

CAL POLY HUMBOLDT
University Senate

Resolution to Address Bias in the Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness Process

12-22/23-FAC — November 29, 2022 — First Reading

RESOLVED: That the University Senate of Cal Poly Humboldt recommends the following changes to Appendices J, K, and M be forwarded to the General Faculty for a vote of acceptance or rejection; and be it further,

RESOLVED: That these changes become effective at the beginning of the 2023 - 2024 Academic year upon approval by the General Faculty; and

RESOLVED: That these updates address bias in the Student Evaluations of Teaching Effectiveness (SETs) process to mitigate bias in the RTP process; and

RESOLVED: That the University Senate of Cal Poly Humboldt acknowledges that bias exists in the process of gathering student feedback as well as in the collegial evaluation of student feedback and that this be acknowledged in the Faculty Handbook; and

RESOLVED: That the University Senate of Cal Poly Humboldt defines bias as “a conscious or unconscious attitude or stereotype that affects our understanding, actions, and decisions. Implicit, or unconscious, biases often contradict our openly-held beliefs or attitudes, undermining our intentions”;¹ and

RESOLVED: That departments should acknowledge that bias exists in the teaching evaluation process; and

RESOLVED: That the naming for SETs be changed to ‘student feedback on teaching effectiveness’; and

RESOLVED: That the faculty handbook should be revised to include instructions on how candidates can object to biased content in their personnel file, including collegial and student evaluations (in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement); and be it further

RESOLVED: That faculty personnel committees should have support and training in understanding how to recognize and deal with bias when evaluating faculty files.

¹ Cheryl Staats et al., “STATE OF THE SCIENCE: IMPLICIT BIAS REVIEW” (Kirwan Institute, 2016), <https://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/2016-state-science-implicit-bias-review>.

RATIONALE:

Research demonstrates that bias in the SETs process exists and disproportionately impacts faculty of color and faculty who identify as femme, trans, women, or non-binary. The evidence also has found bias against faculty with other identities and characteristics, including sexual orientation, age, rank, disability, accent, pregnancy or parental status.² These biases add to the myriad of circumstances that make it difficult for faculty from marginalized groups to advance through the RTP process and take on leadership roles in the University.

The [2021-2022 UFPC End of Year Report](#) recommends developing “guidance to address student and collegial biases in evaluating the teaching effectiveness of women faculty and faculty of color.”³

These proposed changes to the Faculty Handbook appear modest, but are a significant first step in acknowledging and addressing bias, which is currently not reflected in the handbook. 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. The proposed changes also aim to clarify the process by which faculty can address bias in their SETs, which currently exists, but is not well-known.

This proposal institutes widely recognized internal and interpersonal bias mitigation strategies, including promoting self-awareness, understanding the nature of bias, discussing bias, and implementing bias literacy trainings. It also includes institutional strategies, including the

² Lillian MacNell, Adam Driscoll, and Andrea N. Hunt, “What’s in a Name: Exposing Gender Bias in Student Ratings of Teaching,” *Innovative Higher Education* 40, no. 4 (August 1, 2015): 291–303, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-014-9313-4>; Rebecca J. Kreitzer and Jennie Sweet-Cushman, “Evaluating Student Evaluations of Teaching: A Review of Measurement and Equity Bias in SETs and Recommendations for Ethical Reform,” *Journal of Academic Ethics* 20, no. 1 (March 1, 2022): 73–84, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-021-09400-w>; Anne Boring and Kellie Ottoboni, “Student Evaluations of Teaching (Mostly) Do Not Measure Teaching Effectiveness,” *ScienceOpen Research*, January 7, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.14293/S2199-1006.1.SOR-EDU.AETBZC.v1>; Friederike Mengel, Jan Sauermann, and Ulf Zölitz, “Gender Bias in Teaching Evaluations,” *Journal of the European Economic Association* 17, no. 2 (April 1, 2019): 535–66, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jeea/jvx057>; Anish Bavishi, Juan M. Madera, and Michelle R. Hebl, “The Effect of Professor Ethnicity and Gender on Student Evaluations: Judged before Met,” *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 3 (2010): 245–56, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0020763>; Bettye P. Smith and Billy Hawkins, “Examining Student Evaluations of Black College Faculty: Does Race Matter?,” *The Journal of Negro Education* 80, no. 2 (2011): 149–62; Dana A. Williams, “Examining the Relation between Race and Student Evaluations of Faculty Members: A Literature Review,” *Profession*, 2007, 168–73. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25595863>

