3. Other possible tasks:** We can brainstorm as a committee, but one I will suggest is whether we might recommend campus-wide criteria and/or training for RPT committees, department heads, deans, etc. on how to use CLEs effectively in evaluating faculty

RPT Committees may be the first time you see a course evaluation on another faculty member, and there can be diverse views on how to use them in RPT work. There is support from this from another member related to their early experience on an RPT too.

**4. Other business?**

Find out about how faculty can give feedback on the F-Impact process before we vote to implement a trial

**5. Adjourn within one hour** – at 11:55 – Well done!

**Course Learning Evaluations Committee**

**Wednesday, October 18, 2023**

**12:00 p.m.**

**Zoom**

Minutes by Josh Parks

**Present**

Ethan Mills (chair)

Bethany Womack

Cindy Williamson

Meredith Barbee

Jodi Caskey

Prashan Srivastava

Matt Guy

Josh Parks

Debbie Cantrell

Steven Shelton

Andrew Bailey

**Introductions**

**Recommendation to Participate in the University of Nebraska Omaha CLE Study**

Ethan Mills revisited the goals of the study discussed in the previous committee meeting (e.g., defined high impact practices, how faculty identify their goals, how students evaluate

those goals) and how the goal is to minimize subjectivity and bias in student course evaluations.

Ethan discussed a vote prior to this meeting in which 7/10 voted yes to recommend participation in the UNO study. Ethan noted that participation would be limited to only the F-IMPACT portion of the UNO study. This means that faculty would only select their high impact practices, and that students would not take part in the process. Participation would be optional for faculty. The data from UTC participants would be sent to UNO to help with their study.

### **Limiting Participation to Only Stem Courses**

Ethan said that he would like to take part in the study and noted that other humanities faculty might be interested as well. He also noted that faculty could take part for only a course or two, and that participation would not be required for all classes taught.

Bethany Womack asked if opening participation to non-STEM courses would create complications for UNO's study.

Cindy Williamson noted that UNO would effectively handle the data, and that there should be no additional work for faculty/staff other than their participation.

Meredith Barbee suggested opening participation to all faculty could encourage the most participation.

Ethan noted that asking faculty take on additional work can be challenging and said the committee can discuss ways to encourage participation in future meetings.

Jodi Caskey said UNO might not want participation from non-STEM courses.

Cindy said we'd probably go with UNO's preference but noted that there should be a way to parse the data. Ethan said UNO seemed fine with participation from any courses.

Prashan Srivastava suggested opening participation to all courses.

### **Votes on Specifics of Recommendations**

Ethan put the following questions up for a committee vote.

Should UTC limit the trial to STEM faculty only?

9 voted no, 1 voted yes.

Should UTC limit to Gen Ed courses?

11 voted no, 0 voted yes.

### **Presenting Recommendation to Faculty Senate**

Ethan said he cannot attend the Faculty Senate meeting on 10/19/23, but that Faculty Senate President Donald Reising would like someone to present the committee's recommendation.

Jodi Caskey volunteered to present to Faculty Senate and asked Ethan to write a brief statement.

### **Future Business**

Ethan said he would like the committee to discuss the use of CLEs for RPT decisions, noting that he has served on RPT committees and feels the need for guidance regarding the use of RPT decisions.

Meeting adjourned at 12:28.

### **Course Learning Evaluations Committee**

**Fri. Feb. 16, 2024**

**1pm**

**Zoom:**

<https://tennessee.zoom.us/j/83792083906>

**Present:** Ethan Mills (chair), Parthasarati Dileepan, Jennifer Lynberg, Andrew Baiely, Jodi Caskey, Monica Miles, Jessica Taylor, Matthew Guy, Bethany Womack, Cindy Williamson, Meredith Barbee, Anna Liu, Prashant Srivastava (came halfway through)

