

January 31, 2021

Senate Chair Oishi:

As a former Senate Chair, Chair of Senate Chairs, and 13-year Division Chair I most strongly object to the Senate's passage of the new "Student Complaint Process" dated 1/13/21, as passed by the LCC Senate on the same date and during the same Senate session that it was introduced as New Business. I have two serious concerns; 1. The intent and content of the Complaint Process. 2. The way in which it was rushed through the Senate approval process with no campus-wide vetting by those who are the most affected.

From the Senate minutes it seems inappropriate that the Senate would pass such an important new policy affecting every LCC Student and every LCC Faculty member without some reasonable time for deliberation from the time of introduction of the Motion 21.02 as "New Business" to the passing of the Motion 21.03.

In fact, this motion is not a simple "process" but rather a new, far-reaching academic and personnel policy. In my opinion, this seemingly rushed process is riddled with issues which are unfair and potentially destructive to the careers of junior Faculty members. It lists no finite outcomes or final resolutions other than escalation to next Administrative level. It bypasses the Student Committee of the Senate which is already assigned by the BOR to mitigate such student concerns. (The Senate Student Committee is not specifically restricted to only student "academic" grievances and has adjudicated many other wide-ranging issues in the past.) It was not distributed to the Faculty before implementation.

Have the following questions been answered? Will complaints filed be included in Faculty personnel records? Will filed student complaints be considered for tenure and promotions? Has UHPA been consulted? Can a student complaint be filed anonymously without the Faculty member being able to directly address his/her accuser? (This has already happened.) If found to be malicious or frivolous, what is the Faculty members remedy? What is the impact of student complaints on individual faculty academic freedom to manage their instruction in the best way their professional experience dictates, rather than student opinions? Has this new "process" which centers around Faculty members been published to the entire Faculty prior to implementation?

Setting aside the many dangerous flaws and precedents that this new process institutionalizes for perpetuity, my much deeper concern is how this resolution was rush processed by the Senate.

By long-standing common practice, and based on accreditation requirements for shared governance, all UH System Faculty Senates facilitate well-publicized open forums for Faculty members to discuss and debate any new or changed policy or procedure, especially those which affects every single Faculty member of that campus. This sweeping complaint procedure was not vetted by the campus at all, nor was the campus ever given the opportunity to do so prior to implementation. Approving such a rushed process, completely bypassing traditional open Faculty vetting forums, and without due attention to scrutiny, security, outcomes, and faculty academic freedom protections sets a most dangerous Senate precedent while simultaneously abrogating the Senate's most fundamental shared governance responsibilities as well as the Senate's own long-standing traditional vetting procedures.

I recommend immediate Senate reconsideration of this policy until such time as appropriate open Faculty forums can be publicized and scheduled by the Faculty Senate, which bears the sole responsibility to the Faculty to properly fulfill the Senate's own procedures. I further request that a copy of this letter be distributed to all current LCC Faculty Senators as soon as possible.

Respectfully,

Prof. Robert W. Hochstein