



Faculty Senate

Steering Committee

Agenda for meeting of Thursday, March 28th, 2024, 3:00 pm

Location: Lake Nona Campus, 6850 Lake Nona Blvd., Medical Education Building, Room 300F

For those unable to make the in person meeting due to travel, location or health issues, there is a Zoom option:

<https://ucf.zoom.us/j/94258309914?pwd=Z09FanVnOE55QmMweVJwMUZvYlhJdz09>

Passcode: 686775

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call via Qualtrics
3. Approval of Minutes of *February 29th, 2024*
4. Recognition of Guests
5. Announcements and Report of the Chair
 - a) Steering Composition Update for 2024-2025 Faculty Senate session
6. Report of the Provost
7. Unfinished Business
8. New Business
 - a) Report of the Nominating Committee – *Nominating Committee*
 - b) UCF Faculty Senate Leadership Statement Regarding Civil Discourse and Free Expression
 - c) Update on Resolution 2023-2024-8 Evaluating Faculty Instruction
9. Committee Reports - no reports this meeting
10. Other Business
11. Adjournment

Chair Report: Steering composition update for 2024-2025 Faculty Senate session.

Due to the addition of two new academic units (CDL and CUGS) to the senate for the 2024-2025 senate session, the member composition for the steering committee will be altered in the upcoming year. The steering committee membership is described in the Bylaws in Section VI.A.1, but it's written in a way that can be a bit hard to follow so its outlined here as well.

For steering membership:

1. Steering members includes the senate officers (chair, vice chair, secretary, and past chair).
2. After the officers are included, there are 15 "standard" senators allotted to steering, with a requirement of one senator per academic unit. That one senator from each unit is selected by a vote of all senators from that one unit (note: senate officers can vote for but cannot serve as this standard steering member).
3. If there are seats left in the 15 standard senator spots after each academic unit has their single position filled, those vacant spots go to the unit with the largest number of faculty, and we go on down the list until we get to 15 standard senators (again, these standard steering members cannot be senate officers).
4. For the upcoming year, we have 14 academic units, as we have added in CDL and CUGS to the senate, and thus to steering as well. This means that the 14 units will each get their single senator, and only the largest (College of Science this year) will get a second standard steering member to bring us to a total of 15 standard members.
5. In the year just ending, we had 12 academic units, and the three extra steering seats went to the three largest academic units (COS, CAH and CECS).
6. We will always end up with 19 members of steering, although there may only be 18 voting members if we have a past chair that is not a current senator (for example, Bill Self is currently a non-voting member of steering...he is on the steering committee in the bylaw-mandated role of past chair (***Bylaws Section III.A.3***), but he is not an elected senator this year).

From Bylaws VI.A.1 Composition.

The Steering Committee is composed of the chair of the Faculty Senate, the vice chair, the secretary of the Faculty Senate, and the immediate past chair of the Senate. In addition to the current officers and the immediate past chair of the Faculty Senate, the total number of senators on the Steering Committee shall be no greater than one-fifth (15) of the total number of senators (75) and apportioned as provided below. Steering Committee members shall be elected by a majority vote of senators present and voting within each of the academic units. There shall be no voting by proxy.

- a. Each academic unit will have one representative on the Steering Committee.
- b. The apportionment of the remaining seats of the Steering Committee (after the provision in Section VI, A.1.a is implemented) shall be derived as follows:
(# general faculty from each unit w. 5 or more senators/total # faculty from all units w.5 or more senators) x remaining # of vacant seats (***edited to fit the space here***)
- c. Vacant seats shall be allocated in descending order of the calculation in *Bylaws*, Section VI.A1.b until all seats are filled.
- d. In the event of a vacancy on the Steering Committee, the senators of that academic unit shall elect a replacement from amongst its membership.

AGENDA ITEM:

UCF Faculty Senate Leadership Statement Regarding Civil Discourse and Free Expression

Excerpts From the BOG Civil Discourse Final Report-2022

University Leadership

State university boards of trustees have the powers and duties necessary for each university's operation, management, and accountability. University civil discourse policies, programs, and initiatives should be viewed as strategic priorities by each board of trustees. The Board of Governors also believes that university faculty senates and student governments have a vital role and should participate early and often in the development, implementation, evaluation, and support of civil discourse programs and initiatives.

