TASK FORCE ON THE ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

On July 27, 2006, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FacEx) established a Task Force to consider how faculty and other teaching personnel at the University are evaluated for their teaching and for their related scholarship. FacEx determined that one important outcome of the committee's work would be a proposal for a set of blueprints or guidelines intended to aid academic units on campus when they evaluate teaching and student learning. The Task Force was asked to consider the following general issues:

- Identify the components of teaching and teaching scholarship that are valued and appropriate for consideration during this evaluative process.
- Determine who can appropriately contribute to the evaluation of each of these individual teaching components.
- Determine what evidence a teacher may present regarding his/her teaching effectiveness and teaching scholarship.
- Review comparable policies and procedures at peer institutions.
- Identify sustainable policies to ensure academic units document and regularly assess procedures for evaluating teaching effectiveness.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Assessment of Teaching

Teaching is an essential and integral component of universities' missions, and all members of the university community contribute to successful student learning. In contemporary institutions, opportunities for participating in the educational process continue to expand, and discovering how to acknowledge and reward the traditional and emerging elements that result in successful learning is complex. We approached the charge of assessing teaching and learning with the goal of providing opportunities to share the great diversity of possibilities for making positive contributions to the educational mission of the university. The perspectives of faculty colleagues, of students, and of the individual teacher can all inform the evaluation of teaching, and all three should be included in any process. The primary evaluation should come from faculty colleagues who look directly at the intellectual aspects of teaching, while also considering the views of students and the teacher's own observations. The materials we recommend below provide the evidence that faculty colleagues could use in making judgments for annual review and for promotion and tenure. No single source of evidence or information should predominate in the evaluation, and the relative weighting of these elements may vary within individual units.

Teaching is intended to generate skills, knowledge, and understanding in the students enrolled, so the evaluation of teaching should include some review of the learning asked of and demonstrated by students. The teaching methods and practices that prompt learning can also be reviewed by faculty colleagues and by students to inform the evaluation. Also very important is the faculty member's own account of how teaching

has developed over time in response to the effectiveness of prior teaching experience. Ultimately, faculty colleagues will consider the overall impact of teaching, the development of teaching skills over time, and the perceptions of students to form an evaluation of teaching quality.

The task force believes that assessment of teaching performance and student learning should be based on multiple forms of evidence, and accordingly we identified four basic kinds of evidence that can be used to assess teaching and learning. First, there is a wide range of materials that are routine products of teaching a class and require minimal work from teachers to document. Second, the student voice can be captured with a brief questionnaire focusing on the characteristics of teaching that students are best able to judge. Third, a reflective statement from the teacher provides insight into the development of teaching over time, allowing colleagues to observe what the teacher has learned from teaching and put into practice. Finally, faculty colleagues can observe and review the full context of teaching activities, including both the nature of the students and the kinds of courses taught and their place in the unit's overall goals.

Recommendation 1: Allow faculty members to report a broad range of teaching activities as the basis for peer review

Provided below (Appendix 1) is a comprehensive list of activities that we think may be considered in the evaluation of teaching at KU. We recognize that this list is extensive and we urge faculty members to view it as an opportunity to showcase accomplishments and special talents rather than see it as a set of new expectations. Our intent is to generate ways to highlight ongoing teaching activities; the prompts are reminders of the many ways that faculty members can contribute to student learning and to their department's collective teaching mission. Our extensive list should open doors to a world in which the conventional student rating will not be the dominant form of evidence. Review committees and faculty peers should not expect to see contributions in every category; they should view the list as a broad menu from which individuals may include those activities that are a part of their contribution.

Key elements of the list are questions that focus on four essential facets of teaching:
- How does this teacher conduct courses?
- How does this teacher prepare for courses?
- What teaching work has the faculty member done in addition to teaching courses?
- Has the faculty member made progress over time in development of teaching and/or shared teaching work with colleagues?

