WHEREAS:

Statistical procedures depend on complete sampling or random sampling of populations for their validity,

Voluntary online surveys are not designed to ensure even a remote approximation of complete or random sampling,

And, in fact, sampling in voluntary online surveys is frequently less than 50% of the total population and vulnerable to strong biases

IT IS THEREFORE THE CASE THAT:

Results of voluntary online surveys of instructional performance cannot be validly used to support either positive or negative evaluations of personnel,

Students are deprived of actionable voice in the assessment of instructional performance when statistically valid surveys are replaced with voluntary online surveys,

And high-performing instructors are deprived of actionable recognition based on student assessment when statistically valid surveys are replaced with voluntary online surveys.

MOTION: Faculty Council affirms that statistically valid surveys of student ratings of instructional performance, whereas imperfect, are one essential component in the assessment of instructional quality. Faculty Council also finds that voluntary online surveys are in general too suspect statistically to fill this role. Therefore, Faculty Council finds that voluntary online surveys are not in general suitable vehicles for fulfilling this role regardless of their budgetary appeal, and Faculty Council strongly endorses the implementation of statistically valid options on as fast a track as possible.

NOTE: Dr. Douglas Estry, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, has told me that he is working on possible alternatives to the extant voluntary online survey system, alternatives that would restore statistical validity to the process. I am proposing this motion in the belief that instructional evaluation is fundamentally a faculty responsibility, and therefore the faculty should actively support efforts like Dr. Estry’s to bring the present voluntary online survey system to an end sooner rather than later.

Richard Hill
College of Natural Science