Recommendation III. The Board of Governors recommends that the leadership of each university board of trustees, faculty senate, and student government annually review and endorse the Board's Statement of Free Expression and commit to the principles of civil discourse.

Proposed UCF Faculty Senate Leadership Statement

The University of Central Florida Faculty Senate Steering Committee has examined and reviewed civil discourse and freedom of expression within the Faculty Senate. We find that the Faculty Senate has shown support for both civil discourse and freedom of expression as outlined in the University System Board of Governors Statement of Free Expression. The Faculty Senate, via resolution, has endorsed freedom of expression and civil discourse, and our support for both civil discourse and free expression will continue.

Stephen J. King, Ph.D.

Chair, UCF Faculty Senate

Appendix A: State University System of Florida Statement of Free Expression

The State University System of Florida and its twelve public postsecondary institutions adopt this Statement on Free Expression to support and encourage full and open discourse and the robust exchange of ideas and perspectives on our respective campuses. The principles of freedom of speech and freedom of expression in the United States and Florida Constitutions, in addition to being legal rights, are an integral part of our three-part university mission to deliver a high quality academic experience for our students, engage in meaningful and productive research, and provide valuable public service for the benefit of our local communities and the state. The purpose of this Statement is to affirm our dedication to these principles and to seek our campus communities' commitment to maintaining our campuses as places where the open exchange of knowledge and ideas furthers our mission.

A fundamental purpose of an institution of higher education is to provide a learning environment where divergent ideas, opinions and philosophies, new and old, can be rigorously debated and critically evaluated. Through this process, often referred to as the marketplace of ideas, individuals are free to express any ideas and opinions they wish, even if others may disagree with them or find those ideas and opinions to be offensive or otherwise antithetical to their own world view. The very process of debating divergent ideas and challenging others' opinions develops the intellectual skills necessary to respectfully argue through civil discourse. Development of such skills leads to personal and scholarly growth and is an essential component of the academic and research missions of each of our institutions.

It is equally important not to stifle the dissemination of any ideas, even if other members of our community may find those ideas abhorrent. Individuals wishing to express ideas with which others may disagree must be free to do so, without fear of being bullied, threatened or silenced. This does not mean that such ideas should go unchallenged, as that is part of the learning process. And though we believe all members of our campus communities have a role to play in promoting civility and mutual respect in that type of discourse, we must not let concerns over civility or respect be used as a reason to silence expression. We should empower and enable one another to speak and listen, rather than interfere with or silence the open expression of ideas.

Each member of our campus communities must also recognize that institutions may restrict expression that is unlawful, such as true threats or defamation. Because universities and colleges are first and foremost places where people go to engage in scholarly endeavors, it is necessary to the efficient and effective operations of each institution for there to be reasonable limitations on the time, place, and manner in which these rights are exercised. Each institution has adopted regulations that align with Florida's Campus Free Expression Act, section 1004.097, Florida Statutes, and with the United States and Florida Constitutions and the legal opinions interpreting those provisions. These limitations are narrowly drawn and content-neutral and serve to ensure that all members of our campus communities have an equal ability to express their ideas and opinions, while preserving campus order and security.

Appendix B:

Resolution 2017-2018-6 Endorsement of University of Chicago Statement on Freedom of Expression

Whereas, the University of Central Florida firmly supports academic freedom and free speech on campus; and

Whereas, multiple events on university campuses across the country over the past several years, but especially 2017, have raised questions about status of free speech on American university campuses; and

Whereas, the free speech policy statement produced by the Committee for Freedom of Expression at the University of Chicago has become a model for university affirmations of free speech and academic freedom across the country since its publication in 2015; and

Whereas, the Chicago Statement has been adopted or endorsed by a growing number of faculty bodies and institution across the United States; therefore

Be it Resolved that the Faculty Senate endorses the following statement on freedom of expression, adapted from the University of Chicago statement:

Because the University of Central Florida is committed to free and open inquiry in all matters, it guarantees all members of the University community the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn. Except insofar as limitations on that freedom are necessary to the functioning of the University, the University of Central Florida fully respects and supports the freedom of all members of the University community to discuss any problem that presents itself.

