

## UCFA Discussion of the Use of SIRS Forms

This is a rough summary of the discussions held in the UCFA over several meetings in the Spring of 2017. This information is not reflected in the meeting minutes, so is to the best of my recollection.

The chair (Phyllis Floyd) brought it to our attention that faculty had expressed concerns about the exclusive use of SIRS forms for evaluation of faculty teaching to inform decisions regarding annual reviews, merit raises, and RPT decisions. Although the Faculty Handbook does not require the use of SIRS for this purpose, SIRS is prominently featured throughout.

(<https://hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/faculty-academic-staff/faculty-handbook/5Section-Instruction.html>) In addition, SIRS is the first form of evaluation mentioned in the *Instructions for completion of Instruction on Form D*, which may further encourage reliance on SIRS as the only or primary form of evaluation for this purpose.

This concerned the UCFA because of evidence that student evaluations of faculty teaching are systematically gender biased.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/01/11/new-analysis-offers-more-evidence-against-student-evaluations-teaching>

And reliance on these kinds of evaluation raise other concerns, as reported in an AAUP survey of 2014. <https://www.aaup.org/article/how-do-we-evaluate-teaching#.WbBDw4qQyV6>.

For these reasons, it was the UCFA's view that at a minimum, all unit chairs and directors should be discouraged from reliance on a single instrument like SIRS for these purposes, and encouraged to use multiple modes of evaluation that paint a richer picture of the quality of instruction. Although there was lengthy discussion about how to compose this recommendation, the UCFA came to the realization that although it is simple to discourage the use of SIRS because of its potential discriminatory impact, it is quite another matter to develop and effectively promote a more robust system of teaching evaluation, and so recommended to the Steering Committee that it draw on the expertise of the faculty in other university committees with responsibilities that touch on the quality of teaching.

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UCFA Chair 2017-18