



TO: SUNY University Faculty Senate
FROM: Graduate Academic Programs & Research Committee
RE: Resolution: Faculty Freedom and HyFlex Teaching Modality
DATE: October 24-26, 2024
LOCATION: SUNY Plattsburgh, NY
RESOLUTION # 198-01-1 Graduate Academic Programs & Research
VOTE: For: 38 / Against: 8

RATIONALE:

WHEREAS according to Open SUNY Online Learning Data Definitions¹, shared by several campuses^{2,3,4}, a HyFlex course is one that “combines online and face-to-face instruction simultaneously into one single course section, with the mode of direct instruction determined by each individual student. Students are able to choose how to participate in any given class meeting—online or face-to-face”^{1,2,3,4}; and

WHEREAS the HyFlex model has emerged from San Francisco State University due to enrollment concerns as a more resource efficient modality since both online and on site sections can be merged into one section, even though in many places separate sections are simultaneously taught⁵. In addition, this model has been more widely adopted at Community Colleges⁶; and

WHEREAS SUNY Online has funded since 2022 a round of Innovative Instructional Technology Grants (IITG)⁷ related to HyFlex teaching across the System, including Tools for HyFlex Course Delivery and Tools to Teach Large Courses⁸; and

WHEREAS although the HyFlex model presents advantages in terms of student flexibility and course scheduling efficiency, all proponents of this system raise important challenges in terms of faculty freedom, faculty preparedness, faculty workload, classroom technology, classroom resources, and difficulty ensuring equity across modalities; and

WHEREAS these challenges have led some universities, faculty members, and accrediting bodies to not recommend this teaching modality, unless these challenges are clearly overcome⁹; and

WHEREAS equity has been identified as an additional challenge between online and on site course delivery, in particular with students of diverse backgrounds; and

WHEREAS faculty academic freedom protects faculty members’ choice of appropriate teaching methods and pedagogy to best support the subject matter they are teaching. The Policies of the SUNY Board of Trustees Articles VI, X, and XI Title I, the UUP Contract Article 9, and AAUP outline the principles and tenets of academic freedom regarding to teaching and pedagogy^{10,11}; and

WHEREAS Faculty members are expected to prioritize remaining current in the research and scholarship in the subject matters they are teaching and in which they are experts; and

WHEREAS HyFlex modality is generally considered an [in-person modality](#) while international students are limited in the number of online courses they can take;

RESOLUTION:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the University Faculty Senate requests Campus Governance Leaders, Campus Senators, and Campus Leadership, when making decisions about policies related to HyFlex course modality and its definition, to protect full academic freedom in teaching and pedagogy preferences, and to consider faculty workload, classroom technology, classroom resources, difficulty ensuring equity across modalities, and other considerations in pursuit of excellence of instruction; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University Faculty Senate requests Campus Governance Leaders and Campus Leadership to respect the academic freedom of faculty members' modality choices. In making the decision to teach in HyFlex modality, a faculty member is invited to consider: faculty workload, classroom technology, classroom resources, difficulty ensuring equity across modalities, and other considerations in pursuit of excellence of instruction.

BACKGROUND:

1. SUNY Online. (2020) Online Learning Data Definitions. Available: <https://online.suny.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/SUNY-and-IPEDS-Online-Learning-Definitions-May-2020.pdf> [Accessed: 15-Sep-2024].
2. SUNY Oswego. (2024) HyFlex Course Development Support. Available: <https://ww1.oswego.edu/extended-learning/instructional-design/how-we-can-help#HyFlexDev> [Accessed: 2-Oct-2024].
3. University of Buffalo. HyFlex Teaching. Available: <https://www.buffalo.edu/catt/teach/develop/teach/teaching-modes/HyFlex-teach.html> [Accessed: 2-Oct-2024].
4. SUNY Oswego. (2023) SUNY Oswego HyFlex Policy February 2023. Available: https://acquia-prod.oswego.edu/faculty-assembly/sites/www.oswego.edu.faculty-assembly/files/proposed_HyFlex_policy_with_apc_and_pp_recommendations.pdf [Accessed: 2-Oct-2024].
5. Beatty, B.J. (2019) Where Does Hybrid-Flexible Come From? Available: https://edtechbooks.org/HyFlex/book_intro [Accessed: 2-Oct-2024].
6. McCabe, R. (nd) HyFlex, Blendflex, Online Synchronous – Emerging Modalities. Available: <https://system.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/academic-affairs/program-planning/covid-19/HyFlex-Blendflex-and-Online-Synchronous---Emerging-Modalities.pdf> [Accessed: 2-Oct-2024].
7. SUNY Online. (nd) Innovative Instructional Technology Grants. Available: <https://online.suny.edu/iitg/> [Accessed: 15-Sep-2024].
8. Pereira, M. (2022) Call for Applications: SUNY Innovative Instruction Technology Grants. Available: <https://dailybulletin.buffalostate.edu/call-applications-suny-innovative-instruction-technology-grants> [Accessed: 2-Oct-2024].
9. University of Washington. (nd) Challenges of delivering live lectures to in-person and online students simultaneously. Available: <https://teaching.washington.edu/challenges-of-delivering-live-lectures-to-in-person-and-online-students-simultaneously/> [Accessed: 2-Oct-2024].
10. SUNY Board of Trustees. (2024) Policies of the Board of Trustees. http://www.suny.edu/Board_of_Trustees/PDF/Policies.pdf [Accessed: 2-Oct-2024]. AAUP. (2023).
11. AAUP. (2023) Academic Freedom and the Law. Available: <https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/Academic%20Freedom%20Outline%20for%20Website.pdf> [Accessed: 2-Oct-2024].

