**“What Should Penn State Consider in the Evaluation of Teaching   
Besides Student Ratings and Peer Observation?”**

Commonwealth Caucus Meeting

Monday, September 17, from 8:15 – 9:45 pm

Senate Meeting Room, Kern Bldg.

Penn State policy requires that the evaluation of teaching be based on a variety of evidence from students, peers, and the faculty member under review[[1]](#footnote-1). In addition to SRTE data, one additional form of student input must be included from a list of three: written student feedback, end-of-term interviews with students, or exit surveys of students. In its Statement of Practices for the Evaluation of Teaching for the Purposes of Promotion and Tenure states that “while student evaluations are the most common strategy of evaluation, by themselves they are not sufficient to provide a complete evaluation of teaching.

The Commonwealth Caucus discussed additional sources of information and evidence that could inform the evaluation of teaching. The following lists were created by the senators present at the Commonwealth Caucus meeting on September 17, 2018.

The discussion included:

**1)** Other sources of **student feedback** that might be collected.

* Feedback from former students of the faculty member under review (potentially to determine whether students might have “second thoughts” about the faculty member’s teaching). This could include:
  + Formal survey or poll sent to all former students
  + Informal feedback from emails or letters to the faculty member
  + Feedback from Learning Assistants or Undergraduate TAs
* Interviews with students
* Feedback gathered during the semester from students (e.g., Classroom Assessment Techniques, Midterm Course Interviews)

**2)** Other **evidence of teaching quality** that could inform evaluation and be included in Annual Reviews or Promotion Dossiers

* Alumni letters
* Graduation/exit surveys
* External reviews of course materials (e.g., syllabi, assignments, exams, grading schema)
* Teaching awards
* Teaching portfolios (see footnote)
* Teaching and learning scholarship
  + Presentations at internal and external conferences or events
  + Publications in peer reviewed journals
  + Teaching and learning books, or chapters in teaching and learning books
* Evidence of Teaching and Learning Development
  + Teaching certificates
  + Attendance at workshops or conferences
  + Participation in (or leadership of) a Teaching & Learning Community
* Evidence of mentoring/coaching students (e.g., letters of recommendation)
* Evidence of student success or student performance
  + Student work examples/samples (e.g., high, medium, low quality work)
  + Alumni work/job placement
  + Work with students from underrepresented groups, first generation students, and low income students
  + Student publications (e.g., based on undergraduate research or seminars with the faculty member)
* Feedback from staff (e.g., academic advisors, learning center, academic support center) or evidence that the faculty member seeks formative feedback from staff
* Evidence that the faculty member has served as a peer observer

**Strategies to Improve Peer Observation**

* Simultaneous review by a multiple faculty (inter-rater reliability)
  + Train faculty for peer observation, including the expectation that faculty observers are open to different teaching methods
* Allow faculty member under review to provide input
  + Pre-observation (“What aspects of your teaching have you been working on that you’d like me to notice?”)
  + Post-observation (“What when well?” “What would you change?”)
* Use a consistent format (e.g., [Course Observation Checklist](http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/pdf/Classroom_Observation_Checklist_Form.doc), [Teaching Dimensions Observation Protocol](http://tdop.wceruw.org/), [Teaching Observation Form](http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/pdf/Observation.pdf), [COPUS](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3846513/), etc.)

1. Information from the faculty member under review may be included in the Narrative Statement and/or by submission of a teaching portfolio. Teaching portfolios typically include a teaching philosophy statement, learning goals or expectations; descriptions of methods used to help students learn; evidence goals have been achieved; and plans for improvement. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)