³ The University Faculty Personnel Committee (UFPC), “2021-2022 UFPC End of Year Report,” April 29, 2022, <https://hraps.humboldt.edu/2021-2022-ufpc-end-year-report>.

development of clear, concrete, objective indicators and standardized criteria for faculty evaluation.⁴

Changes to mitigate bias in the RTP process and creating transparency in how faculty can address bias in their files arguably also protect the university from lawsuits. Our current lack of documentation in addressing bias and the lack of acknowledgement of bias does not insulate us from this well-documented phenomenon, but arguably leaves us open to liability.⁵

This resolution does not address certain aspects of the SETs process that require more extensive work (such as changing the evaluation instrument itself) and it does not address aspects that must be changed through the Collective Bargaining Agreement. However, the Faculty Affairs Committee plans to continue working on this, with more extensive revisions perhaps in spring 2023.

Section II of Appendix J of the Faculty Handbook should include the following definition of bias:

Bias – a conscious or unconscious attitude or stereotype that affects our understanding, actions, and decisions. Implicit, or unconscious, biases often contradict our openly-held beliefs or attitudes, undermining our intentions (Staats, Capatosto, Wright & Jackson, 2016).

Section VII.A.2 of Appendix J of the Faculty Handbook currently reads as follows:

(1) Student Evaluation

- a) All classes (unless exempted) taught by faculty shall be evaluated each semester by students completing a quantitative or a combination of quantitative and qualitative written questionnaire (15.15, 15.17).
 - (1) Candidates shall not be present when evaluations are administered.
 - (2) Evaluations shall be anonymous and identified only by course and/or section. 15.17a
 - (3) Space may be provided on the quantitative form for student comments. 15.17
 - (4) Summaries of student evaluations shall be prepared by regularly employed staff, not student employees. These shall contain appropriate tabulations and compilations of student comments.

⁴ “Unconscious Bias Training | Office of Diversity and Outreach UCSF,” accessed November 17, 2022, <https://diversity.ucsf.edu/programs-resources/training/unconscious-bias-training>; “Implicit Bias Module Series,” accessed November 17, 2022, <https://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/implicit-bias-training>.

⁵ Ann Owen, “The Next Lawsuits to Hit Higher Education,” Inside Higher Ed, June 24, 2019, <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2019/06/24/relying-often-biased-student-evaluations-assess-faculty-could-lead-lawsuits-opinion>.

- (5) Evaluation summaries shall be placed in the Personnel Action File and shall not be available to candidates until after class grades have been submitted.
- (6) Candidates are encouraged to comment in writing on student evaluations including such information as required course status, grade point distribution, rigor, or course objectives.
- b) In addition to classroom evaluations, students may be provided an opportunity to consult with the IUPC. 15.16 All statements submitted outside of the regular classroom evaluation process shall be identified by name before placement in the PAF. 15.17b
- c) Low enrollment courses may be exempted from the requirement for student evaluations as specified below (see University Senate Resolution #29-12/13-FAC):
 - (1) Course sections enrolling three or fewer students
 - (2) Thesis courses, comprehensive examination courses, baccalaureate and master's project courses, senior and master's field, applied, and directed research course and independent study courses.

