

UFAC's Teaching Evaluation Report and Recommendations

October, 2012

At our October meeting, the University Faculty Affairs committee voted to forward the following to the University Faculty Council for consideration and action.

Teaching Evaluation

Members of the UFAC reviewed the literature on teaching evaluation, explored teaching evaluation methods at other COPLAC schools, and reviewed sections of our handbook that specifically relate to teaching evaluation. What follows is a summary of our discussion, conclusions, and recommendation.

Teaching evaluation is used for many purposes. Ostensibly, such evaluations can be, and, perhaps, are used as feedback to improve teaching, to encourage course revisions, and to encourage reflection in Faculty Annual Activity Reports (FAARs). They do play a prominent role informing Annual Performance Reviews (APRs), and influence merit pay decisions, as well as promotion and tenure recommendations.

As is evident from the above applications, teaching evaluation is primarily used as a human resource tool to manage personnel compensation and retention decisions. This focus diverts attention from its application in enhancing the outcome of the teaching process, which is student learning.

Based on our research and personal experiences, we believe that:

1. Currently we, as a university, are overly reliant on Student Course Reaction Questionnaire data, particularly given that it is based on instrument that has not been validated.
2. The current SCRQ only addresses minimal standards for professional teaching, and at best can be used to identify the extremes on these standards.
3. Teaching evaluation should be based on data from multi-sources, e.g.,
 - a. Self – based on personal reflection on all existing data sources and to include rationale for learning objectives per course as it fits in the programs curriculum, teaching approaches chosen, and techniques used.
 - b. Supervisor and Peer review - of rationale, syllabi, exams, papers, and assignments, as well as classroom visits by appropriate faculty should be included.
 - c. Student's reflection - on classroom management, grading schema, including usefulness of exams and assignments in facilitating learning. In addition to SCRQs, other approaches to gathering this data should be explored.

4. Our peer review procedures aren't being followed consistently, or are not being taken seriously.
5. Given the turn over in Chairs and Deans since these procedures were first established, a review of existing procedures is warranted.
6. Our peer review procedures should include syllabi, exam, grade distribution, and classroom visits.
7. Teaching evaluation should be closely tied to our Outcomes Assessment efforts and student learning (Recent preparations for the SACS visit may have addressed these concern).
 - a. Learning objectives consistent with the goals outlined in a program's OA plan should be included on syllabi as appropriate.
 - b. OA measurement methods should be identified that tie to the goals and the learning objectives of each course.
8. Teaching evaluation's primary goal should be to help faculty continuously improve student learning, not as a source to differentiate faculty compensation.
9. Creating an atmosphere that encourages faculty to continue to develop teaching skills and to focus on enhancing student learning will enhance the usefulness of any approach to teaching evaluation.
10. The details of the teaching evaluation process must be tailored to each program, but should have some minimal guidelines in common.
11. Most of the concerns above are covered in Section 6 (See sections 6.2 and 6.3.2) of the faculty handbook, hence it does not require significant change. But, we do question whether or not the practices outlined in the handbook are:
 - a. Currently being consistently followed.
 - b. Are consistently implemented across departments and programs,
 - c. Are being applied equitably.

Questions that remain:

We are basing all of the above on our own experience, philosophical leanings and the little research we conducted. We don't really know whether or not Department Chairs really do overly rely on SCRQs to assess teaching. We do not know how many of our faculty actually use the data regularly to enhance their teaching. We don't know when the peer review plans were last reviewed. We don't know if all courses within a program are appropriately tied to student learning outcomes.

We don't know a lot of things that we probably should before we bring forth specific recommendations. However, we agree that the Department Chairs, Program Directors and their respective Deans are the ones in the best position to address the concerns raised above and to answer the remaining questions in ways that apply specifically to their disciplines. Therefore, we recommend adding the following (**in Bold**) to the faculty handbook. Adding these two requirements to the annual faculty performance review process should assure that we aren't overly reliant on one data source, and that the process is routinely reviewed and revised as needed.

Recommended change to the handbook

6.2.1 The Role of the Department - The chair of each department will be responsible to ensure that a specific evaluation plan is approved by the department and the dean. The plan must evaluate the individual faculty member in the areas of teaching, professional activity and service. **The evaluation of each of these areas must be based on multiple sources. The plan must include a provision for periodic review by the department and the dean.** It must also include the following elements:

It is our hope that our teaching evaluation efforts will increasingly focus on faculty development, as well as, on student learning thus becoming an integral part of our outcomes assessment efforts, and continue to add to our reputation as a great teaching school.