Summary of Academic Senate Survey #1

Use of Journal Lists as Quality Indicators and for Evaluation of Faculty Performance
Why this topic?

• Directive by Regents to develop criteria (quality indicators) for program assessment (e.g., see Academic Senate Minutes, Nov. 7, 2001.)

• Concern (at the time these were developed) that these indicators might by applied to individual performance in ways that could affect academic freedom and constrain creativity and interdisciplinary collaboration.

• Concern expressed recently to the Academic Senate through a discussion with a local AAUP committee member, Ron Lee (Exec. minutes of 8/24/05) that some units might be using journal lists for individual evaluation in a manner that impacts academic freedom.
Related issues

• Degree of faculty influence in development of lists (even if used for program as opposed to individual evaluation).

• Degree of “fit” of journal lists to the range of scholarly activities of faculty within units. Are they still being used for assessment? Do they need updating, etc.? 
Thus our survey has two “themes”

• Extent of use of journal/publication lists in individual faculty evaluation, and whether such lists are seen as controlling research or collaboration decisions by faculty.

• Degree of knowledge about list usage among faculty, degree to which faculty felt they had influence on their development, and degree to which these lists reflected faculty interests and activities.
Our item choice and design

- Included two demographic items – (unit/college, tenure status) -- these were the first two items on the survey and were in radio button choice format.
- Included three items related to use of journal lists for individual evaluation and whether such lists constrained decisions about scholarly research (theme 1).
- Included three items about faculty knowledge about list existence, development process, and “fit” the range of faculty scholarship (theme 2).
- Included an opportunity to submit individual comments in a text box.
Theme #1 (question 3)

• Have you ever had a performance evaluation at UNL (annual, or related to promotion and/or tenure) for which your publication in, or failure to publish in, journals or titles belonging to a specific list provided to you was used as a criterion for your individual performance assessment? (Use a 7 point scale, where 1=very certain it has NOT happened to me to 7=very certain that it HAS happened to me.)
Theme 1 – Question 4

- Do you have knowledge of instances in which other faculty members in your department or unit have been given performance evaluations for which publication in, or failure to publish in journals or titles belonging to a specific list was used to evaluate individual faculty performance? (Use a 7 point scale where 1=very certain it has NOT happened to other faculty to 7=very certain it HAS happened to other faculty.)
Theme 1 – Question 8

• To what extent has the perceived use of a designated title list used for assessment or evaluation affected any individual decisions you have made about your research or scholarly activities here at UNL? (e.g., decisions not to pursue topics of personal interest, to avoid engaging in interdisciplinary research, or to refrain from publishing in journal titles outside the "list".) Use a 7 point scale, where 1=Never and 7=Frequently.
Theme 2 – Question 5

• Does your college use publication rates on a specific list of journals or titles as one of several "quality indicators" for overall assessment of your department or unit? (Use a 7 point scale where 1=very certain that my college does NOT use such a list and 7=very certain that my college USES such a list.)

This is a filter for next two items – which were not presented if a participant entered “4” or less.
Theme 2 – Question 6

• Which of the following statements most accurately describes the influence that faculty in your department had on the selection of the specific journals or titles on the publication list used as "quality indicators" for the overall assessment of your department or unit? (Use a 7 point scale, where 1=Not at all influential, and 7=Extremely influential.) If you have insufficient knowledge to answer this question, skip to question 7 by clicking on submit.
Theme 2 – Question 7

• Based on your knowledge of the titles included on the list used as "quality indicators" for your department or unit, to what extent do you believe it reflects the range of research or scholarly interests and activities of the faculty in your department or unit? (Use a 7 point scale, where 1=Extremely poor fit and 7=Extremely good fit.) If you have insufficient knowledge to answer this question skip to question 8 by clicking on submit.
Overall Response Rate

• 491 fully completed questionnaires.
  – 147 for CASNR/IANR
  – 160 from A&S
  – 26 from CBA
  – 54 from Education & Human Sciences
  – 38 from Engineering and Technology
  – 20 from Fine & Performing Arts
  – 25 from Libraries
  – 1 from Law, 6 from Journalism, and 10 from Architecture (combined into a LJA unit n=17)
  – 4 were “others” not easily classifiable (athletics, museum, etc.) -- these not included in the unit breakdowns.
Tenure Status

• 81 non-tenure track.
• 75 non-tenured (but on tenure track).
• 110 tenured, but not fully promoted.
• 225 fully promoted.

Weighted toward senior personnel…
Survey Results:

• Aggregate presentation of responses to Theme 1 (use of journal/publications lists for individual evaluation) items.

• Breakdown of Theme 1 items by unit.

• Aggregate presentation of responses to Theme 2 (faculty influence and list “fit”) items.

• Selective examination of theme 2 items by unit where appropriate or meaningful.

• Overview of open ended comments.
List Use for Individual evaluation: All Responses

Mean Rating is 2.59

1=Certain it has never happened; 7=Certain it has happened.

