

Faculty Forum **cie**

Volume 1, Issue 1,

September 2005

Fall 2005 Faculty Club Luncheons @ The Center

- September 13: **Teaching, Learning, Technology** w. Dr. Steve Ehrmann, VP, Teaching Learning & Technology Group
- October 11: **Scholarship of Teaching** w. . . .
- November 8: **Creating a Graduate Culture** w. Dr. Lee Redamacher and Dr. Janine Harrison
- December 6: **The Colors & Styles of Learning and Teaching** . . .

RESERVATIONS @
www.calumet.purdue.edu/cie

Brown Bag 2nd Wednesdays, Gyte Annex 119?

* September 14, Noon-12:50pm
Web Conferencing w. Breeze in Indiana, Lynn Ward, IHETS.

* October 12, Noon-12:50pm
Electronic Portfolios as a Tool for Community Engagement, Gloria Rogers, ABET, Inc.

* November 9, 11am-11:50am
Beyond Cheating: Individual and Cooperative Engagement through Online Testing, Kevin Valadares, University of Southern Indiana

Assessing Assessment

The idea that students might routinely evaluate the teaching they experience in college was a hard sell on most campuses; student ratings were usually introduced with a good deal of struggle. The controversies over the years caused student ratings to become the most extensively studied aspect of collegiate education. Now, after fifty years of research and more than 2,000 journal articles, there's little reason to doubt that the procedure can provide valid and useful information for both faculty members and administrators.

about how to make them most effective. Whatever the case, student and faculty time gets taken up in an exercise producing only mediocre results.

Student Ratings as a Teaching Tool

Student ratings of teaching should encourage students to think about their educational experiences—to develop clearer conceptions of the kinds of teaching and educational experiences that contribute most to their learning. All of us could do a much better job of introducing the educational rationale for filling out these forms. We can certainly create forms that encourage students to be reflective... Faculty members can help students consider educational issues by collecting feedback early in the semester and discussing the results with the students, relating the use of the feedback to educational goals and theory... The student

opinion form could, and should, be educational in the highest sense—helping students gain a better understanding of the goals of education, stimulating them to think more meta-cognitively about their own learning, motivating them to continue learning, and encouraging them to accept responsibility for their learning.

Helping Teachers Learn From Feedback

What about faculty members? What value lies in the process for them? There is evidence that faculty members do improve their teaching as a result of getting feedback from student ratings or through other methods. However, the amount of improvement depends upon the type of information collected and the use of the information. Typically, feedback from questionnaire items referring to specific behaviors is more likely to be helpful than from broad>>



“Student ratings of teaching should encourage students to think about their education...”

Even today, though, student evaluations seldom make an optimal contribution to improving either teaching or personnel decisions. One reason may be that they've become banal: Students and faculty treat them as a routine, giving them little thought. Another reason is that we forget what we've learned

Why Do I Teach?

Parker Palmer, in his classic *The Courage to Teach* (1998), postulates, "If we want to improve the quality of college teaching, a million workshops on methodology will not be enough. Good teaching does not come from technique. It comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher." Indeed, most teachers choose our vocation for reasons of the heart. We care deeply about our students and our subjects. But the demands of the professoriate cause too many of us to lose heart. For Palmer the essential

question is how to continue to do what good teachers always do: give heart to their students.

So for me the real question is how to be authentic in the classroom and simultaneously reconcile the need to be a scholarly and productive member of the professoriate with my very basic need to connect with my students and my subject. The scholarship of teaching provides me with such a venue, for it allows me to use my chosen vocation as a basis for my scholarship. And the process of studying the scholarship of

teaching provides me with the exposure to innovative teaching methods employed by others as well as exposes my own methods to the thoughts and constructive criticism of others. In the process I become a better teacher and in doing so model for my students what it means to engage in and value lifelong learning.

Students are the real reasons I teach, students who grow and change in front of my eyes. As Pete Beidler puts it, "Being a teacher is being present at creation, when the clay begins>>

“Good teaching comes from the integrity of the teacher...”



