

FACULTY EVALUATION REPORT
August 1, 2020 – May 31, 2021

Submitted by Dean of the School of the Arts, David Klamen, July 2021

NAME: Mark McPhail

I. TEACHING:

In 2020, Dr. McPhail returned to teaching at IU Northwest. He had not taught on campus since teaching in the 2017-18 academic year following his stepping down from an administrative position he held since 2015. The Chair of Communication reported that the number of students enrolled in these courses were smaller than usual (18, 10, and 4) and the DFW rates for his courses were considerably higher than his colleagues. His 2017-18 Faculty Annual Report rated his 2017 teaching as "Inadequate."

Dr. McPhail was given a release from teaching during the 2018-2019 academic year to research and author a book. He was scheduled to return to teaching in the Fall of 2020. In preparation for his return to teaching and to allow for necessary adjustments to transition to online teaching due to the pandemic, Dr. McPhail was given a course release and intensive training supported in the Fall of 2020. However, as explained below, Dr. McPhail's teaching remains unambiguously inadequate.

As referenced above, his DFW rates were meaningfully higher than his peers in 2017, and this grew significantly in 2020-21. Dr. McPhail taught two sections of S121 Public Speaking in the fall semester and was given a course release for training for online teaching. These two courses had a combined DFW rate of 56%. The averaged DFW rate for the rest of the department teaching S121 was 29%.

In the Spring 2020/21 semester, Dr. McPhail taught two sections of S223 Business and Professional Speaking and one section of S121 Public Speaking. The S223 courses had a combined DFW rate of 59%. The average DFW rate for S223 during the prior two semesters was 22.8%. Considering that the two courses were populated by Business majors (mostly Junior and Seniors), this rate represents a level of student failure that exceeds the DFW record from Dr. McPhail's fall semester.

It has been reported that students are avoiding enrolling in Dr. McPhail's classes due to his reputation as a teacher. His one section of S 121 Public Speaking in the Spring semester was low enrolled with seven students; five students completed the class with passing grades. This was the lowest-enrolled section of Public Speaking that was allowed to run this past semester.

There were also issues involving his engagement with the students. It is reported that Dr. McPhail did not show up for his two in-person classes this semester, apparently changing their modes to online or online synchronous (from on-campus Hybrid) without notice or approval.

His teaching evaluations contain a small number of responses and receive scores that are low for a faculty member in the School of the Arts. His overall ratings averaged 3.34 with ratings of 1.67 for one of his upper-level courses. I did not receive student evaluations for his second upper-level course. Mean overall scores for the school are 4.27.

It was reported that Dr. McPhail did not contact or engage with his High School Dual-Credit section of Public Speaking in Fall 2020/21. The two students enrolled in this section apparently withdrew from the section after receiving no participation from Dr. McPhail.

It has also appeared that Dr. McPhail did not publish one or more of his Canvas sites until after the beginning of classes, leaving students unable to appropriately prepare, confused, and in some cases, withdrawing from his course (see example of a student letter to an advisor below).

...“I have a concern with my Business & Prof Communications professor. I have done a little bit of outside research and have come across some negative reviews about Professor McPhail. Also judging based off of the fact that he was late to publishing the canvas page(2 days), I feel as if his class may be a problem to me and I do not want to have this type of stressor on my shoulders.”

If there is any other professor that I could switch to that teaches the course, or another option, I would be grateful for the opportunity. I know pulling the plug on a class this early without really giving it a chance is not always the wisest thing, but I would rather not take the risk. Any advice?

Considering the poor student outcomes in Dr. McPhail’s classes, his failure to show up for his on-campus classes, his late publishing of Canvas sites, and other issues, his record of teaching for the past year is inadequate.

II. RESEARCH/CREATIVE ACTIVITIES:

Dr. McPhail published a book chapter with Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, titled "The Rhetoric and Ethics of Political Communication: Freedom Summer as a Case Study in Moral Leadership." He also published a journal article titled, "(Re)-Signing Reconciliation: Reading Obama’s Charleston Eulogy through A Rhetorical Theory of Adaptive Racism." This is a respectable research record for a senior faculty member.

III. SERVICE:

Dr. McPhail performed no service in 2020/21. As far as colleagues and I could confirm, he did not attend any meetings (department, college, or campus), or participate in any committees, etc. His annual report (submitted weeks late after multiple reminders) shows no service activity. His service record is inadequate.