

TO: Dylan Rodriguez, Chair
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FR: Richard M. Carpiano, Chair
Executive Committee, School of Public Policy

RE: Campus Review Consultation: Consideration of Proposal for Suspension of iEval
for Spring 2020

Date: April 24, 2020

The Executive Committee of the School of Public Policy is appreciative of Dr. Jeannette Kohl and Dr. Jason Weems' proposal to suspend iEval for Spring 2020. We were sympathetic to the concerns and rationale guiding this proposal. However, upon reviewing it, we identified several issues that were problematic in terms of the scope and implementation of the proposed measures. In response, we raised two, multi-part issues that need to be considered and offer an alternative—and more flexible—solution, that has several benefits.

Our concerns with the submitted proposal center on the following two matters:

1. Suspending iEval altogether for Spring 2020.

Committee concern about this “broad stroke” effort was raised for three reasons:

- a. Students have a right to be able to express their feedback about a course.
- b. Faculty will be kept from receiving feedback on their newly formatted courses and online instructional efforts.
- c. Many faculty may still receive good teaching evaluations, but will be unable to use such evaluations to their benefit in promotion and merit because the proposed option takes away their choice to (i) have their course evaluations collected and (ii) use them as they see they fit.

2. Enacting this measure just for Spring 2020 is unfairly biased towards faculty teaching during the Spring 2020 term. Many faculty are not teaching during Spring 2020 term and will only encounter the current online teaching situation (and challenges motivating this proposal) for the first time either during the Summer or possibly Fall 2020 terms. Therefore, extending any special iEval courtesy to only faculty teaching during Spring 2020 term implicitly presumes that only those faculty will endure hardship transitioning their teaching to online platforms and will unfairly benefit only them. It is fair to argue that many faculty on campus would not be teaching online (e.g., due to subject matter, teaching style) unless the COVID-19

response situation existed. Therefore, regardless of whether faculty had two weeks or two months to prepare, this situation and the resulting campus policies present challenges to *all faculty* teaching under these circumstances.

Given these important issues are not sufficiently addressed in the proposal, our committee offers the following multi-part alternative suggestions as part of our comments:

1. Continue with using iEval as campus normally would for any term, *but*
2. Faculty members' first term teaching online (i.e. for Spring, Summer, or Fall 2020) will automatically be excluded from their file evaluations *unless*
3. A faculty member requests *in writing* to their unit that they (i) wish to include these (first term teaching online) evaluations in their efile and (ii) have these evaluations count for their merit and promotion file review.

These suggested measures will provide three benefits:

1. Enable students to still (i) have a voice in regard to their learning experience, the course environment, and instructor conduct and effectiveness; and (ii) provide valuable feedback to their instructors.
2. Enable faculty to (i) receive—and potentially benefit from—that valuable student feedback and (ii) benefit in their evaluations if they choose, yet
3. Protect faculty (automatically) from any unfair penalties incurred due to the COVID-19-related circumstances that forced them to teach in this manner *for their first term teaching online* (i.e. it will extend to all faculty forced to adopt their classes to an online environment and not just those faculty teaching during Spring 2020).