Of course, the ideas of different members of the University of Central Florida community will often and quite naturally conflict. But it is not the proper role of the University to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive. Although the University greatly values civility, and although all members of the University community share in the responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, concerns about civility and mutual respect can never be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas, however offensive or disagreeable those ideas may be to some members of our community.

The freedom to debate and discuss the merits of competing ideas does not, of course, mean that individuals may say whatever they wish, wherever they wish. The University of Central Florida may restrict expression that violates the law, that falsely defames a specific individual, that constitutes a genuine threat or harassment, that unjustifiably invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interests, or that is otherwise directly incompatible

with the functioning of the University. In addition, the University may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt the ordinary activities of the University. But these are narrow exceptions to the general principle of freedom of expression, and it is vitally important that these exceptions never be used in a manner that is inconsistent with the University's commitment to a completely free and open discussion of ideas.

The University of Central Florida's fundamental commitment is to the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of the University community to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed. It is for the individual members of the University community, not for the University as an institution, to make those judgments for themselves, and to act on those judgments not by seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas that they oppose. Indeed, fostering the ability of members of the University community to engage in such debate and deliberation in an effective and responsible manner is an essential part of the University's educational mission.

As a corollary to the University of Central Florida's commitment to protect and promote free expression, members of the University community must also act in conformity with the principle of free expression. Although members of the University community are free to criticize and contest the views expressed on campus, and to criticize and contest speakers who are invited to express their views on campus, they may not obstruct or otherwise interfere with the freedom of others to express views they reject or even loathe. To this end, the University has a solemn responsibility not only to promote a lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it.

Approved by the Faculty Senate on October 19, 2017.

Civil Discourse Final Report

2022



CIVIL DISCOURSE INITIATIVES

in the

STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

As members of many different societal groups and communities, people thrive on the personal interactions that occur every minute of every day. These ongoing interactions provide the foundation for learning, discovery, and growth in a university setting. More specifically, open-minded, tolerant, and respectful discourse among campus community members is critical to enabling students to learn and pursue their educational goals, faculty to effectively teach, and staff to pursue fulfilling work.

To promote civil discourse in the State University System, the Board of Governors, the presidents of Florida's twelve public universities, adopted a "Statement of Free Expression" in 2019. The Board's statement directly aligns with the well-established "Chicago Principles" that originated at the University of Chicago in 2014 to articulate the university's overarching commitment to free, robust, and uninhibited debate. Universities have widely adopted the Chicago Principles throughout the U.S.

The Board's Statement of Free Expression was endorsed by the twelve state universities as a vehicle to establish, maintain, and support a full and open discourse and the robust exchange of ideas and perspectives on all university campuses (See Appendix A). The statement reinforces that a critical purpose of a higher education institution is "to provide a learning environment where divergent ideas, opinions, and philosophies, new and old, can be rigorously debated and critically evaluated."

Board of Governors Chair Syd Kitson established the Board's Civil Discourse Initiative during his January 2021 "State of the System" address. Chair Kitson expressed concern regarding the steady decline in respectful discourse among those with differing viewpoints. He stated that the university setting could provide a foundation for understanding, learning, and growth in this area. Chair Kitson tasked Governor Tim Cerio to lead the initiative through the Strategic Planning Committee. Governor Cerio has stated that "Civil discourse, conducted civilly without fear of reprisal, is critical to free speech and ensuring academic and intellectual freedom – not just on our university campuses, but throughout our country."

The 2018 Legislature established the Campus Free Expression Act in section 1004.097, Florida Statutes. This statute provides direction and relevance to the Board's initiative as it codifies an individual's right to engage in free-speech activities at public higher education institutions. It also prohibits a public institution from shielding students, faculty, or staff from expressive activities while authorizing a public institution to create and enforce reasonable restrictions under specified conditions.

CIVIL DISCOURSE: BEST PRACTICES

The State University System

The state universities provided information on activities and initiatives promoting and supporting civil discourse in their campus communities. Best practices gleaned from a review of their submissions were highlighted within the following four categories.

