Student Evaluation of Faculty - SFI Update and Guidance From the MSP Executive Board

Dear MSP Members,

On February 2, 2024, MSP faculty received an email from the Office of the Provost with the subject heading “Full Time Faculty Now Included in the Student Feedback on Instruction (SFI) Project.”

The MSP Executive Board opposes this unilateral change in the student evaluation process. It is the position of the MSP Executive Board that any change in how faculty are evaluated by students is a Mandatory Subject of Bargaining and must not be implemented until the process has been bargained. Our Contract says we have the right to negotiate evaluations, and the administration arbitrarily changed the system without negotiating it with the faculty through MSP.

The SFI Project is more than just a change in mode of delivery from paper to electronic evaluation. The MSP Executive Board does not oppose electronic evaluation. In fact, several unit members use Qualtrics for student feedback on instruction. The issue at hand here is the fact that we are increasingly being treated like employees rather than empowered faculty with shared governance of academic matters. This unilateral action by the administration displays, in the opinion of the MSP Board, a lack of respect for faculty and the ideals of shared governance, as well as disregard for the contract.

Why is this important to MSP faculty? Scores collected from SFI can have serious repercussions for a professor’s career at UML. These scores are one of several metrics used by the Personnel Committees at the Department and College levels, and at University Rank and Tenure, to decide whether a faculty member coming up for promotion and/or tenure has achieved teaching excellence. These scores could also be used to decide whether a teaching or clinical professor’s annual contract is renewed if s(he) has less than 6 years of service.

Any changes that materially affect faculty job security and/or promotional prospects should not be made unilaterally by administrators without meaningful input from the faculty through the collective bargaining process. Bargaining is about to begin and therefore SFI should be discussed in the bargaining process.

The MSP’s objection to the SFI Project was communicated to the administration via a Cease-and-Desist Letter sent Jan 24, 2024, and the MSP Executive Board is filing an unfair labor practice charge with the State Department of Labor Relations.

Please contact your MSP Officers, or College and/or At-Large MSP Representatives, if you have questions.

***While these legal actions are being pursued, the Board advises faculty to comply with the SFI process that has been unilaterally mandated by the administration.***