

On the Evaluation of TCU Faculty Teaching:
A TCU Faculty Senate Report
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“The instruction of students is the first purpose of the University and the prime responsibility of every faculty member.”

-- *TCU Handbook for Faculty and Staff*

As it is clearly stated in the *Handbook for Faculty and Staff*, teaching is the primary responsibility for all TCU faculty members. Thus the evaluation of teaching is one of the most critical components in the assessment of faculty performance. In response to the various discussions held on campus this year concerning how teaching should be evaluated, particularly concerning eSpots, the TCU Faculty Senate believes it is essential that faculty take the lead in recommending a set of “best practices” for their evaluation. What follows is a set of principles and recommendations that the Faculty Senate endorses as guidelines for teaching evaluation. In setting forth these guidelines, the Faculty Senate hopes to open up a campus-wide, faculty-led discussion not only of teaching but also of all areas of faculty evaluation, since teaching cannot be isolated from all other areas of faculty performance.

Principle 1: Teaching is an act of leadership; leading students to new pathways of thought and to new discoveries of knowledge is a primary act of leadership. TCU must always recognize and reward this most essential form of leadership.

Principle 2: The development of a great teacher is a journey that begins with self-assessment. Individually, faculty members must make a robust personal

commitment to pedagogical improvement, continually reflecting on their classroom performance and continually aspiring to enhance and enrich their teaching. This commitment is by far the most important component in the development of teaching excellence, and it is a commitment that all faculty members are expected to demonstrate.

Principle 3: TCU must continue to affirm the Teacher-Scholar model; research and creative activity illuminate and enhance good teaching; the synergy between these two vital areas results in an interactive cycle of mutual benefits.

Principle 4: There is no one-size-fits-all formula for assessing faculty performance in the classroom, and each college, department, and program must decide which evaluative practices are best suited to its individual needs.

Principle 5: Faculty evaluation must be undertaken holistically; that is, all areas of professional activity must be considered in gauging faculty performance. In addition to teaching, and depending on an individual's appointment and designation, these areas may include research and creative activity, service, student interaction, and professional development.

Principle 6: In the evaluation of teaching, at least three evaluative practices must be used; SPOTs, eSPOTs, or other forms of student survey feedback must constitute no more than one third of the weight of the evaluation process.

Principle 7: All faculty must be individually informed of the specific criteria which will be used to evaluate their teaching. Deans and chairs must ensure that current faculty, and all new faculty, be made aware of the particular measures for teaching evaluation used by their departments and colleges; all faculty members

must be given a written set of departmental policies concerning their evaluation and/or alerted to the appropriate location online (urls).

Principle 8: Stasis and adequacy are insufficient; growth, development, and innovation are essential to effective teaching. TCU faculty members must make a commitment to teaching excellence and to continual improvement in their teaching practice.

To assess faculty performance in the classroom, the Faculty Senate endorses the following “best practices”:

Suggested Best Practices for the Evaluation of Teaching

(Individual academic units should establish guidelines for teaching evaluation through an open discussion, articulating values held in common by all colleagues. The following “best practices” are not ranked in order and are offered as suggestions to illustrate the range of evaluative practices. The Faculty Senate urges all departments and programs to undertake a review of their existing criteria to decide for themselves which practices are best suited to their specific needs.)

1. Class observation and evaluations (by chairs, peers, non-departmental colleagues)
2. Self-assessment
3. Assessment, evaluation, and/or teaching effectiveness measurement tools including, but not limit to: the Learning Outcomes Manager, the eLearning OSAT, mid-semester evaluations, and other teaching diagnostic instruments.
4. One-on-one discussions with faculty member being evaluated
5. Teaching portfolios (including all written evidence of classroom performance and a statement of teaching philosophy)
6. Professional portfolios (includes all areas of professional activity)
7. Chairs and members of the evaluation committee may solicit impressions of a faculty member’s teaching from:
 - a. tenured faculty
 - b. non-tenured faculty
 - c. faculty members teaching similar courses
 - d. colleagues from other departments
 - e. students
8. Review of course materials (This may include syllabi, assignments, learning materials, student work, and written responses to student work.)

9. Evidence of teaching innovation (new courses created, revisions of existing courses, new delivery systems, development of service learning and/or community engagement programs, participation in workshops and/or consultations on teaching, participation in pedagogical programs to develop new areas of learning and pedagogy, and participation in other teaching improvement opportunities)
10. Comparison of student perception surveys or faculty mid-term evaluations with end-of-semester surveys or evaluations
11. Awards (nominated and received)
12. Outstanding student research and student achievement completed under the instructor's supervision
13. Evidence of student interaction beyond the classroom (independent studies, honors theses, graduate committees, student advising, mentoring)

Available Resources

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