

320 STEPHENS HALL
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

August 3, 2015

CATHERINE P. KOSHLAND
Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education

Subject: Addendum to the 1987 Recommendations for Administering and Analyzing Student Course Evaluations

Dear Cathy,

On May 11, 2015, the Divisional Council (DIVCO) discussed the proposed addendum to the 1987 Recommendations for Administering and Analyzing Student Course Evaluations, informed by reports of the committees on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations (BIR), Educational Policy (CEP), and Graduate Council (GC). Because Professor Oliver O'Reilly, an elected member of DIVCO, co-chaired the Joint Senate-Administration Task Force on Teaching Evaluation, I separately solicited his input as well. His commentary along with that of the reporting committees is appended here in its entirety.

The discussion in DIVCO underscored ongoing concerns about the efficacy and practical implementation of online evaluation of teaching on campus. Overall, we are disappointed that the recommendations of the 2008-09 Joint Senate-Administration Task Force on Teaching Evaluation are not directly addressed in the addendum.

Much of our discussion centered on concerns about the response rate for online evaluation, as articulated in CEP's commentary:

CEP also suggests that guidance be provided or sought by the Online Evaluation of Courses Steering Committee on what response rates are expected and acceptable. The Maslach and O'Reilly report encourages a minimum response rate of 70%. Therefore, an important question for the Steering Committee is to ask explicitly about the response rates for paper evaluations compared to online evaluations and whether these response rates are expected to be the same? In this regard, faculty from departments that have participated thus far in the online evaluations of courses sometimes report difficulty in getting students to fill out online evaluations, and responses rates are consequently sometimes quite poor.

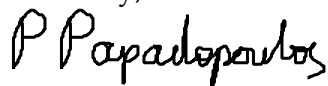
In addition, DIVCO members expressed serious concern about who will ultimately be responsible for ensuring adequate response rates—individual faculty members, departments, or campus administration. We believe that campus administration should be responsible for the development of systems that allow departments to implement a range of incentives to encourage students to complete course evaluations, and yield response rates of 70% and higher, as the task force recommended.

DIVCO also finds that the addendum, in the current outline form, is difficult to understand and lacks clarity. For example, section 1.E.2 (Sharing of Evaluation Data) “General Statement of Principle of Value of Sharing Evaluation Data” does not articulate a principle or provide context for the proposed data sharing. Overall, we find the outline format to be inadequate. We agree with CEP, and recommend that it be rewritten.

In addition to its broader concerns, DIVCO addressed the specific questions you posed. With respect to whether one or two questions should be mandated, we believe that the question assessing the effectiveness of the instructor is indeed mandated. We believe that the second question assessing the effectiveness of the course is not mandatory, but is useful and should remain albeit as an option. As to whether the first question should apply to graduate student instructors (GSIs), we believe that it should, but the questions and templates should be reviewed by Graduate Council, and be tailored according to the size and nature of the course.

In closing, I note that faculty and administration share a common responsibility to devise ways forward on the matter of teaching evaluations, including both the mode of delivery (paper or online) and the content. Perhaps, the iterative process of recommendations and responses to them may not be the most effective way to proceed. I believe that the Senate would be most amenable to a joint effort to make progress on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Panos Papadopoulos
Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate
Chancellor's Professor of Mechanical Engineering

Encls. (4)

Cc: Oliver O'Reilly, elected member of Divisional Council
R. Jay Wallace, Chair, Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations
Glynda Hull, Chair, Committee on Educational Policy
Lisa Alvarez-Cohen, Chair, Graduate Council
Aimee Larsen, Manager, Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations
Linda Corley, Senate Analyst, Committee on Educational Policy

March 24, 2015

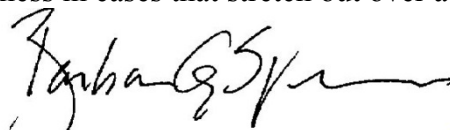
CHAIR PANOS PAPADOPOULOS
BERKELEY DIVISION OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE

RE: Addendum to the 1987 “Recommendations for Administering and Analyzing Student Course Evaluations”

You have asked us to comment on two specific issues that have arisen during the deliberations of the Online Evaluation of Courses Steering Committee, regarding revisions to the 1987 document entitled, “Recommendations for Administering and Analyzing Student Course Evaluations.” We thank you for this opportunity, since we have a vested interest in improvements to the system for the evaluation of teaching, one of three areas of review that must be assessed in all merit, advancement, and promotion cases.

