**MEMORANDUM** 

**TO:**CFA

**FROM:**Steering Committee

**RE:**Use of student feedback forms in special circumstances

**DATE:**March 2, 2013

**Background:**

Because of issues that have arisen in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), the Dean of HSS sent a memo to the Steering Committee in January 2013 with a request that the use of student feedback forms in certain special circumstances be reconsidered.

**Charge:**

The Steering Committee requests that CFA make a recommendation on whether or not

a) it is appropriate to require instructors to ask students to complete student feedback forms in classes under a certain enrollment (e.g., classes with 2 students or 4 students) in order to help guarantee anonymity and

b) it is appropriate to require instructors to ask students to complete these forms in non-traditional classes, such as internship courses, since the course does not have traditional class meetings and students work independently with the instructor spending the lion’s share of their “class time” on site in different internship locations (making the vast majority of the questions on the feedback form irrelevant or not applicable).

If CFA opts to change current policy, then it should clarify the nature of the courses that are to be exempt from the typical evaluation policy.

**TCNJ Governance Processes**

**Step #1 -- Identifying and reporting the problem:**When a Standing Committee receives an issue from the Steering Committee, the first responsibility is to clearly articulate and report the problem to the campus community through regular updates to the campus community and the Governance Web Page ([www.tcnj.edu/~steering](http://www.tcnj.edu/~steering) ).  The problem may have been set out clearly in the charge received from the Steering Committee, or it may be necessary for the Standing Committee to frame a problem statement.  The problem statement should indicate the difficulties or uncertainties that need to be addressed through new or revised policy, procedure, or program.  The problem statement should be broadly stated and should include a context such as existing policy or practice.  Problem statements may include solution parameters but should not suggest any actual solutions.  Clearly stated problems will lead to better recommendations.

**Step #2 -- Preparing a preliminary recommendation:**Once the campus community has received the problem statement, committees can begin to collect data needed to make a recommendation.  Committees typically receive input through committee membership, formal testimony, and open comment from affected individuals and all stakeholder groups.  Committees must be proactive in inviting stakeholder groups (including Student Government Association, Staff Senate and Faculty Senate) to provide formal testimony prior to developing a preliminary recommendation.  When, in the best judgment of the committee, adequate clarity of the principles contributing to the problem are known, a preliminary recommendation should be drafted and disseminated to the campus community through regular updates and the Governance Web Page.

**Step #3 -- Making a final recommendation:**Committees must use sound judgment to give the campus adequate time to review the preliminary recommendation before making their final recommendation.  Again, committees are expected to be proactive in receiving feedback on the preliminary recommendation.  If a full calendar year has passed since the formal announcement of the preliminary recommendation, the committee must resubmit a preliminary recommendation to the campus community.  When, in the best judgment of the committee, the campus community has responded to the proposed resolution of the issue, the committee shall send their final recommendation (complete documentation) to the Steering Committee.

**Testimony**

The presenting of testimony is central to the concept of shared governance.  All stakeholder groups will have an opportunity to provide input into governance issues through direct membership as well as invited testimony.  Individuals appointed or elected to the governance system are expected to take a broad institutional perspective relative to issues being considered.  In contrast, invited testimony will reflect the stakeholder perspective on the issue being considered.  Committees are expected to be proactive in inviting stakeholder groups to provide testimony at both step # 2 and #3 of the process.  Committees need to identify stakeholder groups that are interested in each particular issue and invite their testimony at scheduled Committee meetings or hearings.  Committees should report in their minutes which groups were targeted as stakeholders, how testimony was invited, the form of the testimony (written, oral, etc.), and the substantive content of the testimony.

To see the Steering Committee’s guidelines for gathering testimony, go to <http://www.tcnj.edu/~steering/Guidelines_for_Gathering_Testimony.docx>.