

CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, POMONA
ACADEMIC SENATE

FACULTY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

REPORT TO

THE ACADEMIC SENATE

FA-002-201

Revision and Updating of Policy 1329

Faculty Affairs Committee

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Executive Committee
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First Reading
05/05/2021
Second Reading

Referral

Revision and Updating of Policy 1329

Background

The remote work environment ~~required~~needed for continuing university operations during the COVID-19 pandemic has made it more evident that Policy #1329 needs to be reviewed and adjusted. One important aspect university-wide is the elimination of paper-based processes and the need for wet signatures for written student feedback. Advantages to moving to a digital platform include~~are~~, savings in time, labor, paper, ink, copier contracts and associated costs for all these, as well as the promotion of~~therefore promoting~~ more environmentally friendly and sustainable practices. Improvement of security is also important as Faculty Affairs has received reports of missing paper forms for entire courses due to mishandling, as well as evaluations that ~~did not get done~~were not completed, because, e.g., ~~the~~ paper forms were placed ~~in~~ someone's mailbox, ~~and~~ forgotten and never administered. Another important advantage is expediting the reports sent to faculty by eliminating the step requiring scanning of paper forms.

Allowing the students to provide written input through the official student evaluations of teaching after they complete the questionnaires is another ~~sought~~change sought as discussed by Provost Alva, in her discussion with the Faculty Affairs Committee last Academic Year.

One last aspect is converting the wet signature requirement for student input outside the classroom official evaluations, to an electronic signature or other alternative means to confirm the identity of the sender. This would~~to~~ eliminate the need for letter printing and scanning. Input could be accepted if the student sends from the CPP email account while also providing their Bronco ID number as currently required.

The outcomes/actions requested:

- Modify the policy so that student evaluations continue to be administered fully online, even after the ~~end of the the fully online system currently use continues after the~~ mandated remote work environment due to the pandemic. ~~ends~~.
- Allow for written comments from students in the in-class student evaluations of teaching.
- Allow for digital signature or alternative electronic means to confirm identity for out of the class student comments.

Resources: • Jeanette Baez, Interim Executive Director, Institutional Research, Planning, and Analytics • Tim Raymond, Executive Director, IT Applications, Information Technology and Institutional Planning • Martin Sancho-Madriz, AVP Faculty Affairs • Policy #1329 • Unit 3 Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article 15 "Evaluation" • Faculty evaluation policies at other CSU campuses -> Provost Alva

Discussion

The Faculty Affairs committee (FAC) examined other policies regarding online student evaluations at the other California State Universities as well as consulted with Victoria Bhavsar

from CAFE. During this ~~evaluation process consultation~~, it was noted that the best practice for online student evaluations would be to have the potential window ~~foref~~ administration of student evaluations ~~fall~~ between the beginning of week 13 and the end of week 14 of a standard academic semester.

To address the pressing issue of poor response rates of online student evaluations, it ~~has been~~ was suggested that it be made mandatory that faculty teaching asynchronous classes display on their course homepage a statement encouraging student participation. Further, for synchronous classes, faculty must devote at least 15 minutes of synchronous class time to the completion of the student evaluations of teaching. Because faculty are ~~going to need~~ required to devote class time to having students complete online student evaluations, faculty teaching synchronous courses should have the ability to restrict ~~access to the the completion of the student evaluation to the until that allotted time allotted is provided~~ during class. This would also make the online process commensurate with the implementation of the previous paper-based student evaluations of teaching at Cal Poly Pomona.

Further, it appears the evaluation committees mentioned in 1329 are defunct and so the language regarding "evaluation committees" has been removed. That is, it does not appear that departments maintain standing committees to provide interpretations of student evaluations of teaching summaries. Further, it is the FAC's belief that the interpretation of evaluations be made by periodic evaluation (Lecturer Review and PTR) and performance review (RTP) committees and that guidance regarding the departments' interpretation of summaries of student evaluations of teaching be discussed in those relevant documents.

Finally, it is fairly well agreed upon that student comments should be added to student evaluations; however, what to do with the comments has been debated. In our proposal we suggest that student comments be collected and made available only for faculty's personal use in growing in their role as educators. given research has shown that people of color and women receive disproportionately more negative and irrelevant comments, the written (open-ended) responses by students should only be given to the instructor. These comments should neither go in the Personal Action File (PAF) nor be used in either performance reviews or periodic evaluations. Note: The inclusion of open-ended questions in the formal student evaluation process has no impact on out-of-class evaluation comments that are signed by the student.

