

Graduate and Professional Studies Council Response to UCC 126 10S: SGA Bill to Institute Professor Evaluations when a Student Withdraws from a Class

Faculty member number 1: I understand that this would give students that are experiencing a difficult classroom experience a voice even if they have not completed the course, but I wonder how this would be implemented given the move to online course evaluations (implemented in the College of Architecture last fall and accompanied by a precipitous drop in participation).

My experience (as perceived from my biased faculty position) is that most students drop courses due to personal circumstances or conflicts not related to the instructor or the course. Often as not, they drop because they are failing the course. It seems that giving voice to these students should be carefully considered.

Another aspect that may vary widely from college to college but is true for us is that the course evaluations do not specifically ask about problems with the teacher's teaching style. Primarily, the questions deal with preparedness, knowledge, availability and clarity.

Faculty member number 2: There is much this resolution takes for granted. Especially in assigning 'blame' for a student's withdrawal on the 'teaching style' of the professor. In conversations with withdrawing students the most frequently cited cause for withdrawal are changes in personal circumstance.

Whenever able the I counsel students on the six drop policy, their standing in the course, and examine alternatives with them to successfully complete the course.

Why would students who attend class regularly and complete all of the work support students without the same commitment having a say in evaluating a Professor's performance.

I could support inquiry into why students withdraw. However, not the privilege of evaluating a professor without completing the course. That would be like reading a movie review from a critic who left in the first 15 minutes of the movie.

Faculty member number 3: I'm not sure how this process is designed to work, but let me say I would not support this proposal. The better approach would be to simply send out a survey to the student who dropped asking why. How much faith do you want to put in an evaluation by a student who has not completed the course? The implication here is that if a student drops it must be the professor's fault. My experience is that is seldom the case.

If a student drops a course, how is it possible to administer an evaluation in the same manner as we do at the end of a course? The student has dropped. He is no longer in class.

If we really care about finding out why a student has dropped, a quick survey sent to the student would yield us much, and probably more, information than an evaluation of a professor before the class is completed

Faculty member number 4: Frankly I have two reactions to this. If we do this let the faculty also give an evaluation of the students who withdraw. Have the number of absences, the grades and grade distribution of students and withdrawing students, and get some real data. That is a late afternoon response to reading this!

I find that in my classes it is the student who does not attend class, misses the deadlines and then withdraws rather than to work for extra credit, attend classes and study to pass the next exams. I know this is over generalizing- and if the university wants to approve this then I think they should take it on as a research project and look at the entire picture of retention and withdrawals- and patterns of withdrawals,

interview students, faculty, have a data base and not make some assumptions based on a teaching evaluation. I am always amazed that students would spend the money for a course and then withdraw without thinking about the financial consequences or even talking to the faculty member about alternatives.

So my recommendation is for the university to take retention seriously and do some research and not use a single measure- a teaching evaluation to make deductions about withdrawals, faculty teaching style or anything else for that matter! Look at all the variables- and then we could all learn something about withdrawals and how to help students who want to be helped succeed!

Student representative to GPSC: As the Graduate SGA Social Work Senator rep on the GPSC, I voted in favor of this legislation when it was introduced in the SGA. When a student drops a class, it may or may not be due to the issues related to the student but there is a possibility that there may have been an issue with the professor. This evaluation process will enable students to provide feedback that the university can use to enhance the educational process for the students on campus. I hope this committee supports this legislation.

Faculty member number 5: I oppose this idea because a student who withdraws after a few classes does not have the same experience and insight into the professor's teaching as a student who has taken all the classes, done all the assignments and taken all the exams. A student who withdraws should be asked why, but in no way, shape or form should that student fill out the same evaluation as the student who completes the course.

Faculty member number 6: I have concerns about the SGA bill for the following reasons:

1. The reason most students drop graduate classes has nothing to do with the professor.
2. Students who drop a class often have not attended a sufficient # of classes to give a reasonable or accurate evaluation of the professor's teaching.

Faculty member number 7: The only problem I see is that of anonymity. When the student withdraws and completes an evaluation, all parties who read the evaluation will know who completed it. If only one student withdraws, the identity will be known for certain. If several students withdraw, it will be known that a small pool of students may have completed the evaluation. If the evaluations are mixed in with those of class completers to preserve anonymity, it will considerably diminish the impact of the evaluation (assuming its negative), as it may be 1 or a few mixed in with 30-250.