**Minutes by:** Meredith Barbee

1. Volunteer to take minutes, introductions, and housekeeping
  - Meredith volunteered, everyone introduced themselves
  
2. Should we ask the Nebraska people if we can do another trial this semester? Did we get enough responses to be useful in their study? Did it benefit us?
  - Asked Cindy if it was possible to do another trial, she thinks yes. Last years' data was sent in January. We haven't received any context or comparison from UNO to make the data meaningful
  - Only 3 responses were from faculty in a STEM field, so maybe repeating would give us the opportunity to get more responses.
  - Bethany suggests that current limited responses make this data less useful, so maybe if we do this again, we might get more responses.
  - Ethan mentions that the survey was sent late in the semester and only 1 email was sent, so maybe that could be improved.
  - Ethan met with the committee for status of women-Susan Eckelmann, and they supported the idea that we participate
  - Jodi suggests that there might be a lack of interest by the faculty. Jessica says that there are lots of steps and that student feedback isn't part of the process, and that is also probably limiting the usefulness of the study. Bethany suggests that there needs to be a

clear connection to what faculty are trying to achieve in the classroom. Ethan suggests including motivation in the survey requests.

- Cindy doesn't have any updates on when the student side of the survey will be available.
- Ethan proposes to determine whether we can include the student side of the survey. We should take that into consideration before deciding whether to participate again. No one objects to this plan. We will have another meeting sometime in March/April to discuss.

3. Should we suggest that the administration provide more training for RPT chairs about how to use course evaluations in their evaluation of faculty?

- Ethan mentions that he wasn't trained or taught how course evaluations should be used before he joined the RTP committee after getting tenure. They are used to determine reappointment, but have downsides as a method for evaluating teaching.
- Ethan proposes having the Walker center help us develop this. Matt agrees with this idea. Bethany and Jodi also support. Bethany says providing "information about how the biases we are concerned about show up, and what kind of responses to student feedback are associated with ongoing successful teaching" would be helpful.
- Anna explains the role of the Walker center in canvas and course development. The Walker center sometimes helps faculty make changes in their courses based on student feedback. Donald Behneman oversees training faculty on course evaluations upon request of the faculty. ([donald-behneman@utc.edu](mailto:donald-behneman@utc.edu) Department: Information Technologies).
- Jessica asks for clarification about whether Donald does CLEs or digital measures? Cindy says that Donald only does digital measures, but that CLEs are a major part of digital measures.
- Jennifer mentions that as a new faculty, she didn't realize how CLEs would be used or how to prep students to take the survey. Ethan mentions that sending some communication to all the faculty might be helpful.

4. Response rates are often quite low for our current evaluations. Is this a serious campus-wide problem? Should we as a committee do something to address this issue?

- This is a problem across campus, and can be an issue for RTP committees. Even if responses are low, you can still request them as the instructor. The department head and other administrators can't get them. Cindy says you just need to email her.
- Jennifer asks if they can be used in the RTP and EDO process if the faculty requests them from Cindy, and Cindy says they can.

- Prashant says some schools will not allow students to get final grades without completing evaluation
  - Is it a good idea to bribe students to fill out evaluations? Cindy says yes, we don't know how much data there is on whether this influences anything other than response rate.
  - Jodi wants it to be required. She thinks that this would influence the type of response.
  - Andrew suggests that we go back to paper, but Cindy says that's impractical. Meredith suggests giving time in class on the online eval as a requirement for faculty. Jennifer suggests dropping an assignment instead.
  - Bethany asks if we could extend the due date to after exams, but Cindy says there are lots of reasons why we shouldn't do that.
  - Discussion of ways we could improve student motivation
  - Challenge: there are multiple ways these CLEs are being used: evaluation of faculty teaching by RTP, by the faculty to improve their class, by the students (star scale).
  - Interest in having a specific proposal to increase response rate? Ethan will put together some possibilities.
5. Other possible tasks?
  6. Adjourn within one hour, and then wherever life takes you...

