

Provost Faculty Promotion Dialogue | March 31, 2022

Teaching & Mentoring

Overview & Top Lines

40 participants from 12 colleges/schools



AGNR	2
ARHU	4
BMGT	1
BSOS	5
CMNS	3
EDUC	2
ENGR	3
GRAD	1
INST	5
JOUR	1
LIBR	2
MAPP	-
PLCY	-
SPHL	2
UGST	-
Other	9

Faculty Type



Extension Agent	1
Librarian	2
PTK	19
TTK	11
Other	7

Obstacles to address



- There is no consensus on what good teaching is; *“we are better at identifying what bad teaching is.”*
- While there is a belief that there is a difference or separation between research and teaching, there are in fact ways to keep teaching and mentoring and research integrated.

Indicators of success



- Several themes emerged. The top four were:
 - Impact on students
 - Feedback from students/mentees
 - Developing new and improving current courses
 - Observation of teaching
- There was conversation in several groups about the benefit of using “downstream” measurement to better assess the true impact of teaching and mentoring on students. Participants noted that often the full impact of a teaching/mentoring relationship is not realized until more time has passed.
- There was also discussion about the need to move beyond just the number of students served, especially when assessing mentoring. The burden of mentoring students is often not equally spread across all faculty in a department, and some mentoring relationships are more time intensive than others but can have a big impact.

Themes



What makes it difficult to evaluate teaching and mentoring?

Consider your own research, teaching, and service as well as the work of your field/discipline. What do you see as obstacles that need to be removed or addressed to incorporate teaching and mentoring into the evaluation and promotion process?

A. Bottom line, teaching is still valued less than research and publishing

- Some faculty remain skeptical that teaching, learning, and mentoring matter as much as research and publishing outcomes. Some believe that teaching does not really factor into decisions unless the APT committee is very picky, and then it is likely it only matters as a negative factor, not a positive one.
 - *"We need to change the culture so people are rewarded for teaching and not penalized for doing less research."*
 - *"If you are a good teacher it doesn't count for much, but it is sometimes brought up in APT discussions if you had one bad semester."*
 - *"As long as you don't suck at teaching, it doesn't count against you; it also doesn't help you in the promotion process."*
- Devaluing of teaching can be viewed through an equity/race lens; women and faculty of color spend more time teaching and mentoring. If teaching is not valued and rewarded, the contributions of these professionals will be overlooked.
 - *"A small percent of tenured faculty are POC—this has massive inequitable and systematic racist implications."*
- Teaching grants are not as valued and celebrated as those awarded for research, even though it takes significant time to win and implement grants or implement new technology. This time spent to *"get up and running"* does not factor into evaluation conversations.

Themes



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B. Meaningful evaluation could exist but there are significant costs to this

- Research outcomes are easier to measure (e.g., publications, grant awards); measuring teaching outcomes remains complicated. For example, with classes that teach controversial topics such as policing, prosecution, and victimology, *“are the results of the student evaluation a reflection of my teaching or that they did not agree with or like the content?”*
- Student evaluations are viewed as obviously flawed and of little use in this; response rates are low, can be skewed by a number of factors not related to teaching quality, and do not provide reliable data about innovation in teaching. Looking at data beyond student evaluations creates significant workload issues, as you need people to audit classes, review syllabi, etc., and these may be only slightly more useful than student evaluations.
- What would be most useful is a means for gathering feedback from colleague observation that offers frank and constructive feedback. But there are recognizable issues with colleague observation.
 - *“If we evaluate our peers in the department, there is a social pressure to be nice; non-glowing reviews lead to tension.”*
 - *“My department is Lake Wobegon—everyone is above average in teaching.”*
- Evaluation should be performed by someone familiar with both the methodology of pedagogy AND that of teaching in a particular discipline.