Within each question, faculty members are provided with various prompts about ways they could demonstrate their work in each area and types of evidence that could indicate their success. Appropriate evaluators of the evidence are listed, as well. We have taken into account the resolutions of the Board of Regents from 1995 and 1996 that set some parameters for this process.   Those resolutions state that there should be multiple sources of information and evidence about teaching, and that student ratings will be only one piece of a larger view of teaching. Materials relating to student learning and peer

evaluation of teaching should be considered; students' ratings should not be a substitute for professional judgment about the quality of practices, materials, and learning.

These are the materials that could form the basis of a faculty peer review of the intellectual work in teaching.

<u>Recommendation 2: Student ratings of teaching should be concise and focus on those specific aspects of teaching that students know best</u>

We affirm that student ratings are an important part of the feedback that faculty members receive about their teaching, and we have identified those aspects of teaching about which students have an excellent and useful perspective. Our recommendations have to do both with the questions that should be asked and with how the evidence should be handled and reported.

Information in the ratings should address five general areas around teaching: delivery of instruction, the assessment of learning, availability of faculty members, achievement of goals and expectations of teaching, and general support for learning.   We have consulted with KU faculty members whose field of research includes the design survey instruments, and they are conducting test surveys during the current (Spring 2007) semester to identify the best possible wording for a concise survey that would gather student perception of these five key dimensions. We presume their work will identify the particular wording that would be best, and we include some possibilities as an example in Appendix 2.

Regardless of the particular set of individual questions that emerge from the pilot testing of items, we offer the following general recommendations for student ratings of the KU faculty:

Student ratings should be gathered in a professional and respectful way according to common procedures that assure anonymity.

Consistent with Kansas Board of Regents resolutions, there should be no required form; there will be a recommended form that can be used directly or as a model for local development.

The number of questions asked should be kept to the minimum needed to adequately estimate the students' view of the five areas listed above.

Students should rate aspects of the teacher's performance that are clearly apparent to them; they should not be asked to make judgments that would require extensive extra investigation or professional knowledge.

The numerical data should be reported in a fashion that includes distributions of scores, not merely indicators of an average or mid-point.

The student ratings form should not ask for an overall summary judgment from students about either the instructor or the course. Such items actually report opinions outside the range of student expertise, and they may tend to be used as a substitute for a more complete analysis of the full range of teaching components. We strongly support the goal of providing a rich array of evidence about teaching; items that attempt to capture the student voice in a single number would overshadow students' comments on more appropriate issues.

The reports of numerical data should be put in a context of other teachers' ratings, but those comparison distributions of scores should reflect a restricted range of courses that are comparable in size, position in the curriculum, target student audience, student motivation, or other characteristics identified by departments.

The numerical reports should be given to faculty members in both paper and electronic formats that facilitate reporting for personnel matters without substantial processing or additional handling. Summary reports would show the range of student perception for the five general areas of teaching. The pilot study underway will offer an example of what this reporting sheet could look like.

Recommendation 3: Faculty members should collect open-ended student comments to guide improvement of teaching. Reporting these comments should remain optional, and if they are used in evaluations they should be reported systematically.

Many faculty members agree that a great deal can be learned from the observations offered by students in response to questions inviting commentary on features of instruction, and faculty members should be encouraged to seek open-ended commentary. It is especially valuable for faculty members to invite these comments during the semester at a time when they can still respond to the comments with adjustments in the course. Those adjustments are valuable to students, and faculty members can also include those changes as part of their teaching record.

We recommend continuing the policy jointly articulated by the Provost and by Faculty Governance that makes the use of such comments in personnel decisions optional, at the discretion of the faculty member or unit. Accordingly, any open-ended questions used by a faculty member or requested by an individual department should be on a separate sheet from the numerical rating items, so that they may be collected and distributed independently of each other. Open-ended questions should be framed in ways that maximize the likelihood of constructive comments and specifically discourage irrelevant or disparaging comments about faculty members.

