

Faculty Senate Policy

regarding

STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF TEACHING COSTS & SCANTRON TECHNOLOGY AND SUPPORT

November 10, 2015

The October 13 Faculty Senate discussion of Student Evaluations of Teaching raised a number of issues related to the specific instruments and methods used to evaluate teaching and the ways in which student responses are used in personnel decisions regarding retention, tenure and promotion.

This policy statement addresses a small sub-set of those issues; specifically, it addresses two issues that require immediate attention and action. We call on the administration to make the following policy changes before the dissemination of student evaluations of teaching which begins two weeks before the last day of Fall 2015 classes (i.e. before November 30, 2015). And, we call on the administration to announce these changes through a mass distribution e-mail sent to all faculty by this date.

1. No charge-backs to departments for processing student evaluation of teaching, regardless of the instrument used (in-class scantron or on-line “class climate” surveys).
 - Student evaluations of teaching, regardless of the method or instrument used, are a required personnel procedure which necessarily involve materials costs. Similar to other required personnel materials (eg: provision of Purple Book notebooks), the costs associated with gathering and collating the results of student evaluations of teaching should not be shifted to department service and supply budgets.
 - Student evaluations of teaching, as a high-stakes significantly consequential part of personnel decisions, should be gathered in compliance with faculty personnel rules, which leave the choice of instrument to the faculty. Given recent budget cuts the current practice of differential charges for in-class scantron (12¢/student) vs. on-line “class climate” survey (7¢/student) instruments inserts an unwarranted and potentially unequal market-based bias into this choice.
2. No changes to current scantron capacity, capabilities and support for either course testing or student evaluations of teaching without full shared governance discussion and agreement.
 - Faculty have primary responsibility for determining curriculum and methods of instruction. This necessarily includes decisions about how to assess student learning. This is a matter of compliance with both shared governance and principles of academic freedom. Many faculty use scantron instruments as part of their pedagogical method for testing student learning. In addition, restricting or eliminating access to scantrons would result in a significant workload increase for the many faculty who use this method. Any changes that would affect faculty ability to use this method of assessing student learning must be determined by a process in which faculty are fully engaged through existing shared governance bodies and procedures.
 - Meaningful and valid research on the variability and biases inherent in different teaching evaluation instruments makes the choice of such instruments both highly consequential and different for differently situated faculty. Faculty personnel rules leave the choice of instrument to the faculty (with policy set at the department level). Many faculty continue to choose in-class scantron instruments for gathering student evaluations of teaching. Any changes that would affect faculty ability to use this method of gathering student evaluations of teaching for personnel decision purposes must be determined by a process in which faculty are fully engaged through existing shared governance bodies and procedures.