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Faculty Senate Resolution Endorsing a Policy for Supervisors' Observation of Online and Traditional Classrooms

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RESOLUTION ENDORSING A POLICY FOR SUPERVISORS' OBSERVATION OF ONLINE
AND TRADITIONAL CLASSROOMS

WHEREAS, the increasing role of online learning has raised questions about the extent of, and rationale for, classroom observations by authorized supervisors such as department chairs, and,

WHEREAS, such observations may be legitimate to the extent that they are used in assessing the instructor's advancement or the enhancement of instruction, and,

WHEREAS, the Faculty Senate holds that, to the extent feasible, observations of online classrooms should parallel the observation of traditional classrooms, in which every observation of the classroom is known by the instructor, and in which information not available to all students, such as individual grades or feedback from the instructor, can be accessed only by requesting it of the instructor, and,

WHEREAS, this parallel between the observation of traditional classrooms and online classrooms is further recognized by the American Association of University Professors, which states:

“a classroom is not simply a physical space, but any location, real or virtual, in which instruction occurs, and that in classrooms of all types the protections of academic freedom and the faculty's rights to intellectual property in lectures, syllabi, exams, and similar materials are as applicable as they have been in the physical classroom”¹

and,

WHEREAS, the USA Faculty Handbook currently has no formal policy governing a supervisor's observation of faculty classroom performance,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that section 6.2.1 of the USA Faculty Handbook shall be expanded to include the addition of the following section:

3. Observation by Supervisors

Because of the usefulness of having firsthand information about an instructor's teaching effectiveness, a faculty member's classroom instruction may be observed by an authorized supervisor, such as a department chair. Such observation is justified only in those cases where the purpose of the observation is either to evaluate the instructor for advancement purposes, or to enhance instruction.

Observation of online classrooms by supervisors is to be done sensitively and in a way that parallels that of traditional classrooms as closely as possible. To this end, supervisors' observation of online classrooms shall be done using a

¹ American Association of University Professors, *Academic Freedom and Electronic Communications*. November, 2013, p. 8.

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viewing mode identical with, or closely similar to, that of a student. Furthermore, since faculty teaching in a traditional classroom are aware of when supervisor observations take place, as well as of what is observed, faculty teaching online courses shall be informed, in writing, of what portion of the online classroom was or will be observed, and when.

Supervisors who have a legitimate need to view a traditional or online classroom instructor's gradebook, or feedback provided on individually submitted student work (such as completed papers, tests, and quizzes), may request that such materials be provided by the instructor.