As a general rule, we recommend that these comments be used for the benefit of teachers working to improve their instruction. There may be times in the evaluation of an instructor when it would be useful to have such comments for the interpretation of ambiguous numerical information. In such cases, the faculty member should bring forward the entire sample of such comments to aid in interpretation. Additionally, an individual faculty member should always be free to bring the comments forward, as long as they are reported in a professional manner (see below).

Within KU there are distinct communities of evidence, in which knowledge is constructed in different ways and conclusions are evaluated based on varying criteria. For many in the humanities, as well as from other areas of campus, there is great value in close reading of text, done by an individual, using a combination of personal experience and professional conventions of reading. For people in the social and natural sciences, and many in professional areas, open ended verbal statements are data like any other, and the protocols and conventions of data analysis would be the preferred method of reading. The practices around using open ended student comments should be flexible enough that different local communities (such as departments) can adopt consensual practices that reflect their shared understanding of reading and evidence. This is especially true for the use of these comments as guides for continuous development of teaching.

When samples of comments are used in formal evaluation, the resulting judgment represents an estimate of the professional quality of a faculty member's teaching. In that context, people presume that the conclusions drawn are an accurate representation of the teaching in question and not an artifact of either the reading or the gathering of comments. For that reason, we recommend that professional standards of treating comments as data be followed whenever comments are included in an evaluative professional context beyond a department level. This practice would assure all faculty members that the information will inform the process in the fairest way possible.

The Task Force consulted with KU faculty members whose research includes the analysis of the content of comments. That group noted a series of careful, empirically justified steps that are required for such evidence to meet professional standards of validity. It would be impossible as a practical matter for review of teaching comments to meet the publication standards of the research community, but several general guidelines emerged from the conversation that we recommend be included in the handling of all open ended comments.

• The sample of comments should be as large as possible; small samples can be very misleading.
• Analysis should always include a record of non-responders. Summary descriptions place the responses in a context of the total possible population.
• The analysis begins with the framing of a specific question or questions to be answered by the comments.
• Analysis includes identification of categories of responses, as appropriate to the question being answered. Where possible these categories should be distinct from each other and include a full range of possible answers.
• Individual comments should be put into a single category when possible; if a comment is long or complex, it can be broken into components and counted as separate comments.
• The final product would report a frequency of comments in each category, always including the number of people who did not respond to the question.

The analysis produced will be only as good as the questions asked and the categories of responses that are identified. If those are well constructed and aligned with each other, the analysis can help answer the question posed.

INTRODUCTION

High quality teaching and scholarship have long been recognized as the two hallmarks of a productive faculty member. Teaching is serious intellectual work that is grounded in deep knowledge and understanding of a field, and it includes the ability to convey that understanding in clear and engaging ways. The conduct of courses is the central feature of our teaching responsibilities at KU, and it has priority among the many kinds of teaching activities that take place. Our identification of teaching should not be limited to formal class performance, however, and a broader menu of teaching activities provides additional ways to demonstrate quality in teaching.

There is more to quality instruction than making one's knowledge and understanding accessible to students; effective education successfully generates understanding, knowledge, and skills among students. People acquire more skill in teaching over time, and as in research, that success comes from thinking about the results of prior efforts and identifying ways to improve future results. Quality in teaching will include self-evaluation of how well students are learning and inquiry into how to improve learning in each class.

The measurement of any human activity is never perfect, whether it is teaching or research. The proposed guidelines offer a framework from which faculty can choose elements that may improve the measurement of teaching beyond current practices. It is intended to increase flexibility by offering many different ways that teachers can show their work and demonstrate what they are learning from its results.

It is not expected that any single faculty member would engage in all or even most of the activities listed below, but they should be recognized as part of teaching when they occur across the full duration of a teaching career.

