Analysis and Recommendations of the Committee to Reevaluate Evaluations (EvalReval)

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Executive Summary of the most significant recommendations:

The proposal elaborates these points.

I. Introduction

The main charge of the evalReval committee is improving how undergraduate students evaluate a wide array of classes and teachers to better serve students, teachers, and administrators. Our emphasis on formative uses of evaluation highlights our commitment to teaching.

II. Student/Faculty Education

Educating students and faculty about the teaching evaluation process is an important step toward increasing student participation in the process and improving its utility for teachers. Elements of an informed student culture should be encouraged by a variety of means, and include:

- Students recognizing their role in the course evaluation process.
- Students clearly understanding that grades are submitted before faculty receive results.
- Students appreciating a range of effective teaching and learning.
- Students understanding clear, jargon-free questions on the form.

The results of evaluations provided to teachers and administrators should include an array of both information about the class evaluations and cautions and advice about its interpretation.

III Structural considerations of the proposed form

We recommend that:

- class time be provided for students to complete their evaluations;
- the proposed instrument take students no more than 20 minutes to complete;
- a two-week window be available in which the forms can be administered;
- teachers be encouraged to discuss the importance and use of course evaluations;
- students be able to complete the instrument using a computer or a smartphone;
- its primary purpose is to provide formative feedback to the instructor, while still addressing administrative and student needs.

IV. Key Elements of the Evaluation Form

We recommend a revised form (presented in Appendix One) that:

- comprises 12 standard fixed-choice and 4 open-ended questions;
- includes 2 fixed-choice items of particular interest to administrators (i.e., overall evaluations of teacher and course);
- includes one open-ended question designed specifically for students to address to other students (#13 on form).
- offers the possibility of customization, through the addition of 1 to 6 questions (drawn from a bank of possible questions) specific to the course and/or the instructor's goals.

V. Recommendations for Peer Review/Teaching Portfolios

The committee recommends:

- implementation of and adequate support for a required departmental Peer Review process for teachers being renewed and promoted;
- that faculty who conduct classroom observations also provide peer mentorship;
- that details of the Peer Review process be department-specific;
- that a Teaching Portfolio be made an integral part of the Peer Review process.

Conclusion

This report emerges from much discussion, debate, and collegiality among representatives of all four undergraduate schools, and we hope it aids Vanderbilt's vital teaching mission. Implementation of this proposal must include the means of its reevaluation and modification.

Proposal for the Development of a New Course Evaluation System

I. Introduction

The charge of the evalReval committee is to review and improve the way in which undergraduate students evaluate classes and teachers. This is a daunting task from a number of perspectives. Vanderbilt professors teach nearly 2000 undergraduate courses a semester across four different schools. Class sizes range from less than a handful to in the hundreds. Some are seminar, some lecture; some performance, lab, or project oriented; some based on licensure requirements or have service components; they range across introductory, intermediate, and advanced levels of content; and they negotiate general education and major objectives. Each of these components, in addition to the specific content or purposes of a course, influences how it is most usefully taught and evaluated. Classrooms are experimental and developing spaces, not finished with repeated and merely repeatable experiences, and Vanderbilt teachers strive to refine their pedagogical craft as well as class content, keeping up with the cutting edge research in their fields. Thus, an important goal is to generate evaluations that encourage development and innovation.

We believe students have an obligation and interest in effective evaluation, both to aid their teachers and to guide their fellow students. Evaluation can serve as a moment for reflection on accomplishments and ideals and can provide valuable formative feedback for the teacher. At the same time, there is no ideal time to evaluate a class. In the midst of the class, its full impact has not been experienced, and more retrospectively, memories fade and confuse. Further, the quality of a class derives from its position in a students' careers, its place within wider departmental offerings, its synergy with education beyond the classroom and the students' prior courses, and the (often arbitrary) composition and subsequent chemistry of a class. Ultimately, an education is a woven fabric, and to evaluate the threads independently is to bracket the larger whole.

The research regarding the effectiveness of evaluations is by no means consistent. In general, because of statistical limitations, such work tends to focus on large courses with fairly consistently defined content—and generally shows modest correlations between strong teaching evaluations and student learning. Other research demonstrates that certain questions may simply measure teacher likeability or demeanor, and that issues of gender and race, as they influence perception and experience, can affect evaluations.

Nonetheless, these limits by no means render end-of-course evaluations useless, but rather guide us in their interpretation and use. They help clarify the key components of this report: improving the education of both students and faculty about the creation, use, and interpretation of course evaluation; improving the presentation, design, ease-of-use, and content of the evaluation; and considering its role within a wider discourse and array of information about teaching.

Anonymous evaluations are completed for the vast majority of courses at Vanderbilt. These evaluations are then processed and prepared for three distinct audiences, each of whom reads them for a somewhat different purpose. First, as Vanderbilt is a research university committed to excellent teaching, a most crucial component is the formative feedback that evaluations provide for teachers. Such feedback can help improve courses and strengthen both the network of

teachers and the community of teachers and students. Second, with the decision to make components of the evaluations publically available to students (as of Fall 2012), evaluations now serve a role in helping students select courses. This is one input, and its utility differs depending on majors, requirements, section availability, and scheduling; yet, if it can lead to deeper consideration in class selection, we believe that in coordination with strong advising and discussions with peers, it can be a useful one. Further, in making the evaluations available to students, the university declares the importance of those evaluations and our trust and expectation that students will take them seriously and approach them thoughtfully. Finally, beginning at the departmental level and across the university, administrators make use of evaluations, among other information, to assess renewals, promotions, and tenure. As an example, the standards for tenure declare that "Candidates for tenure must accept as career obligations the dissemination of knowledge and the nurturing of a spirit of inquiry. To qualify for tenure, candidates must demonstrate a high overall level of teaching effectiveness, with appropriate weight given to performance in each of the various forms of teaching that are important to the respective programs of their departments or schools" (http://vanderbilt.edu/faculty-manual/part-ii-appointment-and-tenure/ch3-principles-rules-and-procedures-for-promotion-and-the-award-of-tenure/). This goal is laudable, and our committee is committed to excellence in teaching here. We believe that the evaluations' strongest prospect is to help guide—but not dictate to—teachers as they revise their courses and their approaches to teaching.

This proposal, the accompanying revised evaluation form, and the appendices are the products of a committee of faculty, students, and administrators that met weekly for three semesters. Although we have achieved consensus on many points, others remain less resolved, and we occasionally present alternative positions. Further, our tasks do not exhaust the questions for understanding evaluation at Vanderbilt. For example, we have not dealt with evaluation in the graduate classroom; we believe this needs additional study. As a makeshift, our proposed form could be used in graduate classrooms, but it is clearly neither designed nor optimal for that purpose. Further, our work was unable to focus on teaching beyond the classroom; many faculty spend much, even most, of their teaching time in labs, independent studies, and informal teaching. These need to be acknowledged and credited, but we are aware that our proposals here do not advance that proposition. We have not made specific recommendations for the evaluation of TAs; we understand that different departments and schools have a wide array of processes for such evaluation. For those which use questions that are added to a faculty evaluation, we are proposing a system (the "bank" described below) that will allow those questions to be included in the student evaluations at the departmental or instructor's discretion (whether these are questions already in use or newly developed). Because this is a time when evaluation is being reconsidered, this moment may be opportune for departments to reconsider how TAs are evaluated, in keeping with a formative emphasis. Finally, we have not directly addressed questions of student learning, which is, after all, perhaps the most important measure of success. However, learning is not an outcome that evaluations address well, nor even one that is well defined across disciplines.

Our goal here is to create and implement an improved evaluation system that provides students, teachers, and administrators with the information they need in order to successfully fulfill their respective roles as members of the Vanderbilt community. We have considered ideals but are interested in practical applications, in making use of new technologies, and in recognizing the

expertise and commitment of teachers as they negotiate their many tasks. The form that we are proposing has been discussed in focus groups and in individual interviews, and we appreciate the seriousness with which the students engaged the process. Nonetheless, its real test will occur after its introduction, and we believe that a careful review of its success within 2-3 years of its implementation will be critical. We believe such a review must include all undergraduate schools and might be comprised of department chairs, and will require soliciting information from students and faculty at all ranks.

We hope that this proposal will generate spirited and open discussion. We wish to underscore that, given the relative paucity of applicable research, the implementation of this proposal, however modified, must include the means of its own reevaluation and modification.

II. Student/Faculty Education

Educating students and faculty about the teaching evaluation process is an important step toward increasing student participation in the process and improving its utility for teachers. The percentage of students participating in the evaluation process (the response rate) has dropped roughly 20% since 2004 and currently averages about 65% across all courses. The spread of responses rates includes many well below 50%. The committee has identified several perceived barriers to completion of the evaluations (as revealed by results from a survey of students conducted by VOICE administrators in 2011). Evaluations are requested at a particularly busy time in the semester, and students often do not have time to complete forms for all classes (which can range from an average of five classes to as many as twelve for a Blair student). Students often do not understand how instructors use evaluations to improve their teaching or how administrators use them to make promotion and retention decisions. There are apparently other misunderstandings surrounding the process, including the misconception that faculty may see evaluations before grades are submitted. In addition, some of the terms in the evaluation questionnaire are ambiguous. We postulate that low student response rates tend to yield responses at the extremes. It is important for faculty, supervisors, and students that the participation rate yields a full range of evaluations.

