

Interpreting and Using Student Evaluations of Teaching (SET) Data - For Administrators -

The following information is adapted from: [Linse, A.R. \(2017\). Interpreting and using student ratings data: Guidance for faculty serving as administrators and on evaluation committees.](#) *Studies in Educational Evaluation*,(54),94-106.

What are/are not SETs?

SETs are:

- Student perceptions
- Valuable for identifying what faculty do as part of their teaching
- A tool faculty can use to improve their teaching
- Helpful for identifying patterns over time

SETs are not:

- A proxy for student learning
- Evaluations (despite their name here at UMaine - other institutions use the more appropriately named Student Ratings of Instruction, or Student Perceptions of Teaching).

Four Suggestions for Administrative Use

1. **Examine the distribution of responses.** To illustrate why, see this example where mean and median are similar, but the distributions tell a different story:

	Resp	Median	Mean	SD	Freq(5)	Freq(4)	Freq(3)	Freq(2)	Freq(1)
Were class meetings profitable and worth attending? (5=Always...1=Rarely)	35	3	3.03	1.08	4	6	15	7	3
	35	3	3.06	1.62	10	7	3	5	10

2. **Examine patterns over time and over courses for individuals. Do not use SETs to compare among faculty.**

Reasons:

- SETs within and across classes are not calibrated to any standard.
- Many factors can influence ratings unrelated to teaching effectiveness (class size, course level, major/non-major, elective/core, bias).
- However, consistent low ratings may indicate a problem.

3. Focus on the most common ratings and comments rather than outliers.

Reasons:

- Biased views tend to live in the tails of the distribution.
- It is hard to ignore a few negative comments.
- Exception: Do not ignore a few low responses in questions 7 and 8 as they speak to the inclusive environment in the course.

7. Did the instructor show respect for questions and opinions of the students? (5=Always ... 1=Rarely)

8. Did the instructor ensure an environment of respect? (5=Always ... 1=Rarely)

- 4. A more complete perspective of teaching effectiveness would include other measures in addition to SETs, such as peer observations and teaching portfolios. For additional examples, visit the [CITL website](#).** Note that while there is no university-wide definition of effective teaching at UMaine, reappointment, tenure and promotion guidelines within units often do include such definitions and recommended examples.

The [AFUM-UMS Collective Bargaining Agreement](#) states that care should be used in evaluating teaching effectiveness utilizing SET results when fewer than 10 students respond or the response rate is less than 60% for an individual class.