

MEMORANDUM

TO: Peg Sutton, Chair of Policy Council
FROM: Ginette Delandshere
DATE: February 8, 2004
SUBJECT: Electronic Faculty Annual Report

Following last month's e-mail exchange concerning the new electronic faculty annual report I received unsolicited feedback from about 25 individual faculty members sharing similar concerns. Phil Carspecken also received a number of unsolicited responses from colleagues. As a result both Phil and I would like to bring the issue to the attention of Policy Council for deliberation. Several concerns were expressed:

- 1) Security issues
- 2) Extreme standardization of the annual report and creation of new categories of performance (e.g., national and international service)
- 3) Logistical and technical issues – it seems that the time that the administration saves on compiling reports is now passed on to the individual faculty given that it takes much longer to complete the electronic version of the report than did the paper form.
- 4) Creation of a data base for which the purposes, uses and access have not been defined. Such data might be useful for self-assessment and critique but knowledge management also has many unresolved legal and ethical issues. The existence of databases in public institutions can be considered public property. For what purposes will these data be used? How will they be used (e.g., quantification of individuals' performance)? Who will have access to the data and what will be the oversight process of their use? At a time when Russ Whitehurst, head of the Institute of Education Sciences (former OERI), publicly declares that faculty who do not share the "worldview" of the meaning of research should be isolated or moved, one cannot be too cautious.

The assurance by the administration that this database will not be misused does not appear to be a sufficient safeguard. The creation of such electronic systems has been vetoed in some institutions around the country. Faculty oversight and involvement in defining policy appear critical in this matter. The main point here is that we ought to weigh all pros and cons carefully and make this a faculty decision. It should not be a purely administrative directive to the faculty because the issues are too large and the possible consequences too great. I, therefore, urge Policy Council to organize a forum for wide faculty participation and safe deliberation on these issues, and to ensure the formulation of policy and faculty oversight in the process.

Thank you for your consideration.