ACTIVITIES

1. How does this teacher conduct courses?

Evaluation in this area should focus on some or all of the following factors:
    Clarity of course goals
    Relevance and appropriateness of course content
    Effectiveness of instruction in lecture, labs, discussion, studios, and other activities
    Appropriate relationship with students in which the instructor is available, challenges students, and
        supports their learning
    Measures of student learning
    Presentation of courses serving the mission of the unit or University

A faculty member could provide various forms of evidence to indicate success in achieving these aims, such as:
    Annotated syllabus
    Selection of course materials (readings, resources, demonstrations, grading standards, etc.)
    Ratings and/or written comments from students
    Peer evaluation of classroom performance, interaction with students, and/or course materials
    Samples of student work demonstrating student learning
    Trend data showing the impact of the teacher on measures of learning
    List of courses taught and explanation of their importance
    Explanation of special service in particular courses, such as large lecture courses
    Teaching awards or nominations for teaching awards
    Other materials that the faculty member believes indicate excellence in teaching

Faculty colleagues and or the department chair would evaluate the evidence provided by the faculty member to judge the degree to which he/she was attaining the aims cited above. Student perspectives of

those properties of teaching they are in a good position to evaluate are reflected in "Ratings and/or written comments from students" shown above.

2. How does this teacher prepare for courses?

Evaluation in this area should focus on the following factors:
   Appropriate preparation of new courses or efforts to improve instruction
   Continuing efforts to improve teaching and student learning

A faculty member could provide various forms of evidence to indicate success in achieving these aims, such as:
   Sample of course materials: learning activities, assignments, etc. for new or existing courses
   Plans for future course development; may include a journal or other reflections on teaching
   Examples of innovation in teaching including teaching practices, technology, etc.
   Seminars attended or conducted on teaching; include description of new approaches learned from
      workshops or description of how ideas have been incorporated into teaching (annotated syllabus or
      other notes)
   Student comments indicating changes in teaching, faculty observation supporting innovation based on
      workshops
   Examples of collaboration with faculty at KU or elsewhere to support teaching
   Examples of work with KU offices (KU Libraries, Writing Center, Learning Communities, etc.) to
      support teaching
   Awards or nominations for research, teaching, or service related to improving teaching
   Other materials that the faculty member believes indicate excellence in teaching

Faculty colleagues and or the department chair would evaluate the evidence provided by the faculty member to judge the degree to which he/she was attaining the aims cited above.

3. What teaching work has the faculty member done in addition to teaching courses?

Evaluation in this area should focus on some or all of the following factors:
   Coordinating courses within a program, or developing a new course
   Supporting teaching at the unit level by developing new materials for general use; creating infrastructure
      for labs, studios, or field work; seeking grant support for teaching; recruiting students
   Mentoring and supervising GTAs/GRAs
   Mentoring and supervising students in clinical settings or internships
   Working with student groups
   Mentoring new faculty members in their role as a teacher
   Mentoring students or directing research projects

A faculty member could provide various forms of evidence to indicate success in achieving these aims, such as:
   List of administrative or coordination activities, along with new materials developed and commentary
      from colleagues and students involved
   Observations and comments by students, colleagues, chair, dean on unit level contributions
   External funding of proposals/awards related to teaching, reviews of proposals
   Lists of those mentored and supervised in various roles (undergraduate, graduate, post-docs; research,
      teaching, clinical work)
   Unit records of GTAs/GRAs' performance, comments from other students learning from graduate
      students, comments from community partners or clients
   Examples of student work completed under teacher's supervision, along with descriptions of venues for
      presentation and any recognition
   Letters from students, reflecting on mentoring activities and effectiveness and indicating how the
      mentoring has influenced student work and success
   Faculty colleagues' comments on mentoring activities; e.g., service on MA or MS/PhD committees
   Examples of any regional or national critical review or recognition of student work

Time to degree, success in obtaining employment or other placement
Lists of student groups supported, identifying unit or university level, along with student comments, awards or achievement by the group
Lists of faculty colleagues mentored on teaching, with examples of feedback given or comments from colleagues about the impact of the shared work

Faculty colleagues and/or the department chair would evaluate the evidence provided by the faculty member to judge the degree to which he/she was attaining the aims cited above.

