

SETs Revision Background

Why is this an issue?

- The research is overwhelming. Bias exists in the student evaluation process across academia globally (see resolution for works cited)
 - Students are not trained to evaluate teaching effectiveness or how to mitigate bias
 - Faculty are not trained to mitigate bias in their evaluations of student feedback or in their evaluations of their peers
- The [UFPC End of Year Report](#) recommended that APS “develop guidance to address student and collegial biases in evaluating the teaching effectiveness of women faculty and faculty of color.” (p. 3)
 - Furthermore, they noted:
 - “The UFPC notes several challenges with the use of student evaluations to evaluate teaching. First, the subject position and identity of the candidate affect how students understand the instructor’s approach, knowledge, and pedagogical skill. Research clearly shows that women and people of color in STEM fields consistently face resistance, hostility, and diminishment of their expertise from both colleagues and students.
 - Second, response rates on student evaluations vary considerably from class to class and candidate to candidate. Low response rates, defined here as below 50 percent, likely advantage faculty who benefit from receiving evaluations from students who already view them and their teaching more favorably. Conversely, faculty who are already disadvantaged by student evaluations imbued with gender and racial biases see negative numeric scores driving down mean item scores.” (p. 7)
- Unconscious bias is ubiquitous ([UCSF Unconscious Bias Training resources](#)).
 - “Unconscious biases are malleable—one can take steps to minimize the impact of unconscious bias.”
 - Recognized mitigation strategies for the individual: self-awareness, understanding the nature of bias, discussing bias, and trainings promoting bias literacy.
 - Recognized mitigation strategies for the institution: develop clear, concrete, objective indicators for faculty evaluation; develop standardized criteria; provide unconscious bias trainings.

Scope of this resolution

1. We are acknowledging that bias exists in student evaluations. Currently there is no mention of the role of bias in the faculty evaluation process. Faculty evaluations are directly related to hiring, range elevations, retention, promotion and tenure. Acknowledging bias in student evaluations is a major step in mitigating bias in the entire evaluation process: it opens discussion about bias, creates opportunities for bias

awareness, and demonstrates that bias needs to be addressed in faculty evaluation processes.

2. We are clarifying how faculty can object to bias in their files. We are not changing this process, but providing information on what concrete steps faculty can take when they experience bias (contact the appropriate administrator - Dean or Athletic Director).
3. This acknowledgement of bias highlights how student evaluations are simply one part of the faculty evaluation process. We are not updating this language, but feel that our added language about bias helps contextualize why the handbook specifies that SETs are just one measure of faculty evaluation.
4. We are asking departments to add bias acknowledgements directly to their RTP standards and criteria. IUPCs refer to departmental RTP standards and criteria to develop their evaluations of their peers. Understanding and recognizing these biases at this level help to diminish the effect of bias in the evaluation process and underscore faculty members' recourse when they experience bias.
5. We are asking for trainings and resources to educate, inform, and support faculty in understanding how to deal with bias in their file and how to reduce the effect of their bias in their colleagues' letters and evaluations.

Limitations of this resolution

- We are not revising the questionnaire. This is a much larger undertaking that can do much to mitigate bias at the student level. Research shows that a preamble addressing bias and that well-formed questions can greatly reduce student bias. However, doing this will require much more time and effort to and does not need to hold up the other strategies for disrupting bias that can be implemented more immediately.
- We are not addressing all aspects of how bias can affect the faculty experience. There are other important areas where bias plays out: course assignments, mentorship, leadership opportunities, and many other areas. We absolutely acknowledge this and hope to address these other areas and encourage our colleagues to do so where they can.

Overarching goal of this resolution

- To start a process of addressing and disrupting bias in the faculty experience. We have heard from faculty who have experienced bias and who have felt helpless and have felt that it adversely affects their retention and promotion. We are acting on the recommendations of our colleagues in UFPC and agree that this is an important issue affecting our faculty. This is a significant step to support these faculty. It will not eliminate bias, but it goes far beyond merely acknowledging bias. It also codifies and creates opportunities to further protect faculty from bias.