A 2002 addendum, written by Jan de Vries, then-Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Faculty Welfare, to the Policy on Teaching Evaluations stipulates that a uniform question be included in all teaching evaluation forms, as follows: “Considering both the limitations and possibilities of the subject matter and course, how would you rate the overall teaching effectiveness of this instructor?”. You note that, in practice, this question has often been expanded to ask about course effectiveness, though there is no clear record of this corollary question ever having been incorporated in policy. From our perspective, the second question is particularly apt when courses are co-taught and it is often difficult to pick apart who deserves credit for what. We note, too, that the second question often elicits a very different ranking than the ranking for instructor effectiveness, even in courses taught by a single instructor. This leads us to speculate whether instructor effectiveness is understood by students as a way of registering their opinion of the instructor’s overall likeability or the stringency of their grading, while the course-effectiveness question elicits information about how much they feel they have learned, regardless of whether or not they liked the instructor’s style.

In response to your second question, we are very concerned with retention of evaluation data, particularly in the cases of ladder-rank faculty who have been slow to advance in the Associate Professor rank (some of whom are stalled there for 20 years or more), and Unit 18 Lecturers who must undergo Excellence Reviews to continue appointment beyond 12 semesters of teaching. Many Lecturers teach only one course a year, which means that it can take as long as 12 years to build up a teaching record that triggers an Excellence Review. The eight-year guideline is a great improvement on the three-year guideline enshrined in the 1987 policy. It would seem to be the briefest period that would allow for a reasonable assessment of teaching effectiveness in cases that stretch out over a long period.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara Spackman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Barbara Spackman
Chair

BS/al



320 STEPHENS HALL
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

May 11, 2015

PANOS PAPADOPOULOS

Division Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate

*Re: The Addendum to the 1987 Recommendations for Administering and Analyzing
Student Course Evaluations*

CEP reviewed VC Cathy Koshland's "DRAFT Addendum to the 1987 Recommendations for Administering and Analyzing Student Course Evaluations" via email and offers the following comments:

1) On the issue of whether there should be two questions, one about overall teaching effectiveness, and a second about the overall effectiveness of the course, CEP members offered a range of views. There was consensus about the value of the existing question on the overall teaching effectiveness of the instructor. There was also consensus that, if departments want to include a question about overall course effectiveness, it should remain within their discretion. For those CEP members who believed that student course evaluations should not include a second mandated inquiry about the effectiveness of the course, the following reasons were offered: First, given the significant differences in levels, formats, and purposes of courses within any given department, it seems less than useful to ask students to compare a course they have matriculated in to other courses within the different spectrums of classes taken by individual students within a class. Second, the 2009 Task Force on Teaching Evaluation Final Report chaired by Christina Maslach and Oliver O'Reilly did not suggest that there be a second mandated questions in which students evaluate the overall effectiveness of the course. Finally, CEP also notes that the Maslach and O'Reilly report did recommend that there be a "numerical student evaluation of how much the student learned in the course." Some but not all CEP members similarly believe that including a query in the student evaluations about what the student learned would be a useful second mandated question.

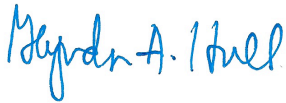
2) In answer to the question of whether the mandatory question about overall teaching effectiveness should be included on evaluation forms for graduate student instructors, we defer to Graduate Council.

3) CEP also suggests that guidance be provided or sought by the Online Evaluation of Courses Steering Committee on what response rates are expected and acceptable. The Maslach and O'Reilly report encourages a minimum response rate of 70%. Therefore, an important question for the Steering Committee is to ask explicitly about the response rates for paper evaluations compared to online evaluations and whether these response rates are expected to be the same? In this regard, faculty from departments that have participated thus far in the online evaluations of courses sometimes report difficulty in getting students to fill out online evaluations, and responses rates are consequently sometimes quite poor. Faculty from other institutions have made similar anecdotal comments concerning the poor response rates from online student evaluations.

4) Given the work done this year in the Senate on requiring and promoting the use of a range of data to evaluate overall teaching effectiveness, rather than a sole reliance on end of term student evaluations (whether online or on paper), CEP suggests that communications about the proposed addendum add the note to the effect that information other than student ratings, such a peer review, should be provided for evaluating teaching for merit and promotion cases.