Faculty who want feedback on their courses are concerned about the lack of student participation, which either provides very little feedback, or feedback that may be concentrated on the lowest or highest ends of the scale. The course evaluation process can be particularly stressful for junior faculty who are being evaluated for tenure. How do they maintain high standards and rigor in their grading process when they also have to obtain more than satisfactory evaluations of their teaching? What are the steps the departments could take to minimize their anxiety? What are the best ways to mentor faculty in this process? Is there transparency in how evaluations are used in tenure/promotion reviews? While many of these questions go beyond the charge of this committee, we believe an improved evaluation process is a step toward addressing them.

The committee recommends efforts toward an on-campus culture in which both students and faculty support and appreciate the importance of teaching evaluations. We unanimously agree that we need to educate students about the evaluation process to obtain more effective results.

Elements of an informed student culture include:

- Students need to recognize their role in the course evaluation process—and the importance of the evaluation process in teaching and learning at Vanderbilt. They are not simply consumers; they are part of the teaching/learning community at Vanderbilt, and their participation in the process is part of their responsibility to the school and to their colleagues. They should be encouraged to take their role seriously in the formative development of classes for future students. We believe Vanderbilt students will embrace this opportunity.
- Students should clearly understand that grades are submitted before the faculty receive evaluation results.
- Students should appreciate and think critically about what effective teaching and learning look like. This has a long-term importance as students develop as citizens since teaching remains a crucial question of public policy, and because careers increasingly include components of teaching.
- Students need to clearly understand the questions they are asked. In other words, the questions should be clear, direct, and free of jargon.

Methods to educate the students include:

- Time designated during orientation to educate first-year and transfer students about the importance and uses of teaching evaluation.
- Time designated during Vanderbilt Visions for discussing the importance of evaluations.
- Continuation of the Student Government promotion of course evaluations (especially in large classes and via website communication).
- Inclusion of statements about evaluations on course syllabi and in class. Instructors should write their own, in keeping with the tone of their own syllabi In the appendix, we have included some sample wordings that faculty could use or adapt.
- Development of an accessible website devoted to the teaching evaluation process. Appendix Five contains more elaborates ideas for the contents of this website; it could include items such as:
    - Descriptions of the importance and use of evaluations for students.
    - Guidelines for faculty when administering evaluations in class and a description of the benefits of allowing in-class time for completion of course evaluations.
    - A copy of the evaluation instrument(s), so that students can preview it before completing it online.

Key changes that faculty should incorporate include:

- Commit class time for students to complete evaluations. We believe that:
    - Students will produce less rushed, more thoughtful evaluations if faculty reserve time in class for students to complete evaluations and to focus on that particular course. Student responses would be saved, then students would be allowed to edit / revise / enhance up until the evaluation deadline, when all saved evaluations would be automatically submitted.
    - More students will complete the evaluations.
    - Time devoted in class communicates to students that evaluations are important enough to spend 20 minutes of class time on them.

- Provide a two-week window for the delivery of the instrument.
    - Instructors can plan the dedicated time for maximum objectivity and when it fits best into the flow of their specific courses.
- Use class time to discuss the importance and use of course evaluations.
    - Schools/departments (heads and DUSs) should encourage faculty to be more explicit about student participation in the evaluation process.

Additional considerations include:

- The faculty should be provided with more context for interpreting their ratings. For instance, in some departments, faculty are given a report that includes average ratings for all courses in the department, as well as courses at the same level (100-level, etc.). Reports like these are helpful for formative purposes. In addition to departmental averages, standard deviations (plus some explanation of their interpretive value) should be supplied. Further, when a class has 10 or more students, and thus anonymity is sufficiently secure, faculty should be able to browse the evaluations (and see how each student answered the array of questions). This kind of deeper examination of the data can help to contextualize the numerical ratings with the class comments.
- The committee discussed the possibility of providing incentives to students, such as tangible gifts or early access to semester grades. However, we agreed that there should be no "reward," but that we should rely on the education of students and faculty to increase the participation rate. Incentives are antithetical to the cultural transformations we seek.
- Very small courses present unique challenges. It is difficult to reserve in-class time for evaluations during one-on-one instruction, and it is often impossible to get the minimum number of results needed for the faculty to view the results of the course evaluation. Often there are too few evaluations available for tenure/promotion review. This is a difficult issue that needs further consideration.
- Independent studies, courses taught by two or more teachers in sequence, and many alternative formats of teaching are difficult to capture with a standard evaluation instrument. In addition, much teaching occurs in informal ways. While the evaluation form cannot resolve these problems, it is important for all members of Vanderbilt to be alert to the value of these efforts, which are often experienced by students as particularly valuable educational experiences.
- The results provided to teachers and administrators should include the distribution of ratings, the mean, mode, and standard deviation. Interpreters of these results should keep in mind that the mode may be a more accurate indicator of the center of the distribution than the mean, especially when there are few respondents. When few students respond, especially when the responses are variable, readers should exercise considerable caution in interpreting the results. Comparisons (for example, to the ratings of other faculty or to the results of the same faculty member at different points in time) may not be warranted under those circumstances.

III Structural considerations of the proposed form

In addition to changing the culture in which the evaluation process occurs, there is the very pragmatic matter of the structure and content of the evaluation form itself.[1] In fact, concerns about low response rates (see Section II) and the utility of the questions, combined with the fact that numerical summaries of evaluations for most courses went online in Fall 2012, became a motivating focus for the work of this committee.

The committee agreed unanimously that the course evaluation form should be a tool for both formative and summative feedback and should therefore serve many purposes. Currently, evaluation results are used to inform administration about faculty teaching in tenure and promotion, to provide student feedback to the faculty on the pedagogy and delivery of instruction, and to (more recently) provide students with data to inform course and instructor selection. Currently, questions 4 and 9 (overall instructor rating and overall course rating) are especially focused on across the university to inform tenure and promotion committees and departments on the performance of faculty teaching. Sufficient historical evidence exists to indicate that these questions serve their purpose, particularly when combined with student comments. However, we should also supplement student evaluations with other measures. We address these issues in Section V of the report.

Teaching and learning inform each other, and feedback aids this continuous process of development that we participate in as instructors. Both the formative and summative aspects of feedback are critical to our growth and to providing different insight into who we are as teachers. There was strong consensus within the committee that the primary function of the evaluation is to provide formative feedback to teachers. But we also largely agreed that the current instrument does not adequately provide either formative feedback to instructors or summative feedback for administrative decision. With regards to formative feedback, the numerical scores reveal patterns of perceived strengths and weaknesses, but provide little specific information to guide the faculty in understanding elements of the course and instruction that were successful and or needed improvement. We must craft a more careful and effective way for faculty to receive formative and summative feedback that can be used to enhance instruction. In addition, evaluation tools and processes should have high impact for students and administrators. Section IV will describe the key elements in the proposed modification of the form. Here we propose modifications that will improve the delivery, response and effectiveness of the course evaluations.

Course evaluations once used a paper form (bubble sheet) with some open feedback questions. This form was completed by students in the classroom and typically yielded response rates above 80%, probably correlated to the attendance rate on those days when the surveys were administered. Subsequently, we have transitioned to a web-based system (VOICE) that has received steadily decreasing response rates since its implementation. In this era of smart phones, tablets and alliterative i-devices, we recommend that an evaluation application be developed. According to a recent Forbes article, 80% of young people have smartphones,[2] and the proportion of Vanderbilt students with these technologies is probably much higher. The culture of social media, texting, and "apps" provides a delivery method for obtaining timely and effective feedback from our students. Retaining an online system (with modifications as proposed) would cover our non-smartphone users. Consistent with current efforts to integrate

[1] In this document, we refer to "the evaluation form," though there is variation across schools and college at Vanderbilt in the content of the form.

[2] http://www.forbes.com/sites/markrogowsky/2013/06/06/more-than-half-of-us-have-smartphones-giving-apple-and-google-much-to-smile-about/

and consolidate our course management systems, we recommend that the evaluation system be delivered using YES or OAK, formats both familiar to students and integrated into their academic lives. By modernizing the evaluation instrument and creating an app and corresponding website for laptop users and a robust social media-like delivery system, we will have the flexibility of making the form available as needed, utilizing features such as a) using "Like" or "👍" or "👎" to indicate when students appreciate a certain aspect of the evaluation, including course-specific questions in the instrument, and b) providing students with ability to revise until the official deadline and still assure the submitting of the most recent version

We will need to address issues such as who would develop and design such an app. There is some precedent for Vanderbilt to develop its own app (http://www.vanderbilt.edu/apps), whether this occurs through IT or as a student-designed product, or in consultation with an outside vendor with an appropriately customizable product. This technology would also allow features such as an improved interface for faculty to review their evaluations. It might allow for both browsing of the complete surveys (when sufficient numbers permit anonymity) and cross-tabulations for faculty members who wish to explore their numbers more deeply. Current updates to classroom infrastructure (such as wifi) will be critical to the success of the proposed evaluation system.

The committee had many discussions concerning who should have access to what components of the evaluation responses. It was unanimously agreed that maintaining student anonymity and educating the students about this strict requirement are critical for the success of student-based evaluations. The biggest item of contention was how much access future students should have to responses to open-ended questions. The main reasons for this debate included: (a) potential bias against instructors, especially junior faculty, as a result of inappropriate comments receiving wide circulation; (b) administrative burden in screening language; and (c) a potential shift of the purpose of the instrument from formative and summative feedback for the instructor. However, the majority of the committee liked the idea of including one written question explicitly for the purpose of informing future students about the course.

Therefore, we recommend that the proposed instrument be designed to take the majority of students no more than 20 minutes to complete; that students be able to complete the instrument using a computer (online) or a smartphone (app); and that its primary purpose is to provide feedback to the instructor, although also addressing some administrative and student needs.

