COMMITTEE ON FACULTY WELFARE

April 5, 2021

To: Jason Stajich  
Riverside Division Academic Senate

From: Patricia Morton, Chair  
Committee on Faculty Welfare

Re: [Campus Review] Report Review: Final Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Evaluation of Teaching

The Committee on Faculty Welfare met on March 16, 2020 to consider the Final Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Evaluation of Teaching.

The report has been long in coming and it is a good evaluation of the diversity of opinions on the value and use of teaching evaluations, both for improving teaching and for evaluating teaching in the merit and promotion review process. Survey responses suggest a range of faculty responses that varied from dropping evaluations altogether to leaving the system as is, but with the majority suggesting that change is necessary. The ad hoc committee proposed a two phased approach to initiating change.

The first phase is immediate, and an attempt to provide a focus on the importance of recognizing and avoiding bias in teaching (=learning) evaluations. This will be addressed by an ieval preamble and the replacement of question 5 with a question on the recognition of bias. These two approaches form a positive educational tool for all of our students. The other aspects focus on evaluation, which include stopping of comparative departmental and campus metrics, communication at all levels of the importance of recognizing bias, and also modifying efile to allow for a diversity of teaching evaluation assessments to be added and utilized. The FW committee was strongly in favor of all of these approaches.

The second phase entails a redesign of the current student evaluations, with a greater focus on questions that greater address learning outcomes and try to avoid bias, and to develop a "Student Evaluation of Learning". The ad hoc committee recommended that this be outsourced to faculty that have research programs that have relevance to the field of bias and learning outcomes. FW supports this approach, but while this is laudable, the same difficulties may be faced with the faculty accepting those recommendations, and also, making sure that questions are appropriate to all fields of study across the campus. However, whatever recommendations that are made must
come to the senate for acceptance, and hopefully a new and improved survey can be developed that is agreed to by the majority.

Increased student participation is necessary but difficult. This was recognized by the committee. Early grade release is seen across many different universities as a means of increasing participation, but FW agrees that without the option in banner we will likely continue to see low participation. Several CFW members felt that incentives to foster greater participation such as early grade release have led in the past to evaluations that were done simply for grade access and were not necessarily meaningful evaluations.

One aspect not covered in the report is whether students should also have access to evaluations as is done at UCSD.

FW noted that in teaching evaluations, (1) there should be greater recognition by departments of the ability to provide anonymous student letters to address teaching at any level of assessment, and (2) that there was not enough focus in the report on the need for greater guidance on evaluation by the Academic Personnel Office.

Overall, FW felt that this is a good first step to revising the evaluation of learning on campus.