

College Policies on Evaluating Teaching (February 21, 2020)

The College recognizes that evaluating faculty teaching success should rest on a broad portfolio comprising multiple forms of evidence. This position is in keeping with national best practices and is especially concerned to not give undue influence to student teaching evaluations which can be skewed by numerous biases including those associated with gender and race. It also recognizes that much of “teaching” takes place outside the classroom, in the behind the scenes work of preparing, grading, assessing, planning, meeting students, leading field trips, organizing speakers, and so on. The goal ultimately is to create a more robust process for recognizing and rewarding excellent teaching and to support a culture of reflective teaching across the college.

Department efforts to evaluate teaching may take different forms, and are envisioned as a formative process culminating in a teaching portfolio that ultimately should include:

- Faculty self-assessment. College FMER forms provide a template for faculty self-reflection on basic goals and objectives, classroom practices (successes and failures), advising, other pedagogical activities, and responses to student evaluations. These factors can be incorporated into a more comprehensive teaching statement for tenure and promotion cases;
- Student evaluations, including quantitative measures and written comments. These are included in FMER evaluations and compiled and/or summarized for promotion and tenure dossiers ;
- Professional teaching activities. These might include details of courses taught (numbers of students, nature of the teaching, assessment, innovations and methods), samples of course materials (syllabi, assignments, and activities), and evidence of engaging local or national communities of practice or committees, professional observations (e.g. CELT), or teacher training classes. Regular accounting of such activities will take place through the FMER process and they may be compiled for promotion and tenure dossiers;
- Formative and constructive peer observation by department colleagues. Peer teaching evaluations will be required once a year for lecturers and untenured Regular and Special Title Series faculty; and may be requested by either the faculty member, the department chair, or the dean beyond that minimum. Peer observation of senior lecturers and tenured associate and full professors will occur by the request of either the faculty member, the department chair, or the dean. These observations will be included in the FMER process and ultimately compiled for inclusion in promotion dossiers.

While actual classroom observation appears as the central focus of this component of teaching evaluation, **the concept of peer observation envisioned here comprises a *process* that should include:**

- Review of syllabi and other teaching materials by the designated observer in advance of class observations;
- Face to face meeting with instructors prior to observation to ascertain the context and goals of the class being observed;
- A follow up discussion;
- A brief written evaluation of the process by the observer;
- An optional response on the part of the faculty member observed.

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Within this general process, **Departments may want to employ a rubric to guide the actual class observation.** These should be standard in a department, and must be sure to incorporate the goals of the class specified in the face-to-face meeting prior to the observation. Rubrics need not be extensive checklists covering every imaginable aspect of a classroom experience; and simpler rubrics in general categories may serve to guide the observation and the follow-up discussion more effectively than a long list that appears merely summative and potentially punitive. Rubrics need not be quantitatively based (i.e. meant to elicit a numerical score on a scale from good to bad) and certainly may be based on qualitative assessments (i.e. narrative). You may create your own rubric or adapt one from elsewhere. Several departments in the college (e.g. Sociology, MCLLC, and Hispanic Studies) have already designed rubrics and you might adopt or adapt theirs.

A survey of rubrics from across the higher education landscape suggests that the following categories, at least, are commonly employed:

- Clear class purpose and statement of goals
- Instructor preparation and class organization
- Pacing and coverage of material
- Classroom style, management, atmosphere, and/or culture
- Consideration of diversity; to include diversity of topic, opinions, activities, and engagement with a broad range of students
- Engagement, rapport, and/or clarity of communication

These categories have been drawn from various sources. The following websites provide some guidance for constructing a rubric (as well as for conducting peer evaluation in general). There are many others available:

<https://teaching.cornell.edu/teaching-resources/assessment-evaluation/peer-review-teaching>

<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/peer-review-of-teaching/>

<https://www.washington.edu/teaching/topics/assessing-and-improving-teaching/evaluation/peer-review/#research>

<https://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/document-your-teaching/peer-observation-of-teaching-best-practices/>

For those faculty members who are engaged in interdisciplinary programs, chairs should consult with program directors and make sure that the observation of the faculty members teaching is robust enough to capture that interdisciplinary role.