**The development of the proposed peer observation form**

Department chairs have long complained about the college’s Peer Observation Form, finding that it was ineffective for its two purposes: evaluating teaching for personnel actions and providing constructive feedback to the person being observed. The items not only reflected outmoded views of teaching, but more problematically, there was no clear delineation of what was meant by the evaluative terms. The Department Chairs asked for a new form that would be easier to use, provide more direction and consistency, and require more detailed rationales for the ratings.

In the Fall of 2012, faculty were asked to respond to a survey in preparation for the Middle States Periodic Review Report submitted June 1, 2013. Response to items developed by the Personnel Committee concerning the peer observation form indicated a view to modify the form. The current form referred to in the survey is the form dated 1996.

Rather than start from scratch, the Personnel Committee gathered several forms which were reviewed at the regular professional development session held for departmental appointments committees in January 2013. The appointments committee members indicated a preference for a form that had been adopted at Kingsborough Community College. Thereafter, this form was revised over several iterations and presented to the department chairs. A sub-committee of the P&B was formed to address this matter[[1]](#footnote-1), working in consultation with the Personnel Committee Co-Chairs.

In addition to the P&B sub-committee, the full body of department chairs continued to revise the form. At the Chairs’ Colloquium meetings of March 7, 21, and April 11 of 2013, the chairs discussed drafts at length and made recommendations. At first, it was thought that different forms would be needed for lecture/discussion classes, for labs, and for clinical courses, but when those were drafted, the chairs felt that they could easily be combined into one document, with items pertinent only to labs or clinicals set off in some way. In this way, comparability could be achieved across different instructional modalities.

At each discussion, the department chairs were asked to share drafts with their faculty and bring back comments. The Personnel Committee and sub-committee members continued to make revisions until the chairs were satisfied. On April 25, they reviewed the final draft, which was presented by the Personnel Committee at an open meeting on April 30. In May, the P&B voted to adopt the new form and implement it for Fall 2013.

During the development process, inquiries were made to Council and to ISR directors Tulier, Harris, and Carroll about the history of the existing form, to see how it had come about. All thought that the P&B had developed the form. Nobody had a recollection of governance having voted on the form, and it appeared that P&B approval would be sufficient since the P&B is charged with carrying out the evaluation and recommendation of candidates for personnel actions to the president. Council leaders eventually found a record that the previous form had in fact been voted on and approved by college governance, and so Council took on the task of further reviewing the form.

1. Profs. Africk, Dillon, Lespinasse, Santore, Sena, D. Smith; Provost August and Mr. Tulier, ex officio, and J. Jordan, scribe. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)