Faculty Senate – EPSAC Response to UCC 0126 10S

The EPSAC committee recommends the proposed policy not be accepted, but further work be conducted in collaboration with students to develop a comprehensive, acceptable policy that can be used as a data-gathering mechanism. We recommend the mechanism be called withdrawal assessment, rather than professor evaluation.

EPSAC is concerned about the assumptions the document makes with regards to faculty roles in preventing students from dropping. Specifically, the document indicates that "students will often times (typo in original document) drop or withdraw from a class due to issues with the teaching style of a professor" and that "if a professor or class fails to improve then the rate of withdrawal will remain high". From my perspective that suggests that students dropping from classes is in most cases a "teaching style" or "class" issue, rather than an issue that is determined by a number of factors, including student motivation, student aptitude, student class and working schedule, students' successful completion of prerequisite classes. If you ask students for their opinions about faculty in classes they withdraw from, they may feel negatively about the faculty member even if their reason for dropping the class is that they were not qualified to take it to begin with.

We think that there is some merit to the idea of evaluating and assessing why students drop classes, but would recommend not priming students to think it is faculty members' fault by providing a "professor evaluation form". The form they could receive when dropping or withdrawing could ask a multitude of questions and faculty teaching style could be one of them, but I feel other issues should be addressed/evaluated/assessed also (see the ones mentioned in 1).

We recommend a revised form be integrated into the peoplesoft system, requiring students who are dropping courses complete the form as part of the drop-process.