IV. Key Elements of the Evaluation Form

In this section we review key weaknesses of the current form and offer recommendations for the content and structure of a revised form. Attached to the report is a proposed version that addresses the criteria we have agreed on.

There is general agreement among members of the committee that on the current evaluation form, some questions--both fixed-choice and open-ended items--leave much to be desired. Poorly-worded, unclear, or vague questions have several negative consequences. First and foremost, poor quality questions yield poor quality answers, which are of limited use to faculty, administrators, and students. Second, weak questions likely reduce both students' and faculty members' commitment to and confidence in the evaluation process. And, third, that lack of confidence may contribute to low student response rates. (See Section II.)

There is a trade-off between the number of items on the form and the time that students and faculty are willing to commit to the completion of evaluations in class. The form we have designed features 16 questions, 13 numerical multiple choice and 3 open-ended, plus an additional "other" open-ended question that can allow students to clarify or expand, as well as allow faculty to ask students to address particular questions, such as book preferences. Because of the idea of banked questions (explained below), the total number of items will vary from course to course. Question 13—"What advice would you offer to a student who plans to enroll in and hopes to do well in this course?"—is designed so that responses will be shared with students along with the responses to the fixed-choice items.

The current open-ended questions shared by all four undergraduate schools are not questions at all, but vague prompts: "General comments about the course" and "General comments about the instructor."[3] These prompts give students no guidance on appropriate or useful answers and little incentive to supplement their numerical responses. Further, they open the door to comments about courses' scheduled times and rooms, and instructors' personalities, accents, and styles of dress—none of which is particularly helpful to instructors. Questions that prompt students to express how the course might be improved and to highlight elements that particularly aided their learning are crucial.

Several questions on the current form collect information about the students, rather than about students' assessment of the course and instructor. Students' gender and year in school could be linked to their answers via the VUNet login, and so are redundant on the form itself. The item that asks about students' level of interest in the course subject prior to taking it (#8 on the A&S version) is of limited worth if not matched with a question about students' level of interest *at the conclusion* of a course.

Given the committee's consensus that the fundamental purpose of the evaluation questions should be formative, most items should provide feedback that can help instructors revise and improve their classroom teaching. That said, we recognize that department, school, and university administrators have an interest in students' evaluations of courses, primarily for decisions about reappointment, tenure, and promotion. Two (fixed-choice) items are maintained for administrative decision-making, and administrators will be able to view responses to other items (both fixed-choice and open-ended).

Beyond the outdated quality and limited relevance of some individual questions, the current evaluation form is fundamentally "one size fits all." That is, the questions asked are the same whether the course is small or large, seminar or lecture, introductory or advanced. One way to tailor evaluations to particular courses and particular teaching and learning goals is to permit instructors or departments to add a few items to the evaluation; these would be drawn from a shared bank of questions that have been vetted in some way (such as review by a faculty committee) or written by instructors themselves.[4] Bank items might be categorized into those most appropriate for evaluations of courses of different formats (e.g., lecture, seminar,

[3] Only the form used in Peabody College includes more specific open-ended items that ask students to identify the strongest and weakest feature of the course, and to offer suggestions for how the instructor might improve his/her teaching.

[4] A caveat: Writing effective fixed-choice questions is not as simple as we might think. We can see evidence of this in some of the items we have used since the evaluation forms were introduced at Vanderbilt in the mid-1980s.

practicum, laboratory, service education course). Again, time constraints are a challenge, so we must limit the number of custom items an instructor may add to an evaluation form. The goal of these questions would be strictly and deliberately formative, and we believe the responses should be available only to the instructors (and mentors as they choose). We suggest that up to 6 questions might be appropriate, although fewer will often do.

An advantage of developing a system that is personalized for the needs of Vanderbilt students and designing the instrument to be flexible with questions selected from a bank is that such a system can be used to provide formative feedback to instructors during other points of the semester and course. The system could be used to perform mid-semester evaluation, an option that would be particularly useful to junior faculty as they develop their teaching. Sharing and discussing the results of a mid-semester evaluation with students can help clarify expectations all around (i.e., "Here's why I'm structuring class sessions this way"). Currently, the CFT offers small group analysis (SGA) and teaching observations. A system that allows instructors to gather their own forms of feedback would serve as a complementary tool that, in conjunction with CFT support and services, can be invaluable to a beginning teacher. The system might also be used to perform pre-assessment of student learning and history (within the context of the course) to guide course design and material selection.

In summary, the current evaluation form requires substantial revision in order to yield data useful to instructors in improving their teaching, as well as to administrators and students. In addition to revising key structural elements, we must re-evaluate and revise the standard questions themselves. We recommend a revised form that:

- will take students, on average, about 20 minutes to complete during class;
- eliminates questions about students' gender and class year;
- comprises 12 standard fixed-choice and 4 open-ended questions;
- includes 2 fixed-choice items (of the 12 total) of particular interest to administrators;
- includes one of the open-ended questions designed specifically for students to address to other students (#13 "What advice would you offer to a student who plans to enroll in and hopes to do well in this course?"). It needs to be clear that responses to this question will be published to students;
- offers the possibility of customization, through the addition of 1 to 6 questions specific to the course and/or the instructor's goals for students in the course.

V. Recommendations for Peer Review/Teaching Portfolios

Student evaluations of teaching, even when designed and implemented in an optimal way, provide only one measure of teaching effectiveness. Two additional measures (Teaching Portfolios and Peer Review) are used at many institutions and are reviewed in the literature. These activities can have either summative (tenure-review and promotion) or formative (self-improvement) purposes. The CFT offers services for teaching observation that are designed to provide formative feedback and that are specifically excluded from tenure/promotion decisions. The recommendations contained here are focused on the use of Peer Review for both evaluative and formative purposes. A commitment to adopt Peer Review would encourage each department or program to initiate a discussion of effective teaching practices within the discipline and will facilitate the sharing of particularly effective and innovative teaching methodologies.

The committee recommends the implementation of a required Peer Review process. The minimal characteristics of this process are described below. Implementation of Peer Review across all four undergraduate schools will require careful consideration of faculty workload and flexibility to meet the requirements of different departments/disciplines. Some departments already employ Peer Review mechanisms that could serve as pilot procedures for wider implementation. As described below, we view development of a Teaching Portfolio as intrinsic to the Peer Review process.

The motivation to implement a mandatory Peer Review process at Vanderbilt University arises from the committee's recognition that students are limited in their ability to evaluate certain aspects of teaching such as accuracy and relevance of course content, appropriateness and difficulty of assessment methods, and fit of a course within the broader departmental curriculum. Peer Review also gives the instructor an opportunity to explain and advocate for innovative approaches in the classroom that may be highly effective, but may initially be met with skepticism by students.

Recommended Protocol: The committee is cognizant that a Peer Review process must address uncertainty about whether colleagues are qualified to serve as reviewers, the possibility of personal biases among reviewers, and excessive time demand on faculty. To maximize effectiveness, we recommended that departments develop a plan for implementation that reflects each discipline's needs and practices. During development of a Peer Review protocol, departments are encouraged to utilize expertise at the Vanderbilt Center for Teaching and to consult literature on this topic (see appendix: "A Protocol for Peer Review of Teaching" Brent and Felder, 2004). Use of guiding questions or observational protocols to guide the assessment is recommended, but each department should design a review process that fits its needs and teaching formats. In addition, faculty who are conducting classroom observations as part of Peer Review should take the opportunity to provide peer mentorship. Again, the shape of mentoring should be the considered decision of each department. Peer Review visits to classes should be deliberately planned and scheduled in discussion with the instructor whose class is being visited. Junior faculty should also have access to additional Peer Review, as requested, outside the evaluative formation.

Although the details of the Peer Review process will be department-specific, the committee recommends that departments include a Teaching Portfolio as an integral part of the Peer Review process. The Teaching Portfolio provides an instructor an opportunity to place his/her course in an appropriate context and to give reviewers information that extends beyond what happens in the classroom. Prior to a classroom observation, the instructor should provide a set of materials pertinent to the course, such as syllabi, assignments, assessments, and examples of student work and instructor feedback. Materials should be accompanied by a narrative that describes the instructor's goals and teaching philosophy for the course and how the submitted materials support the attainment of those goals. As departments develop their guidelines for Teaching Portfolios, they should recognize that there is no generic ideal portfolio, but they will vary from teacher to teacher, class to class. The appendix "Teaching Portfolios: Uses and Development," (Babin et al.), is a useful starting place, as is the expertise of the Center for Teaching. New faculty should be mentored at an early stage to begin assembling a teaching portfolio, and we believe the more discussion about teaching becomes a cultural norm for Vanderbilt, the more portfolios will become integrated into our culture.

Frequency and use of Peer Review reports: The committee recommends that a minimum of two classroom visits, with appropriate feedback, be conducted prior to each evaluation for second-year, fourth-year, and tenure review; for non-tenure track appointments, we recommend that each department determine an appropriate process for reviews that recognizes the faculty member's level of experience. The committee recommends that the Peer Review Reports and accompanying Teaching Portfolio be made available during the department's deliberation of the tenure/promotion recommendation. This approach will allow the department to provide appropriate context to the evaluation.

Optional Peer Review for formative purposes: Peer Review can contribute to the continual growth of faculty at every level. Such occasions may be as simple as a classroom visit by a colleague followed by an informal discussion over coffee. Similarly, the discussion of syllabi and assignments and other components of course design can be helpful without being burdensome.