After the first reading, the FAC consulted with Provost Alva. Provost Alva made the case that by not allowing for student comments to be placed in the Permanent Action File (PAF) and be used by peer evaluation and performance review committees that student voices were not being heard. That in order to have a more inclusive campus, the faculty and administration need to make sure they are truly hearing from our students by having their anonymous open-ended responses on student evaluations be included in formal evaluations of teaching. Further, the faculty will get more constructive feedback if review committees have more (not fewer) windows into the classroom and student experiences.

Alternatively, there are several arguments for keeping these comments out of the PAF and having them only go to the instructor:

Anonymous student evaluation comments disproportionately negatively affect women and people of color (Wallace, Lewis, and Allen, 2019). Although the language in Comments-in-PAF

version of the policy (see attached) states that irrelevant or inappropriate comments cannot be used for evaluation, removal of explicitly biased comments does not account for the implicit bias in student evaluations, or student comments, as a whole. As previously cited, it is well-documented that student evaluations are biased against women and people of color and these implicit biases are compounded in qualitative written comments. Otherwise seemingly “neutral” comments still reflect bias (i.e., student comments made about the instruction quality of women and people of color will be disproportionately negative). Thus, the concern is that using measures of work performance known to be biased against women and people of color replicates and codifies racism and sexism into the structure of the university. Moreover, some faculty have suggested that using measures of work performance known to be racist and sexist may be a Title VII violation, and, so, illegal. Additionally, we worry that allowing comments to be used in this way will create a more hostile and less inclusive environment as we try to retain and recruit more diverse faculty.

There is concern that including comments in the PAF could increase workload. Faculty under evaluation and faculty involved in review committees will have to spend hours attempting to synthesize meaning from these comments.

After consulting with some qualitative researchers, it appears that a policy that includes comments in the PAF would have to outline very specifically the best methods of analysis to ensure trustworthiness (Belotto, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1984; Moin, Syed & Nelson, 2015) (i.e., making sure that comments and interpreted themes are valid, credible, transferable, and reliable). For example, minimally, those tasked with coding student comments should not be stakeholders in the evaluation process. So, coders of the comments should NOT be administrators, faculty members under review, or members of the review committee, but instead should be independent coders with no stake in the outcome of the qualitative analysis. The need for independent analysis is due to a concern from some faculty that ill-intentioned review committees could mine these comments for patterns they want to see. There is further concern that confirmation bias will operate implicitly in the interpretation of these comments, despite good intentions. Decades of work on confirmation bias suggests that review committees will be implicitly biased towards interpreting these comments based on their pre-existing beliefs about the faculty member.

In both versions of the policy, students continue to have the right to make their voices heard in the evaluation process by writing a signed letter that is placed in a faculty members PAF.

Recommendations

The FAC recommends that Cal Poly Pomona make sure that the University secure access to a service that allows for student evaluations to be carried out in a manner specified in this revised policy. Specifically, both versions of this policy allow faculty to restrict access to the student evaluations for synchronous classes to the time the instructor allots for student evaluations.

The FAC recommends that the FAC version of policy 1329 that was presented for the first reading be adopted (with mild changes to the wording provided by the administration). The FAC voted 9 to 4 to recommend that student evaluations of teaching move to an online modality and that student comments be collected but provided only to the faculty member.

However, the FAC did vote 7 to 6 to bring the alternative version of this policy (the Comments-in-PAF version) to be voted on by the entire Academic Senate. This version has anonymous open-ended responses from the student evaluation instruments placed in the PAF and used in formal reviews.

A possible compromise has been put forward to resolve whether or not student comments should be in the instructor's PAF. Since the dean of the college or library where the course is taught is also the HEERA manager, the comments can be sent to that dean as well, but not added to the PAF and prohibited from being used in RTP or other reviews. This approach would allow the dean to provide support in cases where the comments demonstrate that a faculty member is facing unusual challenges, and also give the dean an opportunity to investigate possible inappropriate behavior on the part of a faculty member. This compromise has not been reviewed by the Faculty Affairs Committee, but is being brought forward for consideration.

~~The FAC recommends the revised policy 1329 be adopted. These revisions would make all student evaluations of teaching online and allow for students to write responses as part of the student evaluation process that are only given to the faculty member.~~

~~The FAC also recommends that Cal Poly Pomona make sure that the University secure access to a service that allows for student evaluations to be carried out in a manner specified in this revised policy.~~

~~Finally, the FAC recommend the revised 1329 remove all language of "evaluation committees." It does not appear that departments maintain standing committees to provide evaluations of student evaluations of teaching summaries. Further, it is the FAC's belief that the interpretation of evaluations be made by periodic evaluation (Lecturer Review and PTR) and performance review (RTP) committees and that guidance regarding the departments' guidelines for interpreting the summaries of student evaluations of teaching be discussed in those relevant documents.~~