Themes



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B. (continued) Meaningful evaluation could exist but there are significant costs to this

- It is difficult to do well if it is not clear what or why we are evaluating—is this about student learning, the student experience, or creating documentation for promotion packets?
 - *“I worked with a department on developing peer evaluation that was not for promotion, but for real learning and development. If we’re evaluating for promotion, it’s too late to be helpful.”*
- The effect of good teaching can be delayed or cumulative, so immediate and proximate evaluation does not capture the entire value provided.
 - *“Something that you don’t ‘get’ in an introductory class might click in later.”*
 - *“If 50% of your teaching load is introductory classes that 75% of the students didn’t want to be in, you’re going to have a different experience than in an upper-level elective that everyone was enthusiastic about.”*
- Assessment of non-traditional learning (e.g., experiential) is even more complex, particularly over time.
 - *“Sometimes a project doesn’t go well. Is there still learning involved? Yes, of course, but this is not as easy to measure.”*
 - *“Depending on the discipline/school, learning is happening in varied environments: corporations, labs, elsewhere.”*

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C. A good evaluation of teaching would include assessment of development over time, and there is significant support for professional development in teaching

- There is value in measuring progress and improvement, rather than looking only at an absolute or an end-point. Time and effort expended to improve in this area should be rewarded in evaluation and promotion processes.
 - *"We've had very regular announcements about TLTC and DIT sessions, and participation is strongly encouraged. This applies to our graduate assistants across our college, and we have a strong advocate in our Dean's office."*
- The value of professional development for teaching cannot be overstated. Some institutions require preparation (e.g., Harvard requires a week before one's first semester of teaching).
 - *"I would LOVE to see a certain amount of REQUIRED professional development around teaching."*
- TLTC is recognized as a significant resource, but underutilized because participation is voluntary. If it were required, participation in professional development could be used as criteria for evaluation.
 - *"We have embedded career center staff in our college, and have an 'assigned librarian' as well. Maybe we can do that with TLTC?"*
 - *"I think an embedded TLTC person would be great!"*

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D. Mentoring, particularly of undergraduates, is both undervalued and underperformed

- Mentoring, particularly of undergraduates—*“engaging students outside the classroom”*—does not have a lot of attention paid to doing it or doing it well. Ph.D. student mentoring is valued, measured, and expected; most evaluations do not even consider undergraduate mentoring. There are no quantitative metrics for mentoring; it is optional (for undergraduates), and not captured in promotion guidelines—which speaks to its perceived value.
 - *“Students in distress take up a lot of time and may not be the best students in class, so looking at course grades is not going to be a great measure.”*
- It is easy to measure mentoring inputs—number of hours and/or number of students—but not at all easy to evaluate outcomes. It can take a long time to see if the mentoring of a student was effective. And informal mentoring is difficult to capture at all.
 - *“I don’t get credit for creating a maker space filled with bodies [trying new things].”*
 - *“I have a total of 300 students and I mentor students all the time and use connections in the community to help them get internships and jobs. I write recommendations but it is not quantified anywhere. No one knows.”*

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Teaching & Mentoring

Themes



Identifying measures of success

How will we know whether to give someone a high rating in the area of teaching and mentoring? What would they be doing or accomplishing if their work demonstrated excellence in teaching and mentoring?

Data collected via online brainstorm tool, Ideaboardz

A. Impact on students

23 unique comments, 12 additional upvotes

- Suggestions that related to the impact of faculty members' teaching/mentoring on students made up the largest theme from this session's Ideaboardz exercise. Most grouped into one of four subtopics:
 - **Job placement and success in career** (8 comments) – suggested measuring students' career success after their engagement with a faculty member.
 - **Students' self-reported growth** (5 comments) – suggested surveying students about the impact they felt as a result of their interactions with a faculty member.
 - **Demonstrated knowledge; meeting learning outcomes** (4 comments) – highlighted learning outcomes as a target for measuring the knowledge and skills students develop as a result of their work with a faculty member.
 - **Student publications** (2 comments) – focused on tracking publications on which students are listed as an author.

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B. Feedback from students/mentees

16 unique comments, 15 additional upvotes

- This theme centered on using feedback from students and mentees as a primary measure of success. Most of the suggestions in this category grouped into one of two subtopics:
 - **Feedback from mentees/students throughout or at the immediate end of their experience** (6 comments) – focused on collecting feedback during and/or at the conclusion of a teaching or mentoring experience a student has with a faculty member. Some suggestions for data collection included evaluations, mid-semester surveys, and exit interviews.
 - **Delayed evaluation/feedback from students/alumni a few years down the road** (5 comments) – focused on collecting feedback from students about their mentoring or instructional experience with a faculty member several years after their experience ended.

C. Developing new courses/improving current courses

9 unique comments, 13 additional upvotes

- This theme suggested monitoring the number of courses a faculty member either develops or enhances. Four of the comments grouped together into a subtopic:
 - **Integrating more active and experiential learning** (4 comments) – centered on ways in which faculty integrate more project-based, experiential, or active learning into their courses.

