

Colleagues,

Did you know that according to the LTC Student Advisory Committee, fewer than 20% of Carleton courses offer a mid-term course evaluation? And that students consider such an evaluation to be one of the more important features of a good course?

A few weeks ago, I asked the Student Departmental Assistants what makes a good mid-term evaluation. Here are some of their points:

- Provide enough time during class (10 minutes or more at the beginning of class) to complete the evaluation; don't assign it as homework or hand it to students on their way out the door.
- Provide questions for students to respond to (see below for examples), not a blank sheet of paper.
- Summarize the results of the midterm evaluations for the class as soon as possible and explain what changes, if any, you plan to make in the class. Then implement those changes. Students benefit from a brief summary of the responses and an explanation of how their feedback might lead to making changes in the second half of a course. Often, student responses will be contradictory ("The math is too hard," "The math is too easy") and it's helpful for students to find out that not everyone is responding to the course in the same way. Students also respect an instructor's explanation of why the course content or style is NOT going to change.
- Be sensitive to individual students' desires for their comments to remain anonymous. (You could ask a department assistant to type the responses before you look at them. Also you could ask a colleague, a mentor, a student observer or someone else to review the evaluations with you).

You'll find some sample mid-term evaluation forms as well as many other resources on the LTC web site:

<<http://webapps.acs.carleton.edu/campus/ltc/resources/evals/>>

These have been developed by Carleton faculty for courses in a variety of disciplines. Feel free to consult with the LTC for other suggestions.

An easy set of questions that works well is: "What's going well for you in this course? What could be going better? What do you think [professor's name] should do differently? What do you think you and the other students should do differently?" Students also respond well to specific questions, such as "Is the amount of reading assigned for the course manageable?"

As you plan for spring term, remember the Student Observer Program. We have several willing and able students ready to serve. More information about the Student Observer Program with a downloadable application form is available on the LTC website:

<<http://webapps.acs.carleton.edu/campus/ltc/observer/>>

*Unless you choose to do so, your course evaluations (both midterm and final) are seen only by you. They do not automatically go to your department chair, your mentor, the Dean of the College and they will not be part of any formal review done at Carleton (the Dean's office has its own forms for soliciting student opinion at the time of formal reviews). There may be occasions (such as when writing you a letter of recommendation on your teaching) when a colleague may ask about your course evaluations. At these times, you and that colleague can discuss how best for the information you've collected to be shared.*

I encourage you to consider taking time for this important opportunity by offering a mid-term evaluation in your classes. Have a wonderful rest-of-winter-term!

Mary Savina, Coordinator