Conclusion

Students' evaluations play an important role in the improvement of our courses. By improving students' understanding of that role, by introducing a modernized evaluation form that is more accommodating in format and more demanding of thoughtful response, and by encouraging departments and teachers to bring their own expertise and awareness into dialogue with student perceptions, the evaluation process can better achieve its formative goals while improving the integrity of its summative function. We offer this report after much discussion, debate, and collegiality across all four undergraduate schools, and we hope it serves as a stepping stone for the continued efforts of Vanderbilt to improve its vital teaching mission.

Appendix One: Evaluation Form

The Composition of the Form

The standard evaluation form, which is intended to be used for every Vanderbilt class, includes 12 structured response items and 4 open-response items. Our pilot research with students suggests that these items can be completed, on average, in less than ten minutes. In addition to these 16 items, an instructor has the option, at his or her discretion, to select up to 6 additional structured response items from an optional bank of items, or, alternatively, to write one or more of these optional items in a structured response format. The purpose of making optional items possible (either by selecting from a "bank" or by writing one's own) is to make it possible to tailor the evaluation, at least in part, to the specific information needs of the instructor. The total limit of 22 items stems from the committee's conviction that students must be able to complete the evaluation in 20 minutes or less.

Because of this design, it will be necessary to involve instructors, before the course evaluation period, in choosing or composing the evaluation form for each course. An instructor may simply select the default or "standard" evaluation form, may amend it by selecting anywhere from 1-6 items from the optional "bank," or may choose to write one or more of the optional 6 in a structured-response format. Therefore, an application to support instructors' composition of evaluation forms will be required (it will most likely be an on-line application).

Although the committee has conducted several rounds of review and revision on the standard evaluation form, less scrutiny has been devoted to the items in the "optional" bank. We suggest that some process of regular review be instituted over the next few years so that, as the new evaluation form is introduced, data and feedback from its broader use can be used to fine-tune item choices and item wording. The "optional" items would especially benefit from this process. Some may be selected so rarely by instructors that they should be considered for elimination (the optional bank should be kept lean; if it becomes too large, it will be time-consuming and clumsy to use). Instructors or Departments may want to nominate optional items that have been written by instructors and that turn out to be especially informative. It would be useful to have a mechanism for considering items like these for incorporation as optional "bank" items.

Background: The Development of the Form

A subcommittee initiated development of the evaluation form, but in the end, every member of the EvalReval committee had a role in its design, revision, or test. The committee collected and reviewed research literature on student evaluation generally and student evaluation forms, in particular. We collected a variety of student evaluation forms and background information on those forms from two general kinds of sources. The first source was sister institutions. We selected Stanford and Northwestern Universities as institutions with programs and goals similar to Vanderbilt's and the University of Wisconsin and Notre Dame because both had

recently been involved in rethinking their student evaluation process. The second kind of source was teaching evaluation materials developed by cross-institutional projects. These included the Student Assessment of Learning Gains (situated at the University of Colorado), the Enhancing Teaching and Learning Environments in Undergraduate Courses project (developed at the University of Edinburgh), the Course Experience Questionnaire (commissioned by the Australian Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, and Training), and the IDEA Center Student Ratings of Instruction System (a nonprofit organization in the U.S. that tailors evaluation forms to specific programs and classes and then collects, analyzes, and reports data among comparative institutions as a for-fee service).

Based on these reviews, committee members identified major dimensions of instruction that underlay and structured the evaluation process. Being clear about these dimensions is important for establishing the overall validity of the evaluation instrument. Across the projects we reviewed, there was considerable, but not complete overlap on those dimensions. There is considerable variability in uses, student populations, and kinds of courses that these instruments address, but some dimensions are more likely than others to be correlated with students' overall evaluations of the instructor and/or course, and these are the dimensions that tend to show up in most of the projects.

We identified eight dimensions of instruction that seemed to show up widely in the literature. Some focus primarily on the instructor. They are: (1) instructor clarity, communication, and "understandableness"; (2) teacher-student interaction, rapport, accessibility; (3) instructor's stimulation of interest in the course and subject matter; and (4) instructor's feedback on student performance. Other dimensions focus more directly on the course. They are: (5) course organization and planning; (6) intellectual challenge and critical thinking; (7) course workload and difficulty; and (8) student self-rated learning. Of course, to some extent all eight dimensions tap the students' perception of both the instructor and the course.

As a next step, the committee reviewed items from the collected evaluation forms, selected those that seemed most useful, and classified them into the eight dimensions. In several rounds of review, selection, revision, and rewriting, committee members generated 12 structured response items and 4 open-response items that seemed to us to provide the best collection. We attempted to balance comprehensiveness and efficiency and chose those items that collectively communicated what we most value in instruction.

Subsequently, committee members conducted a number of focus groups with students and sought feedback from faculty members (including pre-tenure faculty and professors of the practice) and other instructors. Participants were solicited from all units in the University. The purpose was to ensure that the collection of items was sufficiently comprehensive and fair, and that individual items were easily interpretable. Several rounds of revision were made in response to this feedback.

Items in the optional item bank were selected from those considered promising in the initial review but for one or another reason (often for reasons of balance) not selected for inclusion on the "standard" form. A special set of "bank" items were generated to be responsive to information needs about classes that are less prototypical of those taught at Vanderbilt, such as performance classes at Blair, science laboratory courses, teacher education practica and placements, and community service courses. These special course "bank" items were drafted and sent for review to faculty members in University units where many of the relevant courses are taught. Feedback was incorporated in revision of the items.

The final version of the standard evaluation form, as well as the optional bank of items, was reviewed and approved by the entire committee the first week of December, 2013.

Course Evaluation Form

Thank you for providing honest and constructive feedback. Your responses are kept anonymous, and group results are reported to instructors only after grades are submitted. The results are used by instructors to improve teaching and course design and by administrators to inform personnel decisions such as tenure and promotion.

Except for Items #10-16, response categories are: not applicable - NA, (1) strongly disagree - SD, (2) disagree - D, (3) neutral - N, (4) agree - A, (5) strongly agree - SA. If an item does not apply to your class, please score it as NA.

1. The instructor helped me understand the core ideas and issues in this subject.

	1	2	3	4	5
NA	SD	D	N	A	SA

2. The instructor explained what was expected of me in the assignments and assessments for this course.

	1	2	3	4	5
NA	SD	D	N	A	SA

3. The instructor encouraged critical, original, or creative thinking.

	1	2	3	4	5
NA	SD	D	N	A	SA

4. The instructor demonstrated interest in students' learning.

	1	2	3	4	5
NA	SD	D	N	A	SA

5. The instructor used class time productively.

	1	2	3	4	5
NA	SD	D	N	A	SA

6. This course helped me appreciate the significance of the subject matter.

	1	2	3	4	5
NA	SD	D	N	A	SA

7. The components of the course, such as class activities, assessments, and assignments, were consistent with the course goals.

	1	2	3	4	5
NA	SD	D	N	A	SA

8. The feedback I received during the course was helpful.

	1	2	3	4	5
NA	SD	D	N	A	SA

8. I felt comfortable asking questions in this course.

	1	2	3	4	5
NA	SD	D	N	A	SA

9. This course helped me consider connections between course material and other areas of my personal, academic, or professional life.

	1	2	3	4	5
NA	SD	D	N	A	SA

10. Overall, the instructor was:

1	2	3	4	5
Poor	Fair	Effective	Highly Effective	Outstanding

11. Overall, the course was:

1	2	3	4	5
Poor	Fair	Effective	Highly Effective	Outstanding

12. Compared to requirements in other classes, the workload required to do well in this class was:

1	2	3	4	5
Much Less	Somewhat Less	About the Same	Somewhat More	Much More

13. What advice would you offer to a student who plans to enroll in and hopes to do well in this course?

14. What elements of the course most contributed to your learning?

15. What improvements to the course would you recommend?

16. Do you have any other comments?

APPENDIX 2: Bank Items

General (ie, potentially applicable for a wide range of courses):

Instructor Clarity, Communication, Understandableness

1. The instructor explained course material clearly.
2. The instructor provided effective examples and illustrations.
3. The instructor adapted his/her teaching when necessary to meet learners' needs.
4. The instructor presented course material in a manner that facilitated understanding.

Teacher-Student Interaction, Rapport, Accessibility

1. The instructor demonstrated understanding and support of student goals.
2. The instructor provided sufficient individual attention to students.
3. The instructor provided appropriate help or learning resources outside of class.
4. The instructor acknowledged and valued individual differences.
5. The instructor created a respectful and safe class environment.
6. The instructor communicated a positive and supportive attitude.
7. The instructor was accessible to students.

Stimulation of Interest in Course and Subject-Matter

1. The instructor communicated the importance and significance of the subject matter.
2. I could see the relevance of most of what we were taught.
3. I found most of what I learned in this course interesting.
4. The instructor made me want to do better
5. The instructor actively involved students in learning activities.

Feedback on Student performance

1. The instructor provided timely feedback.
2. It was clear to me what was expected in the assessed work for this course.
3. You really had to understand the subject well to get a good grade in this course.
4. The feedback on my performance helped me improve my learning.
5. I received a sufficient amount of help and attention to my learning.
6. The grading practices were fair.
7. The grade I have now fairly represents my class performance.
8. The grading standards of this class were more rigorous than those of other Vanderbilt classes.

Course Organization and Planning

1. The course schedule allowed students to stay up-to-date in their work.
2. Tests and projects covered the most important points of the course.
3. The course ran smoothly.
4. This course contributed to and fit well with the goals of the program.
5. This course was well organized.
6. It was clear how each topic fit into the course.