Modal response is Never (52%); 13% indicate certainty it happened.
List Use for Evaluation of Others

Slightly more respondents certain it happened to others (than themselves (15.3% vs. 13.0%), modal response is still certain that it has not happened (27.7%).

Mean = 3.33
Influence of List on Research/Collaboration

1=Never; 7=Frequently

“Never” is clearly the modal response (43.9%).

Mean=2.63
Inspection of the overall pattern of responses to Theme 1 items suggests:

• No widespread use of “lists” for individual performance evaluation (majority of respondents certain it never happened to them).

• But, about 13% are certain it did happen to them.

• No overall evidence for substantial influence of quality indicators on research/collaboration decisions.
How do these issues break down by unit?

• Since the three items are on a 7-point scale, one simple way of examining differences between units is to plot these means by unit.

• Treating these rating scores as a numeric value allows relatively straightforward statistical comparisons to evaluate differences between groups.
Use of lists for individual evaluation and effect on research decisions, by unit:

Journal "List" Use and Influence

Mean Rating

INDEVL | OTHEVL | RESDEC
---|---|---
Cs/IANR | AS | CBA | EHS | ENG | FPA | LIB | LJA

Graph showing mean ratings for different units.
The difference between CBA and every other group are statistically significant.

- The upper bounds for the 95% confidence intervals for all of the units except CBA are lower than the lower bounds for the 95% confidence intervals for CBA on all three items.
- Analysis of Variance shows that the groups differ significantly on all three measures ($p.< .0001$) in each case, but if CBA is removed, the remaining groups are not statistically different.
Response distributions for Item #3 – use of list for individual evaluations – by unit.

1=certain is has NOT happened; 7= certain it HAS happened
Item 3 continued…

LJA was not displayed, but 88.2% rated a “1”, and one respondent each provided a “6”, and one gave a “7” (5.9% each).

Distribution of responses for item #4 (others’ evaluations) was nearly identical.
Item #8 – Influence on Research/Collaboration Decisions

Note: 1=never; 7=frequently
Item #8 Continued
Item 5 (Theme 2) – Does your unit use a list for assessment?

This is a filter item -- therefore many fewer responses were given for items 6 & 7
Faculty Influence on List Development – Item 6

Note - table on left lists total number of responses, from each unit, number who responded to this item, and percentage of respondents who answered this item. All quite low with exception of CBA.
Proportion of responses indicating low levels of faculty influence on list development

- Table shows number and percentage of respondents in CASNR A&S and CBA who rated Faculty Influence on list development 3 or less.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty Influence (FI)</th>
<th>CASNR</th>
<th>A&amp;S</th>
<th>CBA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FI&lt;4</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBA</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List “Fit” – Item 7

Mean = 4.05

1=extremely poor fit; 7=extremely good fit.

Table on left indicates number and percentages of respondents in each unit who responded to this item.
Proportion of responses of 3 or less to item 7, list “fit.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit&lt;4</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSIANR</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBA</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that more than 1/3 of respondents in these units rated the fit of the journal list as more of a “misfit” than a fit.
Conclusions from Item Responses

• Use of journal lists for individual evaluation is not widespread within the university as a whole, and does not appear to play a major role in controlling decisions about research or collaborations.
• However, both these issues may be locally present in at least one unit.
• There are mixed views about degree of faculty influence in list development.
• There is some dissatisfaction about the “fit” of existing lists among respondents who indicated awareness of list usage.
Overview of Comments

- 156 respondents submitted open-ended verbal commentary -- but several made more than one “comment.” (166 comments were sorted.)
- For summary purposes, these comments were sorted into theme categories: How lists formed (5), How lists used (42), Supportive of lists for evaluation (19), Critical of lists for evaluation (52), Attitudes toward the survey (18), and stray-miscellaneous comments (30). All but miscellaneous were subdivided as shown on following slides:
Comments of How Lists Formed (5 total)

• Evaluation criteria should be developed by faculty, not administratively imposed or controlled (3).

• Quality indicators should reflect national, not local standards (2).
Comments on How Lists Used
(42 total)

• Unit does use list (5).
• Unit does not use list (12)
• Uncertain about lists use (7).
• Miscellaneous descriptions (18).
Comments Supportive of Using Lists for Evaluation (19 total).

- 10 generally supportive.
- 9 supportive with reservations.
Critical of List Use for Evaluation (52 total)

• Lists too constrained (not matched to disciplinary interests, too short, etc.) – 13
• Discourage certain types of research (e.g. interdisciplinary, emerging) – 18
• Have had severe effects on morale (e.g. caused loss of quality faculty, used for punitive purposes) – 3
• Other or nonspecific critical comments – 18
Comments of Survey Itself (18 total)

- Critical of design or format – 8
- Critical of Senate for performing this survey – 3
- Appreciative of survey – 7