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Faculty Senate Resolution 16-09

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LSU Faculty Senate Resolution 16-09
Amending PS-36-T and -NT so as to Comply with
Faculty Senate Resolution 03-04 on Grade Distributions

Sponsored by Dr. Sukhamay Kundu, Associate Professor, Division of Computer Science & Engineering; Dr. Evangelos Triantaphyllou, Professor, Division of Computer Science & Engineering; Dr. R. Clint Whaley, Associate Professor, Division of Computer Science & Engineering; Dr. Charles N. Delzell, Professor, Department of Mathematics

Whereas Faculty Senate Resolution 03-04 (On Grades and Standards, adopted December 11, 2002^{*}) declares:

... The Faculty Senate recommends the adoption of the following practices as a matter of policy:

1....

2. Whenever an administrator or a committee makes or reports an evaluation of teaching—or of a course, or of a program, or of an experimental mode or method of teaching—grade distributions will be on view and will be part of the record along with other appropriate factors such as course requirements, grading criteria, and evidence of student achievement....

Whereas some faculty members, department chairs, and deans have prevented members of PS-36 faculty panels from viewing the grade distributions of candidates for appointment, reappointment, promotion, or advancement to tenure,

Therefore be it resolved that the Faculty Senate recommends that PS-36-T and -NT be amended as follows: In section V.B (“Teaching”), in the (non-exhaustive) “list of examples of appropriate factors and evidence” that may contribute to a judgment of the quality of the teaching of a candidate for appointment, reappointment, promotion, or advancement to tenure, change item 9 by appending the underlined text indicated below:

9. Evaluations of teaching and testimonials by present or former students. Any sampling of student opinion should be carried out in such a manner so that students can state their judgments freely and without fear of reprisal. If student evaluations of teaching are used as a factor in judging teaching quality, grade distributions will be on view and will be part of the record, as well as information on the extent to which the department prescribes the syllabus or grading practices of the instructor.

Therefore be it further resolved that the Faculty Senate reaffirms all other parts of Resolution 03-04, as well.

^{*} <http://www.lsu.edu/senate/Resolutions.html>

Faculty Senate Resolution 03-04:
On Grades and Standards
Including (Only by Reference) Two Appendices
Presented by Carruth McGehee at the Meeting of November 7, 2002
As Amended and Adopted at the Meeting of December 11, 2002

Whereas, the evaluation of students' work and achievement is an important responsibility of the faculty; and

Whereas, University policy on undergraduate grades (p. 65 of the current catalog) states that A indicates distinguished mastery of the course material; B, good mastery; C, acceptable mastery; D, minimally acceptable achievement for credit; and F, failure; and

Whereas, grades serve to acquaint students with the standards of the discipline; to inform them about their mastery of skills and subject matter; and to advise them of their preparedness for further study or for a line of work--and ought to do so accurately; and

Whereas, grades serve to certify students' credentials to providers of scholarships and awards, to employers, and to graduate schools--and ought to do so in a meaningful and reasonably uniform manner; and

Whereas, students' educational interests are better served when they are challenged by academic programs of good quality, with grading standards which are rigorous, consistent, and sound; and

Whereas, grades at LSU (see Appendix 2) have been rising for many years; 63% of undergraduate grades in the fall of 2001 were As or Bs; furthermore, grade distributions differ considerably among academic units; and

Whereas, grading standards in U.S. universities have become the subject of widespread discussion and concern (see, for example, the Rosovsky-Hartley report, the material from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and other references listed in Appendix 1);

Therefore Be it Resolved, that all teaching faculty should thoughtfully examine their grading standards and practices.

Be it further Resolved, that in every department (or other appropriate academic unit), administrative leaders should promote analysis and discussion of grading standards and practices--in the light of the disciplines, teaching methods, and characteristics of student populations taught by that department. After due preparation, but no later than Spring 2004, the faculty of every department should review the issues and problems in a formal meeting—to exchange views, move toward consensus, and adopt new policies and guidelines if they see fit.

Be it further Resolved, that the Faculty Senate recommends the adoption of the following practices as a matter of policy:

1. Each semester, every faculty member will be informed of the recent grade distributions in the courses he or she teaches, and in other courses at the same level, courses in the same discipline, and so forth, so that he or she will have a clear picture of grading practices in the campus context. Each department or school will, in timely fashion, obtain the needed reports and studies from the Office of Budget and Planning.
2. Whenever an administrator or a committee makes or reports an evaluation of teaching—or of a course, or of a program, or of an experimental mode or method of teaching—grade distributions will be on view and will be part of the record along with other appropriate factors such as course requirements, grading criteria, and evidence of student achievement.
3. The appropriate officer of each academic unit will take special care to see that all teaching personnel are informed about pertinent policies and expectations with respect to grades, and supported as they undertake to uphold appropriate standards.
4. Each year, beginning in Spring 2004, each Dean, in consultation with the policy committee or other appropriate faculty body, will prepare a report for the Provost on grading patterns and practices in the units reporting to him or her, addressing any need that may exist for reform.

