

RESOLUTION SUBMITTED TO THE BERKELEY ACADEMIC SENATE REGARDING PROPOSED ONLINE EVALUATION OF COURSES CAMPUSWIDE

Preamble

1. The campus needs a system to evaluate instructors that provides useful data for personnel cases and that has an acceptable response rate and profile from students.
2. Currently available online evaluation systems offer several advantages, but they also face documented problems that include low response rates, bimodal responses, and skewed response demographics. These are substantial enough that an online evaluation system should not be mandated for campus departments at this time.
3. Instructor evaluations are confidential, like student evaluations and staff evaluations. Their purpose is to help evaluate instructors for promotion, tenure, and merit increase. They can also be used by departments to evaluate curricula. They are not intended or acceptable to be disseminated to help students choose courses. The campus needs to separate these functions, and to ensure the best evaluation of our faculty for purposes of academic promotion.
4. The University needs a system that does not put it at legal risk by sponsoring the release of all confidential student ratings and comments on instructors to the public, or to other students. The potential misuse of such data, if released publicly, could be detrimental to the fairness of academic promotion cases.
5. Evaluation of instructors and courses is the purview of the faculty: evaluations of instructors originate in departments, and personnel reviews move through the academic hierarchy to the Academic Senate (Budget Committee) before proceeding to the executive administration. The campus needs a system of policies regarding these evaluations, including metrics, methods, and analyses, that must meet the goals of the faculty. Ultimate responsibility for these decisions should reside with the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Faculty Welfare, in consultation with the faculty.

Proposed resolution

The campus administration is urged not to release or sponsor the release of confidential student reviews of instructors that are intended for use in the evaluation of academic promotion cases. The administration is further urged not to mandate online instructor evaluation until and unless its problems are resolved to the satisfaction of the Academic Senate.

The faculty urges that the office of the VPAA work with the Academic Senate to develop methods, metrics, and oversight and accountability necessary to ensure the best possible improvements in evaluating instructors. They will report on their progress at the Fall Division meeting.