

**University Senate of Michigan Technological University  
Proposal 43 - 21**

**“Proposal to Update Senate Procedure 504.1.1: Teaching Effectiveness Evaluations”**

(Voting Units: Academic)

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**Introduction/Rationale**

Michigan Technological University is a diverse community of and for scholars. This community requires an environment of trust and openness where productive work, teaching, and learning can thrive. The University recognizes the necessity of protecting First Amendment rights and encouraging free speech, but also recognizes that certain conduct can threaten the mutual respect that is the foundation of scholarly communities. Our policies are intended to secure the freedom of expression guaranteed by the United States Constitution while maintaining the trust and mutual respect that are vital to a diverse university community. [Board of Trustees Policy 5.1](#)

Occasionally, instructors receive anonymous comments that are harassing or threatening, which demoralizes instructors and undermines their feeling of security, significantly interfering with their ability to perform their required duties. These types of comments also degrade the purpose of the feedback to instructors, which is to help them improve the class and their teaching effectiveness.

The purpose of this proposal is to bring anonymous, end-of-term comments on instructor evaluation forms into the [Academic and Community Conduct](#) system, with the same standards for confidentiality, anonymity, and fairness that the existing system ensures. Students will be held accountable if threatening, harassing, or discriminatory language is used in the survey process such that it rises to the level of violating the [Student Code of Community Conduct](#).

These conduct violations can include, but are not limited to: bullying, discrimination, harassment (general or protected class), retaliation, and threats.

**Policy Changes:**

We therefore propose to add the following to procedure 504.1.1

Under Section II.A,1: Evaluation Instrument

The evaluation instrument will contain language indicating that comments determined to be of a threatening, harassing, or discriminatory nature may result in the loss of anonymity and appropriate action will be taken through the academic misconduct process. The specific procedures for this are as follows:

- 1) An instructor identifies specific comments they consider a potential violation of the [Student Code of Community](#)

[Conduct](#) and reports it. This can be done through “Report a Concern” or by directly contacting OACC, Institutional Equity, or the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). For the rest of this document the “reporting unit” will be the unit first contacted by the instructor.

2) The reporting unit, with permission from the instructor, contacts CTL who then creates and submits a written complaint containing the exact language to the Office of Academic and Community Conduct (OACC) without identifying the instructor.

3) OACC convenes a review committee consisting of a representative from OACC, Institutional Equity, and Public Safety and Police Services. The committee will review the comments to determine if the comments meet standards for harassment, discrimination, or threatening language according to campus wide definitions (as outlined in the Student Code of Community Conduct) and report to the reporting unit a suggested path forward to be approved by the instructor. The reporting unit may release the identity of the instructor to the OACC only with the express permission of the instructor.

4) If comments are NOT found to violate the Student Code of Community Conduct, The reporting unit notifies the instructor who reported the comment that no further action will be taken. The student’s identity is never requested nor released (that is, the student’s identity remains anonymous, even to CTL).

5) If comments ARE found to violate the Student Code of Community Conduct, and the suggested path forward is approved by the instructor, the CTL identifies the student, the complaint is updated to include their name, and the student and comment are transferred to the Academic and Community Conduct system. The instructor or supervisor may request to be notified of the student’s name if the comment language represents a specific safety threat. Otherwise, the student remains anonymous to the instructor and review committee (in step 3 above).

As part of its annual reporting procedures, the OACC will report the number of comments that were forwarded to the OACC for review, and of those, the number that were referred to the Academic and Community Conduct system.