Intellectual Challenge and Critical Thinking

1. The instructor inspired students to set and achieve challenging goals.
2. The instructor had high achievement standards.
3. The teaching encouraged me to rethink my understanding of some aspects of the subject.
4. The instructor helped us see how you think and reach conclusions in this subject.
5. I felt sufficiently challenged in this class.
6. This class supplied a good balance between risk and safety.

Course Difficulty, Workload

1. This course required more work than most other Vanderbilt courses.
2. This course material was more difficult than most other Vanderbilt courses.
3. This course stimulated students to intellectual effort beyond that required by most courses.
4. The amount of work required outside of class was similar to that required in other classes I've taken at Vanderbilt.

Student Self-Rated Learning

1. I have learned a lot from this course.
2. This course helped me develop intellectual skills.
3. This course helped me develop professional skills.
4. This course had high impact for me personally.
5. My confidence in the course material increased as a result of this class.
6. I would recommend this course to other students.

Bank Questions for particular kinds of courses:

Relevant for teacher education practica and student teaching

1. My university supervisor helped me learn to navigate school practices, for instance, how to interact positively with teachers in my placement school, how to figure out school norms, how to collaborate effectively with my field mentor.
2. My university supervisor gave me advice and feedback that supported my growth as a teacher.
3. My university supervisor pressed me to broaden my ways of thinking of myself as a teacher.
4. I received feedback that challenged my thinking as a teacher.
5. I received opportunities to interact with students around the subject matter of the course.

Relevant for Blair individual and ensemble music instruction lessons

1. Based on my weekly lesson preparation, the instructor offered me sufficient opportunities to perform.
2. This course increased my confidence in performance.
3. The instruction balanced repertoire and technique appropriately.
4. I received feedback that helped me become a better performer.
5. The instructor challenged me to improve my mastery of my instrument.

Relevant for laboratory courses

1. The laboratory course helped me understand better how knowledge is developed in this discipline.
2. The laboratory course improved my proficiency in the use of equipment and techniques common to this field.
3. The laboratory course improved my understanding of major components of the scientific process, such as experimental design, statistical analysis, and scientific writing.
4. The laboratory course prepared me to apply, evaluate, and synthesize the meaning of the experiments that we performed.

Relevant for community service courses

1. My role in the placement was important and meaningful.
2. I had opportunities to interact as a peer with the professionals and/or adults who work in my placement setting.
3. I received frequent opportunities to reflect about the connections between what I was doing in the community and what I was learning in class.

4. My placements provided chances to learn more and more deeply about the topics I was learning in my class and program.
5. I had opportunities to exercise responsibility in my placement.

A PROTOCOL FOR PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING

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Abstract

A peer review protocol that serves both formative and summative functions has been implemented at North Carolina State University. For summative evaluation, two or more reviewers use standardized checklists to independently rate instructional materials (syllabus, learning objectives, assignments, tests, and other items) and at least two class observations, and then reconcile their ratings. For formative evaluation, only one rater completes the forms and the results are shared only with the faculty member being rated rather than being used as part of his/her overall teaching performance evaluation. Pilot test results of the summative protocol show a high level of inter-rater reliability. This paper presents a brief overview of the reasons for including peer review in teaching performance evaluation and the problems with the way it has traditionally been done, describes and discusses the protocol, summarizes the pilot test results, and demonstrates how the use of the protocol can minimize or eliminate many common concerns about peer review of teaching.

Introduction

Mounting pressures on engineering schools to improve the quality of their instructional programs have been coming from industry, legislatures, governing boards, and ABET. An added impetus for improving engineering instruction is a growing competition for a shrinking pool of qualified students. If enrollment falls below a critical mass, the loss in revenues from tuition and other funds tied to enrollment could place many engineering schools in serious economic jeopardy.

A prerequisite to improving teaching is having an effective way to evaluate it. Standard references on the subject all agree that the best way to get a valid summative evaluation of teaching is to base it on a portfolio containing assessment data from multiple sources—ratings from students, peers, and administrators, self-ratings, and learning outcomes—that reflect on every aspect of teaching including course design, classroom instruction, assessment of learning, advising, and mentoring.[1–4] A schematic diagram of a comprehensive evaluation system that incorporates these elements is shown in Figure 1.[5] This paper deals with the peer review component of the system. Other references may be consulted for information regarding student ratings of teaching[6–9] and teaching portfolios.[4,10–12]

Why, How, and How Not to Do Peer Review

For the last half century, the standard way to evaluate teaching has been to collect course-end student rating forms and compile the results. While student ratings have considerable validity,[6] they also have limitations. Among other things, students are not qualified to evaluate

an instructor's understanding of the course subject, the currency and accuracy of the course content, the appropriateness of the level of difficulty of the course and of the teaching and assessment methods used in its delivery, and whether the course content and learning objectives are consistent with the course's intended role in the program curriculum (for example, as prerequisite to other courses). Only faculty colleagues are in a position to make these judgments. Moreover, students have limited ability to provide individual formative feedback to their instructors; only colleagues can freely provide such feedback. Recognizing these limitations of student ratings, growing numbers of institutions and departments have begun to include peer review in their faculty performance evaluations.

Peer review is not without its own problems, however. In the customary approach to it, a faculty member observes a class session and jots down notes about whatever happens to catch his or her attention. This approach has several flaws.

- One class may not provide a representative picture of someone's teaching, and the presence of an observer in the class could increase the likelihood of an atypical performance by the instructor (possibly better and possibly worse).
- Different observers are likely to focus on different things and interpret what they see in different ways, so that same class session could get a good report from one observer and a poor one from another.
- Simply watching someone teach a single class provides little information about the currency or accuracy of the course content, the appropriateness of the assignments and tests, and whether or not the students are being equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to move on in the curriculum and to satisfy program accreditation requirements.

Other common concerns about peer review include wide variations in faculty opinions about what constitutes good teaching, controversies over who is qualified to be a peer reviewer, the possibility of personal biases affecting ratings, and excessive time demands on the reviewers.

Peer review procedures that address these concerns have been developed by professional educators.[1,2] One such procedure recently implemented in the N.C. State University Chemical Engineering Department involves evaluation of instructional materials and at least two class observations by two or more independent reviewers, who subsequently reconcile their ratings.

Design and Pilot Test of the N.C. State Peer Review Procedure

The department faculty committee assigned to formulate a peer review procedure began by developing checklist rating forms for classroom observations and course materials, with the checklist items being selected from lists of well-established characteristics of effective teaching.[2] The forms are shown in Tables 1 and 2. The following strategy was then devised:

1. A committee of peer reviewers was formed. Two reviewers ("raters") were assigned to each faculty member ("instructor") to be reviewed.

2. The raters met with the instructor to discuss the instructor's goals for the course, arrange two class observation dates, specify the course materials to be collected (syllabi, course

learning objectives, policies and procedures, handouts, representative lecture notes, assignments and tests, and grade distributions), and go over the two rating forms.

3. The raters observed the first class and independently filled out class observation rating forms (Table 1). Immediately afterward, they met to reconcile their ratings of each item on the form and entered the reconciled ratings on a consensus form. If they could not agree on how to rate an item, their ratings were averaged and rounded up to the next highest integer. The same procedure was subsequently carried out for the second class observation.

4. At the end of the semester, the raters collected the specified course materials, independently filled out course material rating forms (Table 2), and reconciled them to arrive at a consensus rating. They then drafted a report summarizing their findings and gave it to the review committee chair.

5. The chair drafted a letter that summarized and discussed the instructor's strengths and areas that needed improvement. The letter was first given to the raters to be reviewed for accuracy and revised if necessary, and copies of the revised letter were sent to the department head and the instructor. The instructor was welcome to submit a dissenting report if he/she disagreed with any of the findings, but none of the instructors reviewed in the pilot test saw a need to do so.

6. All instructors who were reviewed were invited to meet with their raters and the review committee chair to discuss the evaluation and formulate measures they might take to improve their teaching.

Each rater spent about seven hours on this process: two meeting with the instructor, two observing classes, and three reviewing course materials, reconciling forms, and preparing reports.

In a test of the class observation rating form, one of the task force members observed a class taught by a senior faculty member known to be an outstanding lecturer and gave it the top rating of 5 in eight of the ten categories and 4 in the other two, for an average of 4.8. The full procedure was then implemented for three assistant professors. The average consensus ratings in the six class observations varied from a high of 4.0 to a low of 2.9. (Average ratings were calculated only for reliability analysis; they are not normally included in the peer review summary reports.)

There was a gratifying level of inter-rater consistency in ratings of both class observations and course materials. The average ratings for the same instructor differed from one rater to another by no more than half a unit. Out of 60 item ratings submitted by individual raters for the first class observations (10 items for each of three professors, with each item being rated by two evaluators), the two raters agreed 25 times, differed by one unit 28 times, and differed by two units seven times. The between-rater differences for the second set of class observations were even lower than those for the first set. The agreement for the first set would undoubtedly have been even greater if the raters had observed one or two practice sessions and discussed how to rate each item before progressing to the actual observations. In 30 ratings of individual items

related to course materials (Table 2), the two raters agreed 23 times and differed by only one unit 7 times. No item ratings differed by more than one unit.

The between-session differences in ratings for each instructor were quite small. The overall consensus ratings differed from one session to another by 0.4 units, 0.2 units, and 0.4 units for the three faculty members reviewed, probably reflecting normal variations in teaching effectiveness from day to day. The consensus ratings for specific items in the two observed classes were identical 16 times, differed by one unit 13 times, and differed by two units once. Besides corresponding closely to each other, the class observation ratings for each instructor were consistent with the student evaluations collected at the end of the semester. The committee concluded that the class sessions they observed were truly representative of the instruction delivered throughout the semester.

