

March 11, 2016

To: Jose Wudka, Chair
Riverside Division

From: Stephen Wimpenny, Chair 
Committee on Educational Policy

Re: CEP Review of Proposed Changes to Teaching Evaluations Metrics

The Committee on Educational Policy received a request from Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education's (VPUE) office to change teaching evaluations at their October 2, 2015 meeting. The Committee opined that the request was too vague and declined to do the review, pending receipt of a more substantive and specific proposal.

The updated proposal was received and reviewed at the Committee's meeting on February 5, 2016. The Chair invited the VPUE Steve Brint and Director of Evaluation and Assessment Gary Coyne to attend the meeting to discuss with the Committee their reasons for changing the evaluations and to summarize the proposal. VPUE Brint and Director Coyne stated that the goal of the proposal is to improve on the current system of evaluation and to motivate faculty to promote more effective teaching.

The Committee discussed the proposed switch from the current 5-point evaluation scale back to the previous 7-point scale, along with some re-categorization of the scale labels. VPUE Brint informed the Committee that this is based on research aimed at improving the accuracy of UCR's evaluations and Director Coyne suggested that the change would make the system more friendly and encourage better student participation. The Committee was not unanimously convinced by these arguments.

The Committee raised the issues of the inherent numerical bias in the system when comparing large service courses and the smaller upper division or graduate courses. As the evaluation records form a part of CAP review of faculty when considering issues of merit or promotion, the Committee opined that these points should be considered before changing the current system. VPUE Brint and Director Coyne acknowledged that these issues had not been considered even though they could be considered as important issues.

VPUE Brint also stated that the research documented that lower quality students tend to give instructors lower reviews, which might encourage faculty to teach more to those students in an effort to raise evaluations. The committee held divided views on this point.

The Committee opined that the proposed changes do not adequately address the issues with the current system of teaching evaluations and they are not supportive of approving the changes as proposed by the VPUE. They recommended that the proposal be withdrawn pending submission of a more substantive proposal that also attempts to address some of the limitations of the current system and its effectiveness. The Committee recommended that the limitations of the current system also be

defined in the new proposal. The Committee concluded that a thorough review of the student evaluations needs to be conducted to determine what is considered a good evaluation and recommended that the Academic Senate form an ad hoc committee to review the student evaluation system.