The new wording shall be as follows:

1. Student Feedback

- a) All classes (unless exempted) taught by faculty shall gather student feedback in the form of 'student feedback on teaching effectiveness' questionnaires, including quantitative or a combination of quantitative and qualitative questions. (15.15, 15.17).
 - (1) Candidates shall not be present when questionnaires are administered.
 - (2) Questionnaires shall be anonymous and identified only by course and/or section. 15.17a
 - (3) Space may be provided on the quantitative form for student comments. 15.17
 - (4) Summaries of student questionnaires shall be prepared by regularly employed staff, not student employees. These shall contain appropriate tabulations and compilations of student comments.
 - (5) The University recognizes that student feedback on teaching is subject to bias, and research has shown that this bias disproportionately impacts faculty of color and faculty who identify as femme, trans, women or non-binary.

- (6) Questionnaire summaries shall be placed in the Personnel Action File and shall not be available to candidates until after class grades have been submitted.
 - (7) Candidates are encouraged to comment in writing on student questionnaires including such information as required course status, grade point distribution, rigor, or course objectives.
 - (8) Candidates who find bias in the student feedback on teaching effectiveness (or other content in their file) can appeal to the Dean, in accordance with article 11 of the collective bargaining agreement.
- b) In addition to classroom questionnaires, students may be provided an opportunity to consult with the IUPC. 15.16 All statements submitted outside of the regular classroom feedback process shall be identified by name before placement in the PAF. 15.17b
 - c) Low enrollment courses may be exempted from the requirement for student feedback teaching effectiveness questionnaires as specified below (see University Senate Resolution #29-12/13-FAC):
 - (1) Course sections enrolling three or fewer students
 - (2) Thesis courses, comprehensive examination courses, baccalaureate and master's project courses, senior and master's field, applied, and directed research course and independent study courses.

Section IX.B.1.a.9 of Appendix J of the Faculty Handbook currently reads as follows:

- 9. Written student evaluation of teaching in all courses (unless exempted) is required of all faculty by trustee policy and the CBA, but candidates for RTP may be evaluated in all courses taught during the year preceding their application for RTP. Additional written or oral evaluations may be taken, and identified by name, and submitted as part of the candidate's file. Student evaluations will be used as one element in assessing the quality of instruction, but not as the sole indicator of such quality.

The new wording shall be as follows:

- 9. Written student feedback on teaching in all courses (unless exempted) is required of all faculty by trustee policy and the CBA, but candidates for RTP may be evaluated in all courses taught during the year preceding their application for RTP. Additional written or oral feedback may be taken, and identified by name, and submitted as part of the candidate's file. Student feedback will be used as one element in assessing the quality of instruction, but not as the sole indicator of such quality. ~~Student evaluations will be used as one element in assessing the quality of instruction, but not as the sole indicator of such quality.~~
 - 1) Student feedback on teaching will be used as one element in assessing the quality of instruction, but not as the sole indicator of such quality.

- 2) Student feedback on teaching is subject to bias, and research has shown that this bias predominantly affects faculty of color and who identify as femme, trans, women or non-binary.

Section C of Appendix K of the Faculty Handbook currently reads as follows:

C. Areas of Performance

1. Effectiveness in performing workload assignment duties: The primary work of lecturers is in the classroom and the most critical evidence to support movement from one range to the next higher range is satisfactory teaching effectiveness. Evaluations of teaching effectiveness shall be based on student, peer and administrative statements. The REP must include all student evaluations of the instructor and/or class over the past five years, and previous performance evaluations. In the cases of Unit 3 temporary librarians and counselors, typical data may include annual collegial evaluations and summaries prepared by the appropriate supervisor(s) or evaluating committees within the initiating unit. If the candidate's workload assignment includes responsibilities not defined above, his/her contributions in such areas shall be documented by peer evaluations that specifically address the candidate's performance in those additional areas of workload assignment.