After reviewing these results, the department faculty voted to adopt the procedure and it has been used successfully for three years. The high inter-rater reliability observed in the pilot test has been consistently maintained, and no instructors have filed dissenting reports.

Recommended Peer Review Protocol

Peer review has two possible functions: summative (to provide data to be used in personnel decisions or award nominations) and formative (to improve teaching). Based on our review of the peer review literature and our experience with the procedure described above, we recommend the following protocol for both summative and formative peer review.

1. *Design class observation and course material rating forms using the formats shown in Tables 1 and 2*. Select items that have been shown to correlate with effective teaching from lists given in References 1 and 2. Obtain consensus approval of the department faculty for the items included in the final forms.

2. *At the beginning of the fall semester or quarter, form a departmental peer review committee that will function for the next academic year*. The committee should consist of a chair within the department who oversees the peer review process and a cadre of faculty raters who may come from within the department or from other departments in related disciplines. Guidelines for selecting raters are suggested in the next section.

3. *Early in the fall, provide a 1–2 hour training session to the raters*. The trainer (an experienced rater from previous years or a faculty development consultant) should present an illustrative set of course materials and one or two mini-lectures or videotaped excerpts of real lectures, and the participants should complete the rating forms and discuss their reasons for assigning the ratings they did. Presenting two mini-lectures that vary in quality makes the experience more instructive.

4. *Summative review*. For faculty members being considered for reappointment, promotion, or tenure or undergoing post-tenure review, the summative procedure described previously should be used (preliminary meeting to go over the procedures, at least two raters and two class observations for each faculty member reviewed, reconciliation of independently completed checklists, final meeting to discuss the results and identify steps for improvement if necessary). The results should be included in a portfolio along with a

summary of student ratings for the preceding three years and other items specified in Figure 1.

Formative review. A modification of the summative procedure should be implemented for formative peer review. The preliminary interview, two classroom observations, and course material review may be performed by only one rater, who completes the rating sheets as above but shares and discusses the results only with the instructor. Such constructive feedback provided to faculty members in their first few years should increase the chances of their meeting or exceeding departmental standards for teaching in subsequent summative reviews.

Resolving Concerns about Peer Review

In the introductory section, we raised several common concerns about peer review. In what follows, we suggest how these concerns are addressed by the protocol just described.

- *Concern: There is no universal agreement among faculty members about what constitutes good teaching, and the chances of getting agreement in most departments are slim.*

Extensive research has demonstrated that certain characteristics of instruction correlate significantly with students' motivation to learn, learning outcomes, and satisfaction with their education. The suggested checklist rating items in References 1 and 2 are based on those research findings. The references list far more items than would be practical to include in rating forms, and even the most disputatious department faculty should be able to reach consensus on a subset of them.

- *Concern: Many faculty members are not qualified to review someone else's teaching, and those who* are *qualified may be in short supply and overworked*.

We are not aware of research-based eligibility criteria for being a peer reviewer, but certain criteria are suggested by experience and common sense. We propose that reviewers (both summative and formative) should be:

(1) *tenured faculty or faculty or non-tenure-track faculty with primarily teaching and advising responsibilities.* Untenured assistant professors should not have to rate colleagues who may later be in a position of evaluating their candidacy for tenure. (Another way to avoid this situation is to use raters from different departments, subject to the knowledgeability condition of Criterion 3.)

(2) *experienced.* Faculty with less than three years of teaching experience should generally not be called upon to rate someone else's teaching.

(3) *knowledgeable*. Raters should understand the criteria to be used in the peer review process, and to a reasonable extent, the broad discipline of the course being reviewed if not the specific course content. Asking a mechanical engineer to review instruction in certain civil or chemical engineering courses, for example, would be generally acceptable, but asking a medieval historian to review instruction in an engineering course would not. As for understanding the rating criteria, the suggested preliminary rater training should be adequate to provide it.

(4) *competent*. While it is not necessary to use only winners of outstanding teacher awards as peer reviewers (there may not be enough of them to meet departmental needs), using poor teachers to evaluate their colleagues' teaching would clearly be a bad idea.

(5) *flexible*. There is no single correct way to teach. Instructors whose styles vary from traditional lecture-based instruction to full-bore active, cooperative, problem-based learning may all be excellent teachers. Faculty with a rigidly narrow view of what constitutes acceptable teaching should not be peer reviewers.

(6) *unbiased.* Individuals who have strong personal or philosophical differences with a faculty colleague should not be asked to serve as peer reviewers for that colleague. If they are asked to do so, they have an ethical responsibility to decline.

Many engineering faculty members meet these criteria, so at most institutions it should not be too difficult to find enough qualified raters to cover all scheduled summative peer reviews in a given year.

- *Concern: Peer review that goes beyond a single class observation imposes too much of a time burden on faculty members*.

The total time required for a summative review using the suggested protocol is about seven hours per rater. This obligation is equivalent to serving on a committee that meets for two hours every other week in a semester, a level of commitment routinely required of faculty members. Moreover, in the proposed system faculty members would generally undergo summative reviews no more than once in three years, so that most faculty members would only be required to serve as reviewers every two or three years. The time burden of peer review is thus considerably less than that imposed by typical committee service.

- *Concern: Two observed classes may not be representative of the entire course.*
- *Concern: The presence of an observer in a class necessarily affects the instructor and possibly also the students, so that any observed class cannot be representative of the course (the "observer effect")*.
- *Concern: Raters may be biased against the instructor and unable to maintain objectivity in their reviews.*

These are legitimate concerns. Since the protocol uses multiple raters and observations and the observations are only one component of the review process, it is unlikely but possible for a good teacher to get a poor evaluation or vice versa because of atypical class sessions. Similarly, even though the suggested reviewer selection process should screen out bias, it is possible—albeit highly improbable—for two raters to share the same unacknowledged bias toward the instructor they are evaluating.

These concerns simply reinforce the idea that peer review should be only one component of the system used to evaluate faculty teaching performance. If multiple sources are used in the review—say, student ratings and peer ratings—and they converge to the same conclusion about an instructor's teaching performance, the chances are great that the common conclusion is correct. On the other hand, if the two sets of ratings yield considerably different conclusions,

then either something is wrong with at least one set or the instructor's teaching in the reviewed course was not truly representative of his/her usual teaching. At that point, further investigation could and should be undertaken.

One way to increase the reliability of multiple-source evaluations is to make sure that there is some overlap in the information the sources provide. For example, if the class observation rating sheet includes items related to preparedness for lectures, clarity of explanations, and respect for students, then the evaluation forms completed by the students should ask for ratings of the same attributes.

Summary

A protocol for summative peer review of teaching has been outlined and tested. It is based on research on teaching effectiveness, consistent with accepted best practices in evaluation, and reliable, and does not impose undue time demands on the faculty. If it is part of a multiple-source assessment system of the type illustrated in Figure 1, it should provide an evaluation of teaching performance with a validity acceptable by any reasonable standard, but more extensive testing will be required to confirm that hypothesis. The protocol also provides a good basis for formative evaluation, which if implemented in the first few years of a faculty member's career should significantly increase the likelihood that a subsequent summative review will be favorable.

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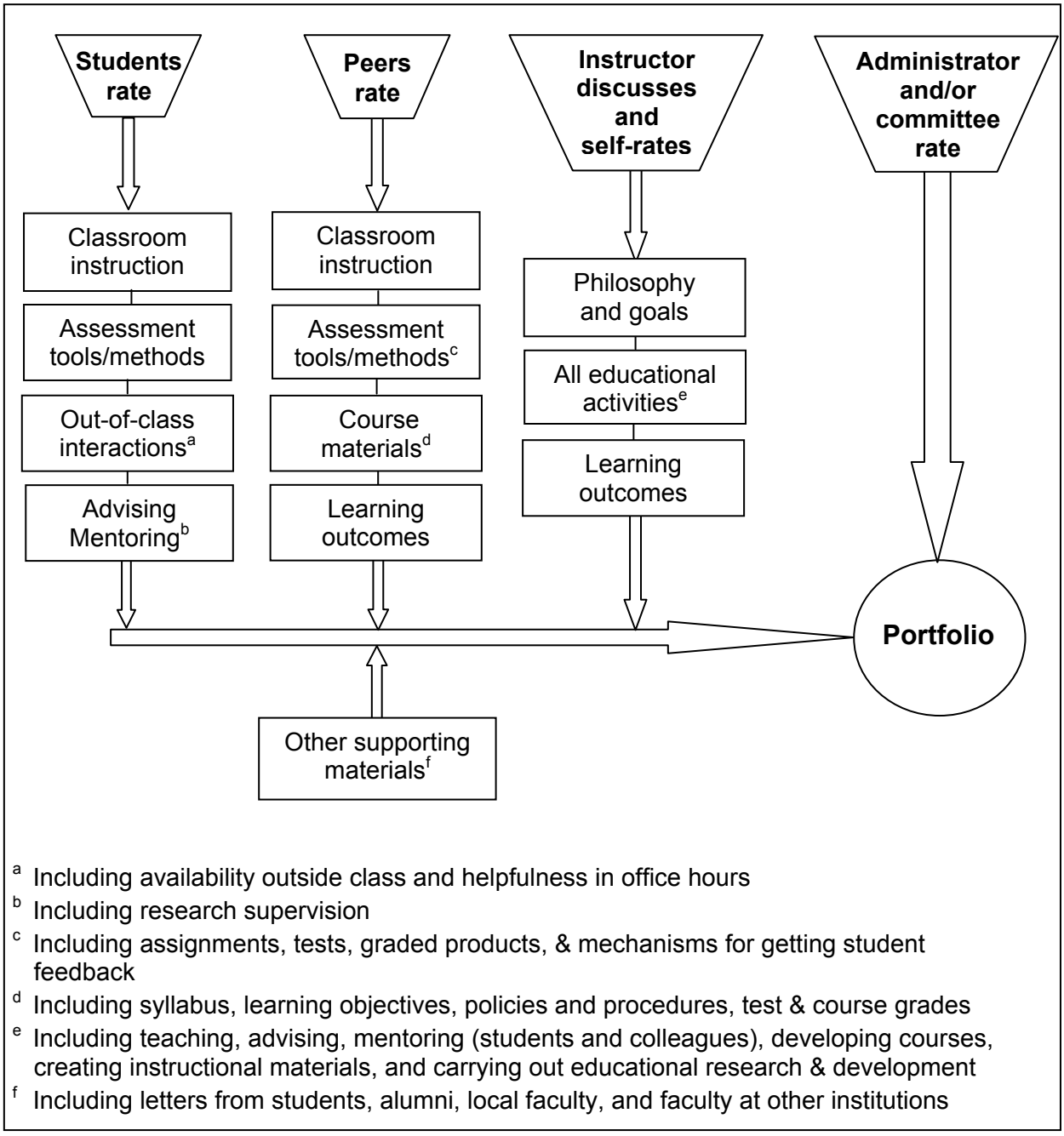

