



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, ARTS, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA 92521-0132

January 28, 2016

TO: José Wudka, Chair
Academic Senate

FROM: Jason Weems, Chair
CHASS Executive Committee

RE: Review of the Proposed Revisions to the iEval Survey Form

The CHASS Executive Committee discussed the “iEval as a Tool to Collect Student Evaluations of Teaching: Current Issues and Possible Improvements” report at the regular meeting on January 13, 2016. The committee evaluated all of the report’s recommended changes. Of these, we unanimously support expanding the choices on the Likert scale from five to seven (recommendation 1, p.5). We also support the removal of the five items where no text of the question is provided (rec. 5).

While the committee did not come to a strong conclusion on the issue of supplemental materials versus electronic resources (rec. 2), several felt it important that a question about supplemental materials not be *replaced* by one on digital resources. Both of these categories are important and we should not encourage a format that only values the digital. The committee was confused by the discrepancy between the report’s discussion (p.4) and its recommendation (p.5) regarding questions related to instructor behavior (rec. 4). While p.4 suggests “eliminating or splitting” questions that tie together multiple concepts concerning instructor quality, the final recommendation mentions only “removing some items.” We think the criteria in question need to be studied further to determine what (if anything) should be removed.

Most importantly, the committee unanimously and powerfully disagrees with the proposal to remove “most or all items related to student behaviors” (rec. 3). While the report justifies such action by stating that the data is not sufficiently disaggregated to be of use, we challenge this assertion. While it would be useful to have this data expressed in more detail, we find great value in it now. Even at a broad level, information about student attitudes toward the course is vital for contextualizing the classroom experience. Multiple committee members assert that this is some of the most meaningful and heavily used data provided by the evaluations. It helps faculty to understand how their teaching is impacting the attitudes of (sometimes overtaxed, under-committed, or disinterested) students. It also plays an important role contextualizing the evaluations in relation to merit and promotion cases—where they are

key components of a faculty file. Finally, removing these questions on student commitment strikes us as deeply contradictory to the interactive, discussion-centered, and “flipped classroom” teaching methods currently promoted at UCR. To work, these methods demand student engagement and active participation. We feel that it sends a wrong message to remove questions that speak to student involvement, as it implies that all responsibility lies with the instructor.

Jason Weems, Chair

UCR CHASS Executive Committee