

Student Affairs Committee and Educational Research Technology Committee Faculty Senate Report on the Resolution Passed on Course Evaluations

August 28th, 2018

Background: On October 23rd 2017 the Faculty Senate passed with 80% approval a resolution on “Departmentally Controlled myUVM Portal Integrated Online Course Evaluation Platform.” (Appendix A). Since then, additional efforts have been conducted on behalf of the Faculty Senate.

Update: The Provost has charged a committee of eight individuals to execute the action called for in our resolution with a deadline of February 2019 for a recommendation. Appointed members of this committee:

- Penny Bishop, Associate Dean for Innovation and Technology, College of Education and Social Services;
- Jamie Benson, Chair, Academic Affairs Committee, Student Government Association;
- Michael Cannizzaro, Associate Professor, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders;
- Thomas Chittenden, Co-Chair, Faculty Senate Student Affairs Committee;
- Andrew Hendrickson, Information Technology Administrator, College of Arts and Sciences;
- Rachel Seremeth, Director, Enterprise Application Services;
- Regina Toolin, Chair, Faculty Senate Educational and Research Technologies Committee;
- Rachel Grace Trowbridge, Associate Registrar.

Departmental Presentations:

Per the request of the Provost, UVM department chairs and directors were contacted including a full presentation to the CAS Directors & Chairs body in February of 2018. These presentations generated additional letters and emails of support to further identify a solution to improve how course evaluations are conducted at UVM.

Administrative Staff Discussions:

To translate our resolution into action, staff in ETS, SAA and the Registrar’s office were consulted. A draft Request for Information (RFI) document was developed and technical questions have been identified.

From these discussions, concerns have been raised on some of the language of the Faculty Senate–approved resolution. Three specific changes are proposed in response.

1. Revised language acknowledges that decision making concerning course evaluation methods will continue to rest with our departments, schools, and colleges, as it does at present. It also acknowledges that control over course evaluation data remains with deans and department chairs, as it does now.
2. The new language eliminates reference to “auditing access attempts,” which had unnecessary negative connotations.
3. It adds another “Whereas” clause referencing the support for online course evaluations at UVM evidenced with resolutions, letters and statements of support compiled over the past six years.

This is a report to the Faculty Senate that the following language revisions are being adopted by the newly appointed Request for Proposal Committee. We welcome your comments and concerns.

<i>Language Approved by the Faculty Senate (10/23/17)</i>	<i>Revised Language to be Used by the Request For Proposal Committee</i>
<p><i>Functional units or departments on campus would not be under any obligation to use this integrated platform for course evaluations, and that the determination to do so rests with the governance structures in place within each functional unit/department;</i></p>	<p><i>Governance and decision making over course evaluation platform use would continue to rest with the governance structures in place within each college, school, or department;</i></p>
<p><i>This platform would place full autonomy and control of the questions, responses, and managed access to the responses solely with the functional units or departments on campus currently responsible for managing course evaluations;</i></p>	<p><i>Control over course evaluation response data would continue to rest with department chairs and deans, as it does at present;</i></p>
<p><i>Any implemented system would include data access and access attempt auditing to maintain verifiable integrity over the departmentally controlled responses to these course evaluations.</i></p>	<p><i>Add: WHEREAS there is documented widespread support across the University of Vermont from faculty, associate deans, and deans for the development of a sophisticated, integrated, and online course evaluation platform to improve the quality, completeness, and dimensional depth of collected responses.</i></p>

Appendix A: Faculty Senate Passed Resolution on October 23rd 2017

WHEREAS the University of Vermont Faculty Senate passed a motion on online evaluations on April 9th 2012 (FS2012-174) supporting the creation of an online course evaluation platform for UVM courses; and

WHEREAS the University of Vermont Student Government Association passed a resolution supporting the revitalization and standardization of academic course evaluations on November 18th 2014 (SGA2014-04); and

WHEREAS the Student Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, the Educational Research & Technologies Committee of the Faculty Senate and the Student Government Association passed additional resolutions calling for an integrated course evaluation system to have the following operational and policy parameters:

- The anonymity of respondent submissions should be maintained in all presented results with specific attention to semantic security limiting multi-dimensional response parsing to only include sub-populations with a minimum number of five collected responses from that sub group;
- Such a platform would make available the course questionnaire to students to complete up until being able to view their final course grade, and that a prompt would ask students if they would like to opt out or in to completing the evaluation;
- If the student opts to complete the course evaluation, this would only occur before the final grade is viewable ensuring that students must complete the course evaluation before their grade is viewable through the online portal;
- Functional units or departments on campus would not be under any obligation to use this integrated platform for course evaluations, and that the determination to do so rests with the governance structures in place within each functional unit/department;
- This platform would place full autonomy and control of the questions, responses and managed access to the responses solely with the functional units or departments on campus currently responsible for managing course evaluations;
- Any implemented system would include data access and access attempt auditing to maintain verifiable integrity over the departmentally controlled responses to these course evaluations.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that

- The University of Vermont Faculty Senate supports the implementation of a myUVM-integrated departmentally controlled course evaluation platform.; and
- The University of Vermont should charge a joint Administration/Faculty Senate committee to develop a Request for Information (RFI) to solicit vendor proposals on a course evaluation platform to meet the desired characteristics outlined above.