Be it further Resolved, that the Committee on Admissions, Standards, and Honors should, in consultation with the Provost, monitor developments in the distribution of grades. Each year, beginning in 2004, the Committee will report thereon to the Faculty Senate, offering recommendations as it sees fit.

Be it further Resolved, that the Committee on the Improvement of Instruction should, in the spirit of Faculty Senate Resolution 96-08 (passed unanimously by the Faculty Senate at its meeting of February 17, 1998) monitor patterns in campus procedures for the evaluation of teaching, consider issues related thereto, and offer recommendations as it sees fit.

Be it further Resolved, that colleges and schools whose degree programs have admission requirements including a minimum GPA should, if they find that the use of this criterion may be inducing a decline in standards, consider replacing it by a competitive consideration of the GPA;

Be it further Resolved, that the Faculty Senate favors appropriately rigorous and more nearly uniform grading standards based on sound course design and valid distinctions among levels of mastery. We do not favor arbitrary changes in grade distributions. We affirm the provision in PS-44 that at the beginning of every course, the teacher must give the students a clear statement of requirements and grading criteria. The primacy of teaching faculty's judgment in determining grades in their classes is affirmed.

[7 pages of appendices to Resolution 03-04 are omitted here; see
<http://www.lsu.edu/senate/Resolutions/R03-04.pdf>.]

**PS-36-T:
Tenure-Track and Tenured Faculty: Appointments,
Reappointments, Promotions, Tenure, Annual Reviews, and
Enhancement of Job Performance**

[Excerpt on evaluating teaching.]

V. Criteria for Evaluating Faculty Job Performance

[Preamble of section V omitted here.]

V.A. Scholarship

[Section V.A omitted here]

V.B. Teaching

The University exists for the development and the dissemination of knowledge and understanding, and for the conduct of excellent instructional programs. Every faculty member is expected to be reliable, committed, and highly competent in the performance of his or her assigned teaching duties, to contribute to the teaching mission of the department, and to perform an appropriate role in the development of curricula and of educational policy.

Characteristics of an excellent teacher include intellectual honesty, command of the subject, organization of material for effective presentation, cogency and logic, ability to arouse students' curiosity, stimulation of independent learning and creative work, high standards, and thoughtful academic mentoring.

Contributions to the teaching mission that are valid and will be recognized, depending on the department, include, for example, the following. The list is not exhaustive.

1. Classroom instruction and the conduct of courses
2. Conduct of seminars, critiques, and practica
3. Direction of independent study
4. Direction of creative and artistic projects
5. Informal student seminars
6. Supervision of students in clinical work
7. Conduct of a course that integrates learning and community service
8. Involving students in research and publication

9. Multidisciplinary and interdepartmental teaching
10. Direction of a thesis or dissertation
11. Articles on pedagogy
12. Redesign of a course, or development of a new course
13. Innovation in teaching methods
14. Contributions to committees and other entities concerned with teaching, curricula, or educational policy
15. Publication of textbooks

If teaching is a part of the department's mission, then in every case for appointment, reappointment, promotion, or advancement to tenure, it is the responsibility of the appropriate group of faculty to arrive at a judgment as to the quality of the candidate's teaching. Examples of appropriate factors and evidence that may contribute to such a judgment are as follows. The list is not exhaustive.

1. Observation of classroom teaching or of other presentations
2. Statements by the candidate of his or her educational philosophy
3. Evaluations by peers of course syllabi or other instructional materials
4. Student performance on departmental examinations or standardized tests
5. Students' subsequent success or demonstration of mastery
6. Honors or special recognition for teaching excellence
7. Invitations to teach in programs at other educational institutions
8. Invited lectures and panel presentations that pertain to teaching
9. Evaluations of teaching and testimonials by present or former students. Any sampling of student opinion should be carried out in such a manner so that students can state their judgments freely and without fear of reprisal
10. Publication by respected publishing houses
11. Textbook adoptions at other universities

12. Grants and contracts to fund teaching activities or provide student stipends, especially by national agencies or foundations

V.C. Service

[Section V.C omitted here; end of excerpt from PS-36-T.]