1. Workshops & Professional Development: Presentations, lectures, workshops, or training designed to provide opportunities for faculty, staff, students, and campus partners to learn how to engage in and facilitate dialogue respectfully.
2. Speakers, Dialogue & Debate: Events or programs that provide opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to engage in, observe, or facilitate conversations and encourage civil discourse.
3. Outreach (on and off-campus): Programs, workshops, and or campaigns with external partners help cultivate a campus culture of civil discourse.
4. Research and Academic Affairs: Research-based initiatives, web tools, and courses designed to provide opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to engage in and learn about issues related to civil discourse in a formal setting.

Additionally, the committee researched established national programs addressing civil discourse and interviewed prominent authorities in this area. Interviews were conducted with Dr. Robert George, McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence & Director, James Madison Program at Princeton University; Dr. Lynn Pasquerella, President of the Association of American Colleges and Universities; Dr. Diana Hess, Dean, University of Wisconsin School of Education; Ms. Liz Joyner, Founder & C.E.O., the Village Square; Dr. Bill Mattox, Director, James Madison Institute's Marshall Center for Educational Options; Dr. Tim Chapin, Dean, FSU College of Social Sciences and Public Policy, and Dr. Jonathan Haidt, founder of the Heterodox Academy.

National Models

A review of the national postsecondary system and institutional civil discourse programs identified a number of highly regarded initiatives and strategies that promote and support civil discourse. Examples include the following.

- The Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Brigham Young University: The Center's primary focus is conflict resolution. Through mediation, arbitration, training workshops, research, conferences, academic courses, and consultations, the Center assists both the university and the community in building skills and promoting understanding of peace, negotiation, communication, and conflict resolution.
- Heterodox Academy: Heterodox Academy is a nonpartisan international collaborative of professors, administrators, and students committed to enhancing the quality of research and education by promoting open inquiry, viewpoint diversity, and constructive disagreement in institutions of higher learning. The

Heterodox Academy was founded in 2015 by scholar Jonathan Haidt. He was prompted by his views on the negative impact that the lack of ideological diversity has had on the quality of research within the Academy.

The Academy collaboratively engages with universities throughout the U.S. to promote rigorous, open, and responsible interactions across lines of difference as essential to separating good ideas from bad and making good ideas better. Heterodox scholars view the university as a place of collaborative truth-seeking, where diverse scholars and students approach problems and questions from different points of view in pursuit of knowledge, discovery, and growth.

- The Institute for Civic Discourse and Democracy, Kansas State University: The Institute pursues theories and practice in civic discourse that are identified to advance improvements in all campus and community interactions. The Institute supports public conversation to elevate specific qualities of civic discourse, including inclusiveness, equality, reciprocity, reflection, reason-giving, and shared decision-making. The Institute offers certificates and degrees through the university's communication studies department; and offers workshops, facilitator training, and research opportunities through the Kansas Civic Life Project.
- The James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions: The James Madison Program is a scholarly institute within the Department of Politics at Princeton University and is dedicated to exploring enduring questions of American constitutional law and Western political thought. The James Madison Program was founded in 2000 by Dr. Robert George, McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton University, and follows the University of Chicago's principles on freedom of expression.

The James Madison Program promotes teaching and scholarship in constitutional law and political thought and provides a forum for free expression and robust civil dialogue and debate. The Program hosts visiting postdoctoral and undergraduate fellows and offers various activities, courses, summer programs, and other related activities promoting free expression.

RECOMMENDATIONS

All 12 universities in the State University System have voiced a commitment to civil discourse and have provided numerous examples of programs and policies to establish, maintain, and support civil discourse throughout their living, learning, and working environment.

In recent years, there have been incidents of unacceptable behaviors and violations of codes of conduct and personnel policies relating to civil discourse by administrators, faculty, and students in the system. When such incidents occur, universities must respond to grievances with rapid response, thorough review, and adjudication according to their established policies. This process is most valuable when the conflict is resolved,

the impacted individuals are redressed, and all involved can learn and grow from the experience.

Moreover, programming restricting participation based on race or ethnicity, and in violation of existing university policies, has occurred with more frequency on Florida campuses. Although perhaps well-intentioned, often the effect of these programs is to further divide and disenfranchise, rather than promote understanding through civil discourse.

