

**CAL POLY HUMBOLDT
University Senate**

Resolution to Update the Informative Language in the Student Feedback of Learning Experiences Survey

18-23/24-FAC — February 20, 2024 — First Reading

RESOLVED: That the University Senate of Cal Poly Humboldt recommends to the President that the attached language be included at the beginning of the Student Feedback on Learning Experiences; and be it further,

RESOLVED: That these changes become effective at the beginning of the 2024 fall semester; and

RESOLVED: That these updates are intended to reduce bias in the student feedback process to support faculty of color and faculty who identify as femme, trans, women, or non-binary as they progress through 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 be it further

RESOLVED: That informative language about bias has been shown to reduce bias in student responses and therefore the included language should be included at the beginning of the student feedback surveys as an update to the current language about the student code of conduct.

RATIONALE:

Research demonstrates that bias in the student evaluation 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.¹ These biases add

¹ Lillian MacNeill, 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>; Peterson, David A. M., Lori A. Biederman, David Andersen, Tessa M. Ditonto, and Kevin Roe. "Mitigating Gender Bias in Student Evaluations of Teaching." *PLOS ONE* 14, no. 5 (May 15, 2019): e0216241. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0216241>; 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,

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.”²

The proposed language is to be added to the student feedback survey instrument so that before starting a survey, the student will see this language. The current language refers to the student code of conduct but does not mention bias. The proposed language is adapted from a research study that found promising results if students are reminded about bias just before starting the survey.³ Similar language has been adopted by CSU Fullerton (see [University Policy Statement 200.000](#)).

“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>

² 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>.

³ David A. M. Peterson et al., “Mitigating Gender Bias in Student Evaluations of Teaching,” *PLOS ONE* 14, no. 5 (May 15, 2019): e0216241, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0216241>.

Current language in the survey instrument:

Your responses provide valuable information to the instructor about their course design and teaching methods and may be used as part of evaluation of teaching in the retention, tenure and promotion process. Civil language and constructive comments are expected. The Student Code of Conduct prohibits use of language in written comments that constitutes “disorderly, lewd, indecent, or obscene behavior” or “threatens or endangers the health or safety of any person within or related to the University community.” [See <http://www2.humboldt.edu/studentrights/home>].

Updated language to the survey instrument:

Your opinions and feedback play an important role in the review of your instructors.

Cal Poly Humboldt recognizes that student feedback is often influenced by students’ **unconscious** and **unintentional** biases about the race and gender of the instructor. Faculty of color and faculty who identify as femme, trans, women or non-binary are systematically rated lower in their feedback than white men, even when there are no actual differences in the instruction or in what students have learned.

As you fill out the course evaluation please keep in mind:

- Provide constructive feedback.
- Focus on your opinions about the content of the course (the assignments, the textbook, the in-class material).
- Be aware of how biases can affect your feedback.
- Obscene or threatening language is prohibited by the Student Code of Conduct (for more information, visit [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)).

Thank you! Your feedback provides valuable information to the instructor about their course design and teaching methods.