

## A COMMENT ON AAUP'S "STATEMENT ON TEACHING EVALUATION"

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) is a national organization devoted to ensuring that college and university faculty enjoy the rights and protections that allow them to pursue their academic endeavors at institutions of higher education within the safeguards provided by academic freedom and due process. As part of its mission, in 1990 AAUP adopted its current "Statement on Teaching Evaluation" (hereafter, Statement) which was designed to provide general guidelines for institutions when they use teaching evaluation data as part of the process of making personnel decisions on members of the faculty. As a company dedicated to providing quality instruments devoted to the student evaluation of instruction, College Survey Services (CSS) is fully aware of, and agrees strongly with, the guidelines expressed by AAUP in its Statement. One section excerpted from the Statement is particularly noteworthy in that it highlights some best practices in the teaching evaluation area, and this section is shown just below (bold added):

*"Student perceptions.* Student perceptions are a prime source of information from those who must be affected if learning is to take place. Student responses can provide continuing insights into a number of the important dimensions of a teacher's efforts: classroom performance, advising, and informal and formal contacts with students outside of class. A variety of ways are available to gather student opinion, ranging from informal questioning of individual students about details of a specific course to campus-wide questionnaires.

Faculty members should be meaningfully involved in any systematic efforts to obtain student opinion. Cooperation among students, faculty, and administration is necessary to secure teaching performance data that can be relied upon. No one questionnaire or method is suitable to every department or institution. Different kinds of questionnaires can be useful in assessing different kinds of courses and subject matters and in meeting the need for information of a particular kind. **However, a common instrument covering a range of teachers, departments, and subject matter areas has the great advantage of affording meaningful comparative data. The important consideration is to obtain reliable data over a range of teaching assignments and over a period of time.** Evaluations in which results go only to the individual professor may be of use in improving an individual teacher's performance, but they contribute little to the process of faculty review. . . . ."

CSS strongly encourages institutions to consider very seriously the points made in the sentences in bold. First, it is clear that utilizing a common instrument facilitates the comparison of evaluation data within a given institution. Second, CSS's reporting tools have been designed to be very user-friendly so that evaluation results can be viewed over any number of semesters, thereby facilitating the detection and interpretation of teaching effectiveness trends over time. In general, CSS takes very seriously the guidelines expressed by AAUP in its Statement and has endeavored to develop instruments, reporting tools, and procedures that adhere to the values which underlie these guidelines. In so doing, we at CSS believe that we can assist any institution establish and maintain a fair, comprehensive, and meaningful process for the evaluation of its instructional program.

