



MONTCLAIR STATE
UNIVERSITY

Office of the Provost
MEMORANDUM

Date: July 16, 2019

To: Prof. David Trubatch, President, University Senate

From: Willard Gingerich, Provost & VP for Academic Affairs

Subject: University Senate Resolution Regarding Criteria for the Evaluation of Teaching

I have received and carefully considered the University Senate Resolution of 4/17/19 titled *Recommendation on Policy Regarding Criteria for the Evaluation of Teaching*. I appreciate the attention of the University Senate to this question of teaching assessment, which I understand in this instance to be limited to “Members of the Faculty under review for reappointment, tenure and/or reappointment.” At the same time I again note, as I have in relation to previous issues of discussion with the University Senate, that the MSU Senate is not an academic body with authority in any matters of personnel action.

Nevertheless I have dedicated to this Resolution the same full attention I give to any resolution which emerges from University Senate deliberation, even more in this case since it touches on a matter of essential significance to all our probationary and promotion-seeking colleagues.

First, the “number of students taught in any given semester (e.g., SSH, or SSH per TCH, or other similar quantitative measure” could only ever be one of a cluster of criteria that go into a consistent and comprehensive and honest assessment of teaching effectiveness, at every level of review from Department/School Personnel Action Committee to the Provost. We articulate those criteria carefully in the Faculty Roles and Expectations document (FRE) under the headings *Clear Goals, Adequate Preparation, Appropriate Methods, Significant Results, Reflective Critique, Effective Mentoring, Enhancement of Teaching*, (FRE, 2) and each criterion receives detailed explanation and questions to guide every individual assessment. Encompassing all these criteria and setting the context for all assessment of teaching is the expectation that “*Faculty members are expected to be engaged, over time, with a broad cross-section of students in a variety of different learning circumstances and to continue to make substantial contributions to the instructional program of the University.*”(FRE, *Assessing Teaching*, introduction, 2) Clearly, this expectation requires that any faculty assessment must

occur in context of a sufficient base of student contact to make the application of our criteria meaningful. What is the adequate minimum of instructional contact that achieves that goal? I have never said in any review or guidance for any review that there is an expectation of X student SSHs or faculty TCHs in a given year for adequate assessment of a faculty member's teaching nor would I suggest such a number. I have noted in some cases that the class sizes or lack of "variety of different learning circumstances" limited our ability to effectively apply those criteria listed above and hence render our collective assessment less than convincing. Montclair State University does not run sections of 200, let alone 500 or 600, students as do many of our public peers—or Harvard where some undergrads pay \$50,000+ per year to sit in a class of 800—so we never expect to assess teaching skill at that scale. It cannot be inappropriate or unfair or surprising that we expect "substantial contributions to the instructional program", the most basic practice of which is actual teaching, across "a broad cross-section of students" when our own expectations are so clearly delineated. The actual numbers may vary across disciplines, but in every case we have agreed to base our successive assessments—from D/SPC to Chair to Dean to Provost, and successively over the years of probation—on a body of "substantial contributions".

Thank you for your interest and consideration of this important subject.

Cc: President Susan A. Cole