

Motion approved by the ND Faculty Senate 30-1 on April 5, 2016

The Course/Instructor Feedback (CIF) instrument the University has created appears to be mainstream by student evaluation measurement standards. The problem is that those industry norms, represented by the entire history of validation of such instruments as reported in the Educational Psychology literature, are weak.

The presumed validity evidence developed by the Notre Dame Advisory Committee to the Provost on Evaluation of Teaching in its 2007 creation of the present CIF instrument is primarily reliability evidence, which is insufficient for a conclusion of construct validity. So, across higher education as well as within Notre Dame, it should be recognized that the true validity of conventional student evaluation measures of teaching is unknown at best.

For any university to treat student ratings such as the CIF as embodying stronger evidence than merited intrinsically is dangerously simplistic. Moreover, the University's non-nuanced use of the CIF results may create other specific dysfunctional consequences, such as a stifling effect on pedagogic innovation. Junior faculty, in particular, may be reluctant to experiment with teaching innovations or new ideas for fear of jeopardizing high-stakes semester evaluations.

The present CIF instrument and its use may have contributed positively in some ways to our educational environment. Yet in view of the methodological questionability of extant student evaluation technology, we urge the University to be more cautious in applying such an approach to professional assessment decisions, to avoid unjustified career-damaging outcomes. For instance, better adherence to the University's own stated emphasis on a portfolio approach in promotion decisions, instead of rigid over-interpretation of inherently *ordinal* data, would seem to serve this just aim.

Accordingly, we support the efforts of the University Committee on the Evaluation of Teaching to improve the state of measurement practice for faculty evaluation purposes.