The Board of Governors as Advocate

The Board of Governors, responsible for the management and operation of the State University System, is unequivocal in its support of civil discourse throughout its 12 campus communities. The Board believes that each campus community member has a unique and critical role in the adherence to civil discourse and the ongoing support of the establishment, maintenance, and evaluation of civil discourse initiatives.

The Board of Governors' "Statement of Free Expression" remains an integral part of the Board's three-pronged mission for state universities: to deliver a high-quality academic experience for students, to engage in meaningful and productive research, and to provide a valuable public service for the benefit of local communities, metropolitan regions, and the state.

- I. **The Board of Governors expects that the leadership at each university will operationalize the Board's commitment to open-minded and tolerant civil discourse by promoting, supporting, and regularly evaluating adherence to the principles set forth in the Board's Statement of Free Expression and cultivating a culture of civil discourse in all campus interactions, including academic, administrative, extracurricular, and social dealings.**

University Planning

In its 2025 Strategic Plan, the Board of Governors sets forth its mission for the State University System and further states that the state universities will "*support students' development of the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes needed for success in the global society and marketplace.*" The Board strongly believes that the state universities are well-positioned to provide the foundation for civil discourse learning, understanding, and growth for all campus community members.

Each university's Accountability Plan is an annual report of specific accountability measures and strategic plans.

- II. **The Board of Governors recommends that each university's Accountability Plan and Strategic Plan include a specific endorsement of the Board's Statement of Free Expression, as well as a clear expectation for open-minded and tolerant civil discourse throughout the campus community. The Board of Governors will include similar statements and principles in its Strategic Plan for the State University System.**

University Leadership

State university boards of trustees have the powers and duties necessary for each university's operation, management, and accountability. University civil discourse policies, programs, and initiatives should be viewed as strategic priorities by each board of trustees. The Board of Governors also believes that university faculty senates and student governments have a vital role and should participate early and often in the development, implementation, evaluation, and support of civil discourse programs and initiatives.

- III. **The Board of Governors recommends that the leadership of each university board of trustees, faculty senate, and student government annually review and endorse the Board's Statement of Free Expression and commit to the principles of civil discourse.**
- IV. **The Board of Governors recommends that each board of trustees conducts a thorough review of current student orientation programs, student codes of conduct, and employee policies and procedures to ensure consistency with the Board of Governors Statement of Free Expression, the principles of free speech and civil discourse, and compliance with section 1004.097, Florida Statutes.**

The University President

The university president has primary responsibility for establishing the campus culture and setting the day-to-day living, learning, and working environment for all university community members. The president directs and monitors these efforts and is ultimately accountable for the civil discourse climate in the campus community.

Board of Governors Regulation 1.001, University Board of Trustees Powers and Duties, states that the annual evaluation for university presidents addresses "responsiveness to the Board of Governors' strategic goals and priorities."

- V. **Beginning in the 2022 presidential evaluation and contract renewal cycle, as a part of a president's evaluation, the Chair of the Board of Governors will consult with the board of trustees chair to review the university's campus free speech climate, including adherence to the principles set forth in the Board's Statement of Free Expression, the occurrence and the resolution of any issues related to the university's compliance with substantiated violations of section 1004.097, Florida Statutes, and the implementation of best practices promoting civil discourse.**

Academic, Student, and Administrative Affairs

Board of Governors Regulation 1.001, University Boards of Trustees Powers & Duties, directs each board of trustees to adopt regulations or policies for a student code of conduct and establish a personnel program for all university employees. These policies are required to include standards for performance and conduct as well as disciplinary actions, complaints, appeals, and grievance procedures.

A university's personnel policies, orientation programs, and student code of conduct are critical to setting the tone for a climate of open-mindedness and tolerance for civil discourse. More specifically, all university campus areas, including classrooms, lecture halls, offices, and extracurricular, residential, and social locales, offer opportunities for learning, tolerance, and growth. Academic deans and directors, student affairs administrators, faculty, and students share responsibility for establishing and reinforcing tolerant, open-minded, and respectful discourse on a university campus.