[a] Including availability outside class and helpfulness in office hours
[b] Including research supervision
[c] Including assignments, tests, graded products, & mechanisms for getting student feedback
[d] Including syllabus, learning objectives, policies and procedures, test & course grades
[e] Including teaching, advising, mentoring (students and colleagues), developing courses, creating instructional materials, and carrying out educational research & development
[f] Including letters from students, alumni, local faculty, and faculty at other institutions

Figure 1. Comprehensive Evaluation of Teaching Performance

Table 1
Class Observation Checklist

Course: _____ Instructor: _____ Date: _____

Circle your responses to each of the questions and then add comments below the table.

	Exceeds expectations in all respects	Meets expectations in all respects	Meets expectations in most respects	Meets expectations in some respects	Meets expectations in few or no respects
1 – was well prepared for class	5	4	3	2	1
2 – was knowledgeable about the subject matter	5	4	3	2	1
3 – was enthusiastic about the subject matter	5	4	3	2	1
4 – spoke clearly, audibly, and confidently	5	4	3	2	1
5 – used a variety of relevant illustrations/examples	5	4	3	2	1
6 – made effective use of the board and/or visual aids	5	4	3	2	1
7 – asked stimulating and challenging questions	5	4	3	2	1
8 – effectively held class's attention	5	4	3	2	1
9 – achieved active student involvement	5	4	3	2	1
10 – treated students with respect	5	4	3	2	1

What worked well in the class? (Continue on back if necessary)

What could have been improved? (Continue on back if necessary)

Rater(s)_____

Table 2
Course Material Checklist

Course: _____ Instructor: _____ Date: _____

Circle your responses to each of the questions and then add comments below the table.

	Exceeds expectations in all respects	Meets expectations in all respects	Meets expectations in most respects	Meets expectations in some respects	Meets expectations in few or no respects
1. Course content includes the appropriate topics	5	4	3	2	1
2. Course content reflects the current state of the field	5	4	3	2	1
3. Course learning objectives are clear and appropriate	5	4	3	2	1
4. Course policies and rules are clear and appropriate	5	4	3	2	1
5. Lecture notes are well organized and clearly written	5	4	3	2	1
6. Supplementary handouts and web pages are well organized and clearly written	5	4	3	2	1
7. Assignments are consistent with objectives and appropriately challenging	5	4	3	2	1
8. Tests are consistent with learning objectives and appropriately challenging	5	4	3	2	1
9. Tests are clearly written and reasonable in length	5	4	3	2	1
10. Student products demonstrate satisfaction of learning objectives	5	4	3	2	1

What are the strengths of the course materials? (Continue on back if necessary)

What could have been improved? (Continue on back if necessary)

Rater(s) _____

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Teaching Portfolios: Uses and Development

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There is a trend in higher education to take teaching more seriously. Concurrent with this trend is a shift in undergraduate education from an instructional paradigm where the emphasis is on delivering instruction and transferring knowledge to a learning paradigm where the emphasis is on designing, developing, and creating a powerful learning environment. With these trends comes the dilemma of how to evaluate and improve teaching effectiveness. This has contributed to the growing popularity of the teaching portfolio. This article explores the concept and usefulness of a teaching portfolio for marketing educators. By defining a teaching portfolio, describing its uses, and providing guidelines for developing a teaching portfolio, the authors hope to encourage the implementation of teaching portfolios by marketing educators.

There is a movement in higher education to reevaluate the roles of college faculty. The Carnegie Foundation's 1990 report, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professorate* (Boyer 1990), delineates four scholarly roles for faculty: the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching. In 1994, the Carnegie Foundation surveyed chief academic officers at all of the country's 4-year colleges and universities and reported that more than 80% either had recently reexamined their systems of faculty roles and rewards or planned to do so (Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff 1997). The study also found that more than two thirds of the institutions were developing new methods to evaluate teaching, such as peer reviews of teaching materials, self-evaluations or personal statements, alumni opinions, and evidence of student achievement.

This movement calls for a more serious focus on teaching itself, the enhancement of its status as a scholarly activity as well as the evaluation of teaching effectiveness. The movement has underpinnings in various constituencies. Given the escalating costs of a college education, many of the groups served by these institutions are calling for more accountability in providing value for those education dollars. Also, many educators themselves care deeply about teaching and are behind the movement (Edgerton, Hutchings, and Quinlan 1991). Furthermore, the debate of teaching versus research has evolved into a perspective that teaching is a form of scholarship, a perspective gaining popularity among academe (see Boyer 1990; Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff 1997).

Barr and Tagg (1995) described another paradigm shift in undergraduate education as moving the educational community away from an instructional paradigm toward a learning paradigm. Under the instructional paradigm, the university provides students with the opportunities to learn. Under the learning paradigm, the university's responsibility shifts to the actual degree to which students learn (Barr and Tagg 1995). The faculty member under the old paradigm is charged with providing/delivering instruction, transferring his or her own knowledge to students, and offering courses. The faculty member under the new paradigm is asked to be far more active in helping to produce learning, through design, development, and creation of a powerful learning environment, one in which "effective learning technologies are continually identified, developed, tested, implemented, and assessed against one another" (Barr and Tagg 1995, p. 15).

Whereas the professor at a podium lecturing to students is a classic depiction of the instructional paradigm, the learning paradigm expands our view to encompass a "learning environment." This environment covers a wide range of professor-student interactions that may occur well beyond the bounds of traditional lecture formats to provide opportunities for learning to occur. These teaching methods, or learning technologies, may occur within the classroom setting such as multimedia course delivery, case-based teaching, group or individual in-class activities, creative production, or team teaching. The learning technologies may also extend the learning environment beyond the traditional classroom to include distance or Web-based learning, computer or media lab settings, supervised internships or independent studies, or on-site programs developed with business or practitioners.

With this movement to expand our views of effective teaching and learning methods, however, comes the dilemma of how to assess as well as improve teaching effectiveness. This dilemma has contributed to the growing popularity of the

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teaching portfolio (Anderson 1993; Knapper 1995; Seldin 1997). With emphasis on research as the only true scholarly activity at many institutions of higher education, teaching is considered a relatively private endeavor among professors. In fact, teaching is seldom shared openly. Rarely does one colleague visit another's classroom for purposes of evaluation or improvement. Rather, teaching effectiveness is usually determined through student evaluations, with 98% of the universities/colleges in the Carnegie study reporting using systematic student evaluations of classroom teaching.

Dissatisfaction with and perceived lack of control over the teaching evaluation process led the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) in the early 1970s to propose teaching portfolios, later named teaching dossiers in that country (Knapper 1995). It was not until 1980, however, that Shore and colleagues from the CAUT published the *Guide to the Teaching Dossier: Its Preparation and Use*. A growing body of how-to literature about developing teaching portfolios primarily mirrors the guidelines provided in the aforementioned monograph, the most prolific advocate being Seldin (1991, 1993, 1997). In addition to how-to literature, what are also surfacing are many unresolved issues regarding the implementation of teaching portfolios, primarily for evaluative purposes. Despite these issues, teaching portfolios cannot be ignored, as evidenced by the growing number of books, articles, and an entire issue of the *Journal of Excellence in College Teaching* (1995, vol. 6, no. 1) devoted to the topic.

Although no descriptive research reports the prevalence of teaching portfolios at either the university or college level, the 1994 Carnegie study does indicate a trend toward other methods of evaluating teaching in addition to student evaluations. For example, for purposes of tenure and promotion, many provosts reported currently using or considering the use of self-evaluation or personal statements (82% using, 12% considering); peer review of syllabi, examinations, and other teaching materials (62% using, 29% considering); peer review of classroom teaching (58% using, 33% considering); evidence of continuing student interest (34% using, 26% considering); alumni opinions (31% using, 29% considering); student evaluation of advising (24% using, 42% considering); and evidence of student achievement (24% using, 42% considering). Seldin (1997) claimed that the use of or experimentation with teaching portfolios for the purposes of evaluation and/or teaching improvement has grown dramatically, from only a handful of schools using them in 1990 to more than 1,000 in 1996. Anderson (1993) profiled the specific uses of portfolios at 25 college campuses.