### **Course Learning Evaluations Committee**

**Fri. March 22, 2024**

**1pm**

**Zoom:**

<https://tennessee.zoom.us/j/83792083906>

**Present:** Ethan Mills (chair), Jessica Taylor, Cindy Williamson, Bethany Womack, Anna Liu, Kristen Jennings Black, Matthew Guy, Meredith Barbee, Monica Miles, Debbie Troutman-Cantrell, Jodi Caskey, Joshua Parks, Dileep Parthasarati

**Minutes by:** Jessica Taylor

1. Volunteer to take minutes, introductions, and housekeeping
2. The U. of Omaha-Nebraska people are not ready for the S-IMPACT (student side) trial this semester. At the previous meeting (2/16/24), most of us agreed that it's not worth it to do another trial until the student side is ready. What do you think? Should we keep it in mind for the fall semester?

- a. Since there is no timeline for the student side of the process, there is little need for us to continue to do the faculty side of the evaluation process.
  - b. We have not heard anything about the grant submitted for the S-IMPACT portion.
  - c. Vote to put off – unanimous approval to delay until next year.
3. Ethan and Cindy met with Anna and Victoria in the Walker Center. They had a lot of great ideas for a training about how to use CLEs. They suggested a site with resources for all faculty, not just RPT committees. The proposal is in [the committee Sharepoint folder](#). Let's discuss the proposal: Do we have any feedback? Are we ready to make a specific recommendation to faculty senate? Let's vote.
- a. Training available and developed – some available on the Assessment/Course evaluation webpage
  - b. Video tutorials for understanding the evaluations
  - c. Hope to submit an agenda item for Faculty Senate to move forward training resources from Walker Center
  - d. Potential to show something in class for students to help them understand what evaluations are for and how they are used (both for course improvement and tenure and promotion)?
  - e. **Create a dedicated webpage specifically for this content – PowerPoint presentations pre-designed to take to classes, video tutorials for faculty and RTP committees, and additional resources – Proposal**
    - i. **Vote – unanimously approved**
4. Should we also continue thinking about response rates? Could this be folded into the training? Something for next year's committee?
- a. Tabled until 2024-2025
5. Other business?
- a. Course Evaluations open April 2<sup>nd</sup>.
6. Adjourn within one hour, and then wherever your Friday takes you...

## **4: Supplemental Materials**

Information about the University of Nebraska-Omaha High Impact Teaching Evaluations can be found [here](#).

Below is the specific proposal that passed (29-1-3) at the Faculty Senate Meeting on April 18, 2024:

## Proposed Website Resources/Info for Interpreting Course Learning Evaluations

The Office of Accreditation and Assessment page on Course Learning Evaluations (<https://www.utc.edu/oaa/cle>) currently includes two buttons at the top of the page:

- Access CLE Results: Faculty Instructions
- Access CLE Results: Student Instructions

Perhaps a button could be added called “Interpreting CLE Results”

This button might link to a page with three main sections of information:

What am I looking at?

- Brief written overview of survey results
- 2-3 minute video tutorial about what is there

How do I use this information?

- Brief written overview of how to use survey results
- 2-3 minute video tutorial about how to interpret results
- Brief information about bias in survey results, including links and resources (see below)

What do I do now?

- Do you see useful recommendations?
- Do these provide useful insight into student needs/perspective?
- Are there comments that seem like outliers of which you may be wary or skeptical? (check with Cindy Williamson on wording here)

Notes for Implementing this Information:

- The Walker Center (specifically our Virtual Media Specialist, Nick Fontaine) can work with the Office of Accreditation and Assessment to create the two video tutorials listed above.
- The Walker Center will link to this information on our page for course evaluations, etc.
- The Course Learning Evaluations Committee would like to work with the Committee on the Status of Women to develop a PowerPoint or some similar resource that faculty can use in the classroom to show to their students before asking them to complete CLEs. This might include information for students about what CLEs are, how UTC uses them, what kind of feedback is constructive, etc.

Useful Links and Resources:

- St. Olaf College’s CTL, “Biases in Course Evaluations”: <https://wp.stolaf.edu/ica/bias-in-course-evaluations/>
- University of Georgia’s CTL, “Interpreting and Responding to Student Evaluations of Teaching”: <https://ctl.uga.edu/resources/documents/interpreting-and-responding-to-student-evaluations-of-teaching.pdf>