- VI. **The Board of Governors recommends that university academic, student affairs, and administrative leaders review student orientation programming, student codes of conduct, and employee personnel policies and procedures to ensure that they contain clear and unambiguous support for the Board's Statement of Free Expression, and the principles of free speech and civil discourse, and that they are in compliance with section 1004.097, Florida Statutes.**

Best Practices for Civil Discourse

- VII. **The Board of Governors recommends implementing the following best practices based on its review of university programs and initiatives that effectively promote and support civil discourse.**

- **Instill the importance of civil discourse, academic freedom, and free speech from day one**, utilizing student and employee orientation sessions, public assemblies, and official university documents and communications.
- **Schedule and host ongoing, campus-wide forums, dialogues, and debates** on various issues and perspectives to promote open discussion, understanding, and learning opportunities.
- **Foster intellectual diversity** by encouraging university leadership to: (1) promote viewpoint diversity and open-minded discussion and debate, and (2) highlight and enforce policies that prohibit programming that excludes participation based on race or ethnicity.
- **Avoid disinvitations** by developing clear, viewpoint-neutral policies and procedures governing the invitation and accommodation of campus speakers.
- **Provide targeted educational and professional development opportunities** for university administrative employees to reinforce free expression and open-minded debate norms.
- **Encourage faculty to establish and maintain a learning environment in their classrooms and offices that supports open dialogue and the free expression of all viewpoints and create processes to evaluate the strength of such environments.**

Appendix A

State University System of Florida

Statement of Free Expression

April 15, 2019

The State University System of Florida and its twelve public postsecondary institutions adopt this Statement on Free Expression to support and encourage a full and open discourse and the robust exchange of ideas and perspectives on our respective campuses. The principles of freedom of speech and freedom of expression in the United States and Florida Constitutions, in addition to being legal rights, are an integral part of our three-part university mission to deliver a high-quality academic experience for our students, engage in meaningful and productive research, and provide valuable public service for the benefit of our local communities and the state. The purpose of this statement is to affirm our dedication to these principles and to seek our campus communities' commitment to maintaining our campuses as places where the open exchange of knowledge and ideas furthers our mission.

A fundamental purpose of an institution of higher education is to provide a learning environment where divergent ideas, opinions, and philosophies, new and old, can be rigorously debated and critically evaluated. Through this process, often referred to as the marketplace of ideas, individuals are free to express any ideas and opinions they wish, even if others may disagree with them or find those ideas and opinions to be offensive or otherwise antithetical to their own worldview. The very process of debating divergent ideas and challenging others' opinions develops the intellectual skills necessary to respectfully argue through civil discourse. Development of such skills leads to personal and scholarly growth and is an essential component of each of our institutions' academic and research missions.

It is equally important not to stifle the dissemination of any ideas, even if other members of our community may find those ideas abhorrent. Individuals wishing to express ideas with which others may disagree must be free to do so without fear of being bullied, threatened, or silenced. This does not mean that such ideas should go unchallenged, as that is part of the learning process. And though we believe all members of our campus communities have a role to play in promoting civility and mutual respect in that type of discourse, we must not let concerns over civility or respect be used as a reason to silence expression. We should empower and enable one another to speak and listen, rather than interfere with or silence the open expression of ideas.

Each member of our campus communities must also recognize that institutions may restrict unlawful expression, such as true threats or defamation. Because universities and colleges are first and foremost places where people go to engage in scholarly endeavors, it is necessary to the efficient and effective operations of each institution for there to be reasonable limitations on the time, place, and manner in which these rights are exercised. Each institution has adopted regulations that align with Florida's Campus

Free Expression Act, section 1004.097, Florida Statutes, and the United States and Florida Constitutions and the legal opinions interpreting those provisions. These limitations are narrowly drawn and content-neutral and serve to ensure that all members of our campus communities have an equal ability to express their ideas and opinions while preserving campus order and security.



STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA





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State University System of Florida

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Faculty Senate
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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Michael D. Johnson, Provost

CC: Jana Jasinski, Vice Provost for Faculty Excellence

FROM: Stephen King, Faculty Senate Chair

DATE: 3/4/2024

SUBJECT: Resolution 2023-2024-8

On behalf of the Faculty Senate, I am pleased to submit the following resolutions brought forward by the Steering Committee to the Faculty Senate. The Faculty Senate passed this/these resolutions on Thursday February 15, 2024.