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D. Observation of teaching

9 unique comments, 6 additional upvotes

- This theme focused on evaluation of a faculty member's teaching as an important measure of success; most suggested direct observation by an external observer. Two comments were similar enough to form a subtopic:
 - **Compare teaching to best practices** (2 comments) – highlighted the importance of referencing “best practices” in teaching as a part of evaluating faculty. SOTL best practices and TLTC's observation rubric were both mentioned.

E. Engaging in professional development opportunities

6 unique comments, 9 additional upvotes

- These comments suggested tracking the ways in which faculty members sought out and participated in opportunities to further their learning and develop their skills in the areas of teaching and mentoring.

F. Increase access for marginalized/underserved populations

4 unique comments, 3 additional upvotes

- This grouping of comments focused on the ways in which faculty members increase access for marginalized and underserved populations of students through mentoring and teaching. Some specific suggestions included expansion of mentoring opportunities, inclusive instructional design, and evaluating faculty members' capacity to effectively mentor students from marginalized backgrounds.

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G. Collaboration with students

4 unique comments, 3 additional upvotes

- This theme centered on the degree to which faculty members collaborate with students (e.g., co-authored publications, research teams, project groups).

H. Developing new teachers and mentors

4 unique comments, 3 additional upvotes

- This group of comments highlighted the importance of developing future teachers and mentors and suggested evaluating the degree to which faculty members invest time and effort in this (e.g., developing or engaging in training programs for TAs).

I. Mentoring

4 unique comments, 2 additional upvotes

- This theme focused on mentoring; people suggested looking at both the time spent on it and the effectiveness of it.

J. Need to define hallmarks of effective teaching

4 unique comments, 2 additional upvotes

- The comments in this theme expressed the sentiment that we need to be very clear about how success is defined, and that we need to gather information (e.g., from effective teachers across disciplines) about best practices in teaching to inform that definition.)

Themes



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K. Awards/recognition received

2 unique comments, 1 additional upvote

- These two suggestions both mentioned tracking the number of teaching and/or mentoring awards faculty members receive.

L. Grants/funding

2 unique comments, 0 additional upvotes

- These comments focused on teaching-related grant money faculty members bring into further curricular development.

Notes

- There were 8 additional comments that did not fit into any of the listed themes.
- There was conversation in several groups about the benefit of using “downstream” measurement to assess the impact teaching and mentoring has. People noted the difficulty of assessing true impact in the moment, and that often students don’t realize how much they’ve learned from a particular teacher or mentor until several years down the road. Several people suggested accessing the alumni network to reconnect with former students.
- There was also discussion about the need to move beyond just the number of students served, especially when assessing mentoring. The burden of mentoring students is often not equally spread across all faculty in a department, and some mentoring relationships are more time intensive than others but can have a big impact. One faculty member offered a specific example:
 - *“Minority students, students of color tend to seek out minority faculty and faculty of color. Their issues and concerns can be much more complex and involved than those of students who come from privileged backgrounds. Those mentoring engagements often require much more effort.”*

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Themes from Chat

In a few words, share your reaction to the comments you just heard from the Provost.

Many participants expressed appreciation and excitement:

- *"Excited about the possibility of prioritizing and expanding learning and the celebration of inclusive, excellent teaching."*
- *"I am all for finding ways to give credit in APT to faculty who focus on making our course materials accessible."*
- *"Delighted to hear the emphasis on graduate student mentoring!"*
- *"Applaud the holistic review."*

There was also a theme related to taking risks:

- *"Reimagine learning" - yes! Reward folks for some risky innovations."*
- *"Important to reward teaching risks."*
- *"We need to have a mechanism to reward failure that served as a point of learning, re-imagining, or just growing as a teacher."*



Themes from Chat

What is something that caught your attention today?

Some participants expressed the need to provide and support more professional development in this area and to *“reward faculty who help other faculty with teaching.”*

A conversation in the chat emerged around measurement of time regarding teaching and mentoring:

- *“How could we think about the different pools of time a teacher and mentor spends on a week-to-week basis? Could we look at what amt of time/week it takes to teach a particular course well? to mentor students and TAs? To start new projects?”*
- *“Good grading and feedback takes TIME.”*