The new wording shall be as follows:

C. Areas of Performance

1. Effectiveness in performing workload assignment duties: The primary work of lecturers is in the classroom and the most critical evidence to support movement from one range to the next higher range is satisfactory teaching effectiveness. Evaluations of teaching effectiveness shall be based on student, peer and administrative statements. The REP must include all student feedback of the instructor and/or class over the past five years, and previous performance evaluations. In the cases of Unit 3 temporary librarians and counselors, typical data may include annual collegial evaluations and summaries prepared by the appropriate supervisor(s) or evaluating committees within the initiating unit. If the candidate's workload assignment includes responsibilities not defined above, his/her contributions in such areas shall be documented by peer evaluations that specifically address the candidate's performance in those additional areas of workload assignment.
 - a) Student feedback on teaching is subject to bias, and research has shown that this bias predominantly affects faculty of color and who identify as femme, trans, women or non-binary.
 - b) Candidates who find bias in the student feedback on teaching effectiveness (or other content in their file) can appeal to the Dean, in accordance with article 11 of the collective bargaining agreement.

Section 6 of the The Guide for Preparing Lecturer Range Elevation Portfolio currently reads as follows:

Section 6: Student Evaluations

For candidates whose workload assignments include teaching, include all qualitative and quantitative student evaluations that clearly and sufficiently represent the candidate's teaching effectiveness over the past five years.

The new wording shall be as follows:

Section 6: Student Feedback

For candidates whose workload assignments include teaching, include all qualitative and quantitative student feedback that clearly and sufficiently represent the candidate's teaching effectiveness over the past five years.

- a) Student feedback on teaching is subject to bias, and research has shown that this bias predominantly affects faculty of color and who identify as femme, trans, women or non-binary.
- b) Candidates who find bias in the student feedback on teaching effectiveness (or other content in their file) can appeal to the Dean, in accordance with article 11 of the collective bargaining agreement.

Section I. of Appendix M of the Faculty Handbook currently reads as follows:

I. Definitions

Coaching Performance Evaluation: Utilizing feedback contained in student-athlete evaluations as well as Coach Peer letters, and documentation contained in the Personnel Action File, the Athletic Director will summarize the performance of the coach on the Performance Evaluation form, noting areas of success as well as documentation of areas for improvement.

...

Working Personnel Action File (WPAF): The file specifically generated for use in a given review cycle, which includes all required forms and documents. As outlined below, the WPAF includes: 1. Student-athlete evaluations completed at the end of the most recent traditional season, 2. Coaching Performance Evaluation completed by the Athletic Director, 3. Three (3) Letters of Evaluation from Peer Coaches, campus, and community or alumni (minimum of 2 from peer coaches), and 4. Self Evaluation (completed by coach).

The new wording shall be as follows:

I. Definitions

Coaching Performance Evaluation: Utilizing feedback contained in student-athlete feedback as well as Coach Peer letters, and documentation contained in the Personnel Action File, the Athletic Director will summarize the performance of the coach on the

Performance Evaluation form, noting areas of success as well as documentation of areas for improvement.

...

Working Personnel Action File (WPAF): The file specifically generated for use in a given review cycle, which includes all required forms and documents. As outlined below, the WPAF includes: 1. Student-athlete feedback gathered at the end of the most recent traditional season, 2. Coaching Performance Evaluation completed by the Athletic Director, 3. Three (3) Letters of Evaluation from Peer Coaches, campus, and community or alumni (minimum of 2 from peer coaches), and 4. Self Evaluation (completed by coach).

- a) Student-athlete feedback on coaching is subject to bias, and research has shown that this bias predominantly affects coaches of color and who identify as femme, trans, women or non-binary.
- b) Candidates who find bias in the student feedback on coaching effectiveness (or other content in their file) can appeal to the Executive Director of Intercollegiate Athletics, in accordance with article 11 of the collective bargaining agreement.

Additionally, all references to 'Student-athlete evaluation(s)' will be changed to 'Student-athlete feedback.' (Sections III. A. 1., III. B. 1., and in the Head Coach and Assistant Coach evaluation timeline tables)