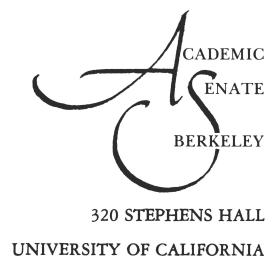
5) CEP recommends that the Addendum be revised to be more readable (for example, not presented in outline format).

Sincerely,



Glynda Hull, Chair
Committee on Educational Policy

GH/lc



May 7, 2015

PROFESSOR PANOS PAPADOPOULOS
Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate

*Re: Graduate Council comments on the Addendum to the 1987
Recommendations for Administering and Analyzing Student Course Evaluations*

Dear Chair Papadopoulos,

At our May 4, 2015 meeting, Graduate Council members discussed the Addendum to the 1987 Recommendations for Administering and Analyzing Student Course Evaluations, including the two questions posed by Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education Cathy Koshland. Members did not have any comments about the proposed addendum. With regard to whether one or two questions are mandated, we believe there is value in both questions (quality of instructor, usefulness of class), but did note that it may be difficult to assess the usefulness of the class until well after the course is over. Members also noted that the implementation of a teaching dossier will provide a richer assessment of teaching than these questions offer. Members agreed that the GC should review templates and questions for student course evaluations that are aimed at graduate student instructors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Alvarez-Cohen'.

Lisa Alvarez-Cohen
Chair, Graduate Council



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May 10, 2015

Professor Panos Papadopoulos

Chair of the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate

Re: Comments on VC Koshland's Letter of Inquiry

Dear Panos,

I am writing to you in response to your request for comments on a Draft Addendum to "1987 Policy for the Evaluation of Teaching (for Advancement and Promotion) and the Recommendations for Administering and Analyzing Course Evaluations" by the Online Evaluation of Courses Steering Committee. The request was forwarded to you by Vice Chancellor Koshland on their behalf.

By way of background, I was a co-chair, with former Vice Provost Christina Maslach, of the Joint Academic Senate Administration Task Force on Teaching Evaluation during the Academic Years 2005–2006 & 2006–2007. This task force produced a lengthy report on the evaluation of teaching for the Berkeley campus and a wide range of recommendations. I have also served two terms as Chair of the Committee on Teaching.

Most of the recommendations discussed in the Addendum are sensible and practical. However, I have two primary concerns:

Response rates and bias are a well-known issue with any form of evaluation. Distributing paper evaluations after a final review is one method for an instructor to improve the response rate. However, such control is not possible for an online system and the methods discussed in Recommendation 2.A. may be woefully inadequate to ensure a good response rate. For instance, many students, including those in my courses that I discussed this matter with, don't read emails from instructors and are typically inundated with exams, papers, and finals at the end of the semester. I firmly believe if the University wishes to implement an online evaluation system, then the administration should take *complete* responsibility for ensuring adequate response rates and be held accountable when problems arise that effect tenure and promotion cases. Taking on this responsibility is also a great opportunity for the administration to show its continued commitment to improving the quality of teaching on the Berkeley campus.

My second concern lies in Recommendation 1.E on sharing of data. While the first part of this recommendation discusses the privilege of departments to withhold evaluation data from the public the second part discusses a "General Statement of Principle of Value of Sharing Evaluation Data." I believe the latter recommendation is not clearly stated and should be removed. I would also like to point out that students have access to public sites where evaluation of teachers and grade distributions can be found. Among others, these sites include

<http://www.ninjacourses.com/>
<https://www.courserank.com/berkeley/start>

In addition, with the onset of online evaluations, I can see how some faculty will be able to easily post their ratings/comments from students on their personal websites should they so choose. In conclusion, the need for a prob-

lematic recommendation such as 1.E is unnecessary.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Oliver M. O'Reilly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'O' at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail on the 'y'.

Oliver M. O'Reilly

Professor of Mechanical Engineering

Chair of the Committee on Teaching (AY 2005–2006 & AY 2006–2007)

Cochair on the Joint Academic Senate Administration Task Force on Teaching Evaluation (AY 2007–2008 & AY 2008–2009)

Elected Member of Divisional Council of the Academic Senate (AY 2008-2010, AY 2009-2010, AY 2013-2014, & AY 2014-2015)