

1 September 15, 2011

2 **S.R. 1102**

3
4 **Title: In Support of Incentivized Electronic Course Instructor Surveys**

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6 **WHEREAS,** The Commission of 125 Report states that a “key to improving UT’s capacity for
7 world-class teaching, scholarship, and research is to require that those who lead
8 departments and research centers meet a higher standard of excellence”; and,
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10 **WHEREAS,** The Commission of 125 Report stresses the importance of “holding [faculty]
11 accountable for the outcome” in terms of teaching and research; and,
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13 **WHEREAS,** Student feedback to professors is an essential component of ensuring the retention
14 and development of a world class faculty; and,
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16 **WHEREAS,** Course instructor surveys are the primary mechanism for student feedback about
17 course design and delivery; and,
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19 **WHEREAS,** Students use this data to select courses and evaluate professors when registering
20 for classes each semester; and,
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22 **WHEREAS,** Course instructor surveys are also central to the goals of the Course
23 Transformation program because they “[increase] instructional efficiency and
24 productivity”¹ by providing a standard by which professors are rated; and,
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26 **WHEREAS,** These surveys are also used to recognize outstanding faculty with teaching awards
27 by providing student feedback on the quality of Course design and on the teach
28 ability of professors; and,
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30 **WHEREAS,** Course instructor surveys should be representative of student opinion as they also
31 factor into tenure decisions; and,
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33 **WHEREAS,** Surveys with fewer than five responses, including those for courses consisting of
34 fewer than five students, are currently not displayed as such a small sample size is
35 not considered to be an accurate rating of the quality of a course or a professor;
36 and,
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38 **WHEREAS,** Electronic surveys are voluntary, and because of this, student participation is
39 limited; and,
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¹ <http://www.utexas.edu/academic/ctp/about-ctp/>

41 **WHEREAS,** Voluntary responses are more likely to have strong positive or negative biases, as
42 students with strong opinions are more likely to participate in a voluntary survey,
43 which can lead to an inaccurate interpretation of results; and,
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45 **WHEREAS,** Paper surveys are more representative, as they are administered during class
46 where most of the students are present, but the current policy does not protect
47 student anonymity in all cases; and,
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49 **WHEREAS,** The current policy may discourage students in small courses from voicing their
50 opinion if they believe the professor will recognize their handwriting; and,
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52 **WHEREAS,** The use of handwritten comments in small classes raises privacy concerns that
53 may lead to students censoring their feedback to faculty; and,
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55 **WHEREAS,** Typed comments on electronic course instructor surveys are official university
56 documents and are subject to open records requests; and,
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58 **WHEREAS,** Student comments are protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy
59 Act (FERPA), the Texas Public Information Act (TPIA), and the Texas Open
60 Records Act (TORA); and,
61

62 **WHEREAS,** Legally protected data in student comments is redacted if those comments are
63 made public to ensure that student privacy is protected; therefore, be it,
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65 **RESOLVED,** That the Senate of College Councils supports a full transition to electronic course
66 instructor surveys in all colleges at the discretion of each college dean; therefore
67 be it further,
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69 **RESOLVED,** That students ought to be redirected to electronic course instructor survey forms
70 when checking their grades online, if they have not yet completed surveys from
71 that most recent semester; therefore be it further,
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73 **RESOLVED,** That students be able to opt out of completing each individual survey, provided
74 that they see first form first, and that students no longer be redirected once the
75 survey window has elapsed; therefore be it further,
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77 **RESOLVED,** That students ought to still receive repeated email reminders to complete all
78 surveys before they elapse; therefore be it further,
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80 **RESOLVED,** That paper course instructor surveys continue to be used until an effective
81 incentive system, as determined by the Registrars Office, is implemented to
82 maintain current participation rates in the interim; therefore be it further,
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84 **RESOLVED,** That this resolution be sent to Brad Englert, Chief Information Officer; Shelby
85 Stanfield, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, Registrar; Gretchen Ritter,

86 Vice Provost; the Educational Policy Committee of Faculty Council, and the
87 Research and Education Technology Committee of Faculty Council.

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