4. Has the faculty member developed teaching or shared teaching work with colleagues?

Evaluation in this area should focus on some or all of the following factors:
Teaching related presentations at KU or elsewhere
Attending or organizing teaching institutes
Serving as a guest teacher at other institutions, for outside associations, or in the community
Developing course materials, such as textbooks or websites
Applying for and receiving grants in support of teaching or publishing articles related to teaching
Participating in outreach to local schools (K-12) or other forums

A faculty member could provide various forms of evidence to indicate success in achieving these aims, such as:
Conference programs from presentations, letters, or other evaluations of quality of presentations; samples of presentation notes or published proceedings; programs from institutes or letters evaluating participation or impact
List of service on department or University teaching committees or presentations at KU Summit or the Center for Teaching Excellence
Letters attesting to impact of guest presentations in classes; formal evaluations if available
Books, web addresses, or other materials generated, along with any letters attesting to the impact or quality of the materials
Products developed for schools, feedback from organizers of presentations, statements from professional society or honors or awards for contributions
Grant proposals, reviewer feedback on proposals, copies of articles on teaching practices submitted and published

Faculty colleagues and/or the department chair would evaluate the evidence provided by the faculty member to judge the degree to which he/she was attaining the aims cited above.

There is an emerging field of specialization often called "scholarship of teaching and learning" that provides opportunities for faculty members to make their teaching practices, ideas, and effective methods public and visible to colleagues. In some cases this area will become the or one of a faculty member's primary fields of scholarship and it could be reported in the research component of professional work. In other cases a faculty member engages in public work on teaching as an integral part of teaching and will report this work in the teaching component. Individual units should have clear policies identifying their criteria for allocating these public works to the teaching and the research components of a faculty member's work.

<u>**Appendix 2: Examples of possible items for student ratings**</u>

The faculty sub-committee of survey researchers is undertaking a study to determine which of the following two strategies would be most supported by data from local student use of ratings forms. One strategy involves using several single topic items that would be aggregated for each of the five key features of teaching. An alternate strategy would be to include multiple topics within a single composite question that would be answered with only one response. In addition there are questions about students' reasons for taking the class that would allow more detailed consideration of the responses. Examples of possible questions for these strategies are as follows:

Sample Single Items Under Consideration:

Rate each item below on the following scale:
1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = neither agree nor disagree   4 = agree   5 = strongly agree

The instructor …

    Gives clear and well organized instruction.
    Explains subject matter so that you can understand it.
    Makes the subject intellectually challenging.
    Makes clear the goals and objectives of this course.
    Assigns readings, papers, projects, problem sets, etc., which help you learn course material.
    Comments on your work (assignments and tests) in ways that help you learn.
    Is available to you on matters pertaining to the course.
    Meets the goals and objectives of the course.
    Demonstrates interest in helping you learn.
    Demonstrates respect for you as a student and your point of view.

Sample Alternative Format with One Compound/Comprehensive Statement per Area:

Delivery of Instruction:
My instructor was clear, understandable, challenging, and engaging.

Availability:
When I asked for help, this instructor was available, responsive, and open (e.g., before and after class, in office hours, via e-mail, and/or on blackboard).

Materials and content:
This instructor provided materials, content, and assignments that were clear, organized, and appropriate.

Goals & Expectations

This instructor set and met goals, objectives, and expectations that were clear, systematic, and appropriate.

Classroom Learning Environment:
This instructor was interested, supportive, and engaged in my learning the course material

Examples of Student Information that would aid in analysis of replies:

My reasons for taking this course (may check more than one):
  To fulfill a major requirement.
  To fulfill a school requirement.
  I was interested in the subject matter.
  The class was offered at a convenient time.
  The class was not full.
  Because of the instructor's reputation.

What percent of class meetings did you attend?
0% to 20%
20% to 40%
40% to 60%
60% to 80%
80% to 100%

Alternative: How many class meetings this semester did you miss?
1-3
4-6
7-10
More than 10

How many hours per week did you work on this course outside of class?
1 to 3   3 to 5   5 to 7   7 to 9   9 or more

Rate how much you learned in this course:
Very little   Below average   Average   Above average   Very much

Expected grade in course: _____