

Faculty Senate Resolution Regarding

DFW Rates Memo to COLFA Faculty from Dean Gelo dated 2-18-16

The Academic Freedom, Evaluation and Merit Committee of the UTSA Faculty Senate has reviewed the DFW Rates Memo to COLFA Faculty from Dean Gelo (2-18-16) at the request of the Faculty Senate and has received faculty member input from and through Senate members. This input has been incorporated into this resolution.

The Faculty Senate supports efforts to address the DFW disparities across classes and abnormally high DFW rates in a systematic manner that advances the quality of instruction and achievement of learning for students. The Provost, Deans, and Chairs, and Faculty members who have recognized this problem and who have made progress in systematically addressing the problem while maintaining academic standards are to be commended.

Regarding the DFW Rates Memo, the Faculty Senate is supportive of the intent of some of the strategies suggested to address the problem. However, there are two statements of policy in the Memo about which many Faculty members and Faculty Senate members are very concerned. These are the last two bulleted statements in the Memo:

- Faculty whose DFW rates in any course are in excess of 20% in a semester following submission of an action plan will be assigned a rating of "fails to meet expectations" in the teaching category of the annual merit evaluation by the dean's office.
- Faculty whose DFW rates in any course in excess of 20% in a second semester after submission of an action plan will be assigned a rating of "unsatisfactory" in the teaching category of the annual merit evaluation by the dean's office. NTT faculty who receive an "unsatisfactory" rating for high DFW rates will not be retained.

There is general consensus among Faculty Senators that these stated policies are an affront to academic freedom of COLFA faculty members and department chairs through the use of overly structured definitions of consequence for evaluation. The policies also seem to be at odds with HOP 2.01 and Regent's Rule 40101 which indicate collaboration and faculty governance are fundamental to all matters relating to academic policy as policy appears to have been crafted and implemented without input or involvement of faculty members. Additionally, departmental autonomy in deciding the criteria for merit and chair autonomy in making hiring decisions for NTT faculty appear to be imperiled by these policies and they appear to be inconsistent with the spirit of shared governance. The approach to impose strict evaluation criteria also does not allow for flexibility to manage potential extenuating circumstances that may arise in efforts to address DFW outlier issues. The Faculty Senate does agree that all faculty members who are teaching courses with abnormally high DFW rates should be actively engaged in developing and implementing action plans to address the issue in collaboration with their department chair. A faculty member who in good faith is actively working to address the problem should not be subject to an inflexible consequence as defined by the Memo. The Faculty Senate strongly suggests rescinding the consequence language from the Memo (the last two bulleted statements) and encourages a focus on a collaborative and engaged approach to solving issues of DFW outliers.