



One Silber Way  
Boston, Massachusetts 02215  
T 617-353-2230 F 617-353-6580  
www.bu.edu/provost

**TO:** Boston University Faculty and Staff

**FROM:** Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer *jm*

Beth Loizeaux, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs *BL*

Daniel Kleinman, Associate Provost for Graduate Affairs *DK*

**DATE:** February 7, 2019

**SUBJECT:** Report and Findings of the Task Force on Evaluating Teaching

In May 2017, we [announced](#) the formation of a task force of dedicated faculty and staff leaders, charged with examining the University's approach to student course evaluations and considering their place in the overall assessment of both undergraduate and graduate teaching. Chaired by Assistant Provost for Academic Assessment Gillian Pierce, the Task Force on Evaluating Teaching was asked specifically to look at BU's existing practices – particularly in the context of current national conversations and widely used practices at peer institutions – with the objective of designing a system for teaching evaluation that provides a comprehensive, fair, and accurate picture and useful information to improve teaching. In response to concerns from faculty nationally about bias in student course evaluations, the Task Force designed a new student feedback survey and explored systematic ways to include feedback about teaching from multiple sources in the overall evaluation of teaching at Boston University. The Task Force has submitted its findings and recommendations to us, and we are pleased to share its [report](#) with you.

Excellent teaching is at the heart of our mission and success as an institution. As a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU), BU is committed to providing the highest quality academic environment for both faculty and students. A responsible system of holistic teaching evaluation allows faculty at all career stages to receive ongoing, timely feedback that, combined with support and mentorship, assist them in growing into even stronger teachers. Evaluations are also a vital component of the evidence considered in the promotions, tenure, and contract renewal processes.

The work undertaken by the Task Force over the last 18 months was extensive, consultative, and exceptionally thoughtful. The recommendations of the Task Force, we believe, lay the groundwork for a system of ongoing, collaborative, and transparent feedback about teaching

quality that will ultimately contribute to improved teaching across the University. Those recommendations include:

1. Adopting a brief University-wide online student feedback survey with both standard and customizable questions;
2. Adopting standard guidelines for administering online course feedback forms designed to ensure maximum response rates;
3. Requiring multiple measures, including peer evaluation and teaching portfolios, when considering personnel decisions;
4. Making midterm course feedback surveys available to all faculty in all courses;
5. Disclosing the results of end-of-semester feedback surveys to the student body, while providing faculty and staff a process for redacting comments that include inappropriate language or content; and
6. Continuing to keep pace with initiatives at peer institutions to better evaluate teaching and emphasize its value in faculty reward systems.

Again, we invite you to read the Task Force's full report, which has been posted on its [website](#), and to provide [feedback](#) of your own on its findings and recommendations.

We want to extend our gratitude to the members of the Task Force for their outstanding work and for the many hours they devoted to carrying out their important charge. We likewise want to thank you for your participation and input throughout the process and for your ongoing commitment to advancing excellence in teaching at Boston University.

### **Task Force on Evaluating Teaching**

#### **Chair:**

**Gillian Pierce**, Assistant Provost for Academic Assessment, Office of the Provost

#### **Members:**

**Suzanne Chapin**, Professor of Mathematics Education, School of Education

**Terry Everson**, Associate Professor of Music, College of Fine Arts

**Ray Fisman**, Slater Family Professor in Behavioral Economics, College of Arts & Sciences

**Christopher Gill**, Associate Professor of Global Health, School of Public Health

**Daryl Healea**, Assistant Dean for Curriculum & Enrollment Services, College of Arts & Sciences

**Roland Jaeckel**, Director, Educational Technology, Office of Digital Learning & Innovation

**Deborah Jaramillo**, Associate Professor of Film & Television Studies, College of Communication

**Rebecca Kinraide**, Master Lecturer, Arts & Sciences Writing Program, College of Arts & Sciences

**Chris Paal**, Assistant Vice President and University Registrar

**Michael Smith**, Associate Professor of Biomedical Engineering and Materials Science & Engineering, College of Engineering

**Matthew Trevett-Smith**, Director, Center for Teaching & Learning