“teaching improves as a result of getting feedback from student ratings”

On-line Journals:

Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

<http://titans.iusb.edu/josotl/>

Inventio

www.doiit.gmu.edu/inventio/

MountainRise:

<http://mountainrise.wcu.edu/>

Networks:

<http://education.ucsc.edu/faculty/gwells/networks/links.html>



CIE website:
www.calumet.purdue.edu/cie

Comments to:
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>Assessing Assessment

>> general items.

In addition, faculty members should have an opportunity to choose items that answer questions they would like answered with respect to their own course and teaching. If departments or colleges require certain items to be included, they have an ethical obligation to make sure those items are indeed relevant to each instructor's teaching responsibilities. Irrelevant questions simply confirm faculty and student suspicions that the whole process is a bureaucratic exercise rather than an honest attempt to improve education...

The Use of Student Ratings in Personnel Decisions

Student ratings also are used in decisions about promotion and salary increases. Here, too, we have serious problems. The most serious may be that teaching is not valued as highly in practice as in our rhetoric. Even when members of personnel committees say that teaching and research should receive equal weight in promotion, their judgments put preponderant weight on research.

But even when administrators and faculty committees sincerely intend to recognize excellent teaching, they fail to take student ratings as seriously as they should. Seldom do they bother to investigate the extensive research literature on student ratings of teaching. Decades of research have related student ratings to measures of student learning, student motivation for further learning, instructors' own judgments of which

of two classes they had taught more effectively, alumni judgments, peer and administrator evaluation, and ratings by trained observers. All of these criteria attest to the validity of student ratings well beyond that of other sources of evidence about teaching. . . . Yet members of personnel committees cheerfully use their own biases (especially if their own ratings are not high) as a substitute for this more substantial evidence from students.

In addition, faculty committees and administrators often have stereotypes about what effective teaching involves. They assume, for example, that a teacher who is not highly organized will be less effective than one who is. But while organization is, in general, related to effectiveness in teaching, the effect of different degrees of organization depends on the students' own abilities and background.

In general, student ratings of their own learning, of their own achievement of course goals (such as critical thinking), and of their own motivation for further learning in the area of the course are preferable to their evaluations of teacher characteristics. Ratings on teacher warmth, organization, and enthusiasm, for example, could be helpful to a committee if used with some sophistication, and such items can be helpful for teacher improvement. But these characteristics are neither necessary nor sufficient as indicators of effective teaching. We fail ethically when we permit important personnel decisions to proceed on the basis of such

potentially misleading data...

Another source of problems in personnel decisions is the general practice of judging a faculty member's teaching effectiveness against college-wide norms. Clearly, teaching methods, and therefore ratings, differ across departments. Similarly, even though variables such as class size, grading standards, class level, and other characteristics have relatively small effects upon overall student ratings, small differences in numerical averages are often treated as significant by personnel committees.

Because norms are so often detrimental to teacher motivation and are so frequently misused in personnel decisions, we believe personnel committees should be provided with the distributions of student responses, rather than with norms.

Let's Do Better

The evaluation of teaching can have important consequences for both students and teachers. Clearly, we are all fallible; we are not likely to achieve perfection; but we can do better, and we should. We have an ethical obligation to maximize the value of the time spent by students, faculty, and personnel committees.

Excerpt from "Persistent Problems in Evaluating College Teaching," W. J. McKeachie and Matthew Kaplan, *Inquiry*, 1.2, 1997, pp. 10-16.

>Why Do I Teach?

>> to breathe. Nothing is more exciting than being nearby when the breathing starts."

Good teaching offers love. Not only the love of learning, books and ideas, but also "the love that a teacher feels for that real student who walks into a teacher's life, begins to breathe, and then walks out." As Beidler says, "I teach because, being around people who are beginning to breathe, I occasionally find myself, quite magically, catching my breath with them."

Excerpt from Bruce Saulnier, *MountainRise*, 2. 2, 2005

RECOMMENDED READING:

"On the Evaluation of University-level Teaching"

A Tufts University review and evaluation of teaching assessment, including peer review, portfolios, small group instructional diagnosis, and student evaluations. http://ase.tufts.edu/cae/occasional_papers/tch-eval.htm

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