

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

ACADEMIC SENATE

January 6, 2000

Dear UCSC community members,

The UCSC Narrative Evaluation System has been a defining feature of undergraduate and graduate education since the founding of the campus in 1965. Approved by the University of California Assembly of the Academic Senate as a variance to standard grading practices, the system comprises optional letter grades in most courses, but compulsory narrative evaluations. The system was established in a very different climate and under very different funding circumstances. Recently, a very substantial number of faculty members have petitioned to replace the narrative evaluation system with a conventional UC grading system, arguing that it has long since outlived its usefulness, and that it is doing more harm to the campus than good.

Grading policy on University of California campuses is the exclusive purview of the Academic Senate, as specified in the regulations of the Senate. Departures from either the current UCSC system or the standard UC system (letter grades in 2/3 or more classes) would require UC systemwide approval.

The Academic Senate will be sponsoring a series of three forums on UCSC Student Assessment policy in January and February. The first two forums will solicit campus input into the process of reformulating assessment policy on campus, with a goal of introducing legislation for the Senate meeting scheduled for February 23, 2000. The first forum will be held in the Media Theater at 4 PM on Tuesday, January 18, and the second is scheduled for 4 PM on Monday, January 24, in Classroom Unit 2.

To make the most of these first two forums, we are requesting that interested members of the UCSC community (faculty, students, alumni, and staff) submit a 1- 5 page proposal for changes to the present UCSC student assessment system. These proposals should be sent to the Academic Senate Office (senate@cats.ucsc.edu) or Academic Senate, 125 Kerr Hall, preferably five days in advance of a forum. A representative panel will compile the proposals and will address them at the forum. In the event that you are unable to submit a written proposal in advance, you may bring it directly to the forum for discussion.

Finally, the sixth annual Convocation on Teaching, sponsored by the Senate Committee on Teaching and the Center for Teaching Excellence will be February 14, 3:30-5:30 in Classroom Unit 2. The title of the convocation is "NES and Pedagogy: Are Narrative Evaluations Important to Teaching and Learning at UCSC?"

We look forward to your participation in the discussions that will ultimately lead to a student assessment system that will be embraced by the faculty of UC Santa Cruz.

With best regards,

Roger Anderson, Chair of the Academic Senate

David Belanger, Chair, Graduate Council
George Brown, Chair, Committee on Educational Policy