Resolution 2023-2024-8

Evaluating Faculty Instruction

Whereas, despite UCF Regulation 3.010 indicating that Student Perceptions of Instruction (SPIs) should not be the only source of evaluating teaching, SPIs remain one of the primary and most convenient methods of evaluating faculty instruction for purposes of annual evaluation, tenure and promotion, and teaching awards at UCF; and

Whereas, empirical research has shown that SPIs are biased against women, with women being judged more harshly than their male counterparts (Boring, 2017; Centra & Gaubatz, 2000; Kogan, Schoenfeld-Tacher, & Hellyer, 2010; Laube, Massoni et al., 2007; Mitchell & Martin, 2018). Empirical research has equally shown that SPIs are biased against ethnic and minority groups, resulting in African American professors being rated, on average, as 21% more mean spirited and 24% harder as compared to Caucasian faculty ratings (Harlow, 2003); and

Whereas, a recommendation of the 2020 report of the UCF SPI Task Force states: “As one of the largest and most innovative universities in the U.S., a designated Hispanic-Serving and Minority Serving institution that is committed to access, inclusion, and diversity, UCF should discontinue the use of SPIs, which perpetuate race- and gender-based biases, in the process of Faculty Performance evaluations” (p.6). The rationale for this recommendation was based in part on an argument that appeared in an issue of Inside Higher Ed, which stated: “Relying on biased instruments to evaluate faculty members is institutional discrimination.” (Owen, 2019); and

Whereas, empirical research, including a recent meta-analysis (Uttl, White & Gonzalez, 2017), has shown that SPIs are a poor measure of teaching effectiveness, primarily measuring perceptions of students who are not experts in pedagogy, and are influenced by non-teaching based factors like time of day, subject, and class size (Boring, Ottoboni & Stark, 2016; Flaherty, 2020; Lederman, 2020; Stroebe, 2020); and

Whereas, empirical research has shown that students rate teaching methods that have been proven effective [such as active learning] as less effective than passive learning strategies (Deslauriers, McCarty et al., 2019); and

Whereas, UCF research has shown that less than 60% of students complete SPIs, despite continuous reminders and subsequent barriers to enrollment and other university activities for those failing to complete them (Dziuban, Moskal, Self, & Hubertz, 2022); and

Whereas, UCF research has shown that 66.1% of students from 2017 to 2021 straight lined their SPI responses (Dziuban, Moskal, Self, & Hubertz, 2022); and

Whereas, empirical research has shown that “up to a third of students use instructor ratings to get revenge on instructors they do not like, even to the extent of submitting false information” (Clayson & Haley, 2011; as cited in UCF SPI Task Force Report, 2020:7).

Whereas, empirical research has shown that student grade satisfaction, receiving expected grades, perceived and actual grading leniency, and/or “consumer satisfaction” are important drivers of [positive] faculty evaluations (Johnson, 2002; Eizler, 2002; Felton et al., 2008; Braga et al., 2014; Stroebe, 2020); and

Whereas, empirical research has shown that SPIs, especially when used in high-stake personnel decisions, encourage grade inflation (Johnson, 2006; Shouping, 2005), ultimately affecting the credibility of institutions and creating dubious impressions of student learning and teaching effectiveness; and

Whereas, at UCF, from 2018 to 2023, in lower-level undergraduate courses, 46.8 percent [range of 42.3 - 49] of grades were A's (A /A-) and 26.2 percent [range of 25.3 – 28.2] were B's (B+/B/B-). From 2018 to 2023, in upper-level undergraduate courses, 47.2 percent [range of 44 – 48.9] of grades were A's and 26.1 percent [range of 25.7 - 27.9] were B's (Source:IKM); and

Whereas, at UCF, from 2018 to 2023, the average percentage of A's received in upper-level undergraduate courses was at or exceeded 55 percent [range of 55 – 65] in 6 of 10 colleges. In the remaining 4 colleges, which are responsible for 62% of all grades at UCF, the most commonly reported percentage of A's for upper-level undergraduate courses was 45 percent [range of 31 – 46] and 26 and 36 percent for B's (Data Source: IKM; College of Medicine and Graduate Studies, and Honor's College, where 80 percent of grades are "S," are not included in these figures).

Whereas, research by scholars from Brigham Young, Purdue, and Stanford University (Denning, Eide, Mumford, Patterson & Warnick, 2023) found that the "no direct cost to the university" practice of grade inflation [not changing enrollment patterns, better performance on standardized tests, student-to-faculty ratios or instructional expenditures] is most responsible for increased graduation rates ("The Grade Inflation Conversation We're Not Having", April 13, 2023 issue of Chronicle of Higher Education); and

Whereas, four other universities (Colorado-Boulder, Southern California, Oregon, and Kansas) have made substantial changes to the evaluation of faculty teaching, which includes elimination of SPIs as a primary source of evaluating teaching (UCF SPI Task Force, 2020:8-9)

Be it Resolved that UCF abandon use of SPIs in faculty annual evaluations, promotion and tenure, and awards, and require committees, unit/department heads, deans, and other university personnel to employ more objective measures of teaching quality and commitment in assessing faculty instruction. Examples of alternative measures include, but are not limited to:

- quality course designations from CDL
- use of evidence-based practices or innovative or FCTL recommended teaching strategies.
- creation of new courses for department curriculum
- syllabi, classroom assignments, exams
- grade distributions
- students supervised on independent studies/theses/dissertations.
- publications, presentations and/or research with students
- In-class peer observation

Be it Further Resolved that UCF retain use of SPIs for faculty members' personal use in guiding their instruction and in post-tenure review, which complies with current BOG regulations and policies.

Approved by the Faculty Senate Steering Committee on February 1, 2024.

Approved by the Faculty Senate on February 15, 2024.

Update on Resolution 2023-2024-8: Evaluating Faculty Instruction

On March 19th Provost Johnson denied Resolution 2023-2024-8 with the following statement:

I cannot accept eliminating student perceptions of instruction from faculty evaluative materials, despite their imperfections. We owe our students, our most important audience, the opportunity to criticize or comment on the teaching they receive. As a result, I am denying this resolution. However, there is at present a great deal wrong with our evaluation of teaching. Most of our departmental AESPs give SPOIs too much credence - e.g., using unimportant distinctions such as 3.3 vs 3.6 averages as a way to distinguish between one rating level and another. In my experience, it is outlying SPOIs - very high or very low - that are most useful in identifying, respectively, excellent or poor instruction. This is particularly the case when comments are studied carefully. Our evaluation of teaching would greatly benefit if departments added to AESPs and P&T criteria items such as those listed as "examples of alternative measures." However, I do note that these mostly account for effort rather than quality. I would favor adding items such as unusually high DFW rates - a sign of teaching failure, not rigor; or students avoiding a faculty member's classes; or a careful perusal of student comments. It is also possible to examine, e.g., final exams to ensure that the course covers appropriate content, and use examples of "A" or "F" final exams to understand the course's rigor. The best measures are those that directly compare student learning under different approaches. In addition, FCTL has a list of possible ways to evaluate teaching effectiveness (attached) that could trigger discussion. I strongly encourage departments to put much more effort into developing written criteria for quality teaching.

This is being presented for information purposes.

On February 29th, the steering committee considered a motion to create a Faculty Senate Teaching Evaluation Task Force. The following motion was approved unanimously by the steering committee:

Motion to create a Faculty Senate Teaching Evaluation ad hoc committee in light of the 37-18 vote passing Resolution 2023-2024-8.

The ad hoc committee charge is twofold:

1. Examine teaching evaluation practices from other higher ed institutions that do not rely on student perceptions of instruction including Colorado-Boulder, Southern California, Oregon, Kansas along with current research and present a resolution to the faculty senate regarding mechanisms to measure effective teaching that do not rely on documented biased measures of student perception.
2. The ad hoc committee shall also present a resolution with a revised set of objective SPI questions for use in 5-year reviews.

The ad hoc committee membership, building upon the multiple task forces and committees who have already spent countless hours researching this topic and to expedite this process, should include Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning representation including members of the previous task force, all members of the Senate Personnel Committee who authored Resolution 2023-2024-8, the Center for Distributed Learning, as well as other interested faculty.

They shall prepare their resolutions to be voted upon by Faculty Senate before the conclusion of the 2025 Senate Term.