The concept and application of teaching portfolios transcends levels of education as well as academic boundaries. While gaining widespread use in higher education, this concept is also well entrenched at other levels of education and is used for K-12 teacher assessment programs (e.g., Bird 1990; Shulman 1988; Wolf 1991) as well as teacher training programs (e.g., Wenzlaff 1998). There are several examples of applications across disciplines as well (for several examples, see Seldin 1991, 1993, 1997). Finally, the concept has been introduced into the marketing literature (e.g., Gifford 1997, 1998).

Despite its increasing prevalence, the portfolio concept is understandably met with skepticism. One may ask what is to be gained from the time invested in completing the teaching portfolio process when one is already required to submit a variety of teaching documents as a part of annual evaluations. This is certainly a logical question given the many demands on a faculty member's time. The answer lies in the critical distinction between evaluation and assessment. Both terms refer to processes in place to examine a performance, result, or skill. While the goal of the evaluation process is to "make a judgement or determination against a standard (or set of standards) to see if the standards were met," the goal of the assessment process is to offer feedback, "document growth and provide directives to improve future performance" (Pacific Crest 2000). Thus, the true strength of the teaching portfolio concept is its role in the *assessment* process, within the reflective nature of the process itself. The portfolio approach offers the possibility for teaching enhancement as a result of going through the development process. As Zubizarreta (1994) argued, the traditional evaluation process provides somewhat limited information in terms of assisting in improving and mastering teaching, while compilation of the portfolio encourages formative growth and development through reflection.

Attention to reflection, the regular and intentional research into one's own teaching practices, is referred to by Boyer (1990) in detailed discussion of the scholarship of teaching. Schon (1983) and Zubizarreta (1994, 1995) have also discussed this reflective aspect of the portfolio process at length. In his 1994 article, Zubizarreta illustrated several assessment-based applications of the teaching portfolio, which extend well beyond the boundaries of the standard evaluation process. He noted that

> faculty members have compiled portfolios for practical improvement, for the revaluation of specific methods and outcomes in designated courses, for post-tenure reviews, for reflection on pedagogical or methodological experiments, or for the purpose of leaving a legacy of valuable experience to junior faculty members. (p. 323)

The purpose of this article is to provide insight for marketing educators about this phenomenon called a teaching portfolio by defining it, describing its uses, and providing guidelines for its development. We claim neither originality nor exhaustiveness of this topic, but we hope to encourage the implementation of teaching portfolios by marketing educators. Even though some schools may already require a teaching portfolio or something like it without calling it that, many faculty members are still confused as to what exactly a portfo-

lio is and how to develop one. Personal experience of one of the authors in which all business faculty are required to submit a teaching portfolio for annual review without guidelines as to what it should entail or how it will be used to evaluate teaching effectiveness has led to much confusion and discontent. The university handbook guidelines merely state that "other material, " such as course syllabi, evidence of curriculum revision, and professional development, may be considered for evaluative purposes, with no clear guidelines as to how this should be submitted or evaluated.

The teaching portfolio concept described in this article provides a focus, which is summed up by Edgerton, Hutchings, and Quinlan (1991):

> General reflection, divorced from evidence of actual performance, fails to capture the situated nature of teaching. Work samples alone aren't intelligible. But work samples plus reflection make a powerful formula. The reflection is "grounded" by being connected to a particular instance of teaching; the work sample is made meaningful and placed in context through reflection. (p. 9)

WHAT IS A TEACHING PORTFOLIO?

While several have proffered definitions of the term *teaching portfolio*, the one used here is

> a factual description of a professor's major strengths and teaching achievements. It describes documents and materials which collectively suggest the scope and quality of a professor's teaching performance. It is to teaching what lists of publications, grants and honors are to research and scholarship. (Seldin 1991, p. 3)

First, a teaching portfolio is a factual description. While reflective comments are deemed the strength of portfolios, especially when used for formative evaluation, concrete evidence (i.e., syllabi, assignments, feedback to students, evidence of students' learning, and evidence of professional development) must be present to support the claims and reflective comments. (Factual evidence is particularly important when portfolios are used for summative evaluation.) At the very least, some required elements must be present for teaching portfolios to be used as an effective evaluation of faculty for personnel decisions such as tenure, promotion, and annual evaluations or in situations in which portfolios will be compared with one another, such as when selecting candidates to receive a teaching award (Edgerton, Hutchings, and Quinlan 1991). However, a teaching portfolio is more than a collection of artifacts. The portfolio also communicates the significance of each item with respect to one's teaching effectiveness. Basically, the portfolio is a summary of teaching efforts, activities, and accomplishments with the "raw data" not necessarily included. Knapper (1995) analogized this distinction as a "shoe box in which receipts for income and expenses during the year are kept and the summary filed on an income tax return" (p. 50). The actual portfolio itself would be similar to completing the income tax return with the knowledge that every item claimed must be supported when called on.

Second, a teaching portfolio provides a factual description of an individual's major strengths and teaching achievement. Should everything a professor attempts (and perhaps fails) be included, or should a portfolio represent only "best" work and successes? Again, the purpose of the portfolio would drive the answer to this question, but experts (e.g., Edgerton, Hutchings, and Quinlan 1991; Seldin 1991, 1993; Wolf 1991) conclude consistently that for summative evaluation purposes, a portfolio should represent best work, much like an artist's portfolio. Indeed, does one include in a curriculum vitae all the rejection letters or studies conducted that did not produce desired (or any?) results (Knapper 1995)? However, if a portfolio is used for formative evaluation, it would seem appropriate to include failures so that one can learn and improve by reflecting on what did or did not work (Van Wagenen and Hibbard 1998).

Finally, materials assembled in a teaching portfolio collectively suggest the scope and quality of a professor's teaching performance. That is, multiple indications of teaching performance are used instead of relying on only one, which traditionally has been student course evaluations. Shackelford and Simpson (1994) reported on the value of teaching portfolios over traditional (student evaluation) methods of teaching assessment. The opportunity to provide a collection of evidence and examples related to teaching offers a more comprehensive assessment reflective of the actual scope of a faculty member's efforts. These authors emphasized that the true value of incorporating portfolios in faculty assessment is in taking the sum of that faculty member's efforts rather than isolated pieces of evidence. Thus, the teaching portfolio should paint a truer picture of one's teaching scholarship. Moreover, the Stanford Teacher Assessment Project conducted an empirical examination and recommended a holistic approach to evaluating teaching with portfolios rather than evaluating individual elements of a portfolio separately to come up with a "score" of one's teaching performance (Wolf 1991). The approach supports the portfolio as a document that contains evidence *collectively* suggesting one's performance.

USES OF TEACHING PORTFOLIOS

While specific uses for teaching portfolios are varied, they all can be classified as either for evaluation (i.e., summative evaluation) or for professional development (i.e., formative evaluation) purposes. Summative evaluation purposes include personnel decisions (e.g., promotion, tenure, annual reviews, teaching awards), salary decisions (e.g., market and merit pay considerations), and career decisions (e.g., position

searches and grant applications). Formative evaluation purposes encompass uses related to teaching practices (e.g., teaching enhancement, introspection, professional planning, revitalization, and constructive feedback/interaction) (Seldin 1993).

Summative evaluation was the original intent for the development of teaching portfolios when they were proposed by the CAUT (Knapper 1995). The campus uses of teaching portfolios profiled in Edgerton, Hutchings, and Quinlan (1991) also indicate that they are used primarily for this purpose. What a teaching portfolio provides, in essence, is a more concrete, defendable tool to evaluate an individual's teaching ability and effectiveness. This is probably the primary objective for one to develop a portfolio, either voluntarily or required: to communicate to others one's teaching effectiveness.

However, Seldin (1993) as well as others (e.g., Anderson 1993; Edgerton, Hutchings, and Quinlan 1991) argued that this objective might actually be secondary to the "process" of developing a teaching portfolio. These authors claimed that the process of developing a portfolio is actually more beneficial than the resulting portfolio itself. Anyone who has endeavored to develop a teaching portfolio will readily agree that the process of developing one does provide insight into one's teaching, which, in turn, may facilitate improvement. Furthermore, since it is recommended that faculty members develop their portfolio collaboratively with colleagues and administrators, experts claim that the true benefit is open discussion about teaching and what constitutes *good* teaching, enhancing its status as scholarship and encouraging improvement.

DEVELOPING A TEACHING PORTFOLIO

Many experts on teaching portfolios recommend following a step-by-step approach to creating a portfolio (e.g., O'Neil and Wright 1993; Seldin 1991, 1993, 1997). Included in these sources are several examples, for it is recommended that models be available when developing a portfolio. Developing an initial teaching portfolio may require substantial time and commitment, but once an initial portfolio is established, updating and modifying becomes a much less time-intensive endeavor. Developing a portfolio requires reflection on what one teaches, how one teaches, why one teaches that way, how effective that is, and, if necessary or desired, effectively communicating that to others. This encompasses precisely what Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff (1997) put forth as standards by which any scholarly work should be assessed. Possible items to reflect on and include in this process are given in Table 1.

The scope encompassed by the portfolio would be dictated by the intended use as well as the time frame covered by the portfolio. For example, a teaching portfolio used for tenure and promotion decisions should cover several years. One for an annual evaluation would typically cover the immediately preceding year. If one wanted to demonstrate improvement over time, however, it would be appropriate to provide evidence of teaching effectiveness over time. A portfolio could also be developed for an individual course (e.g., Cerbin 1994) or for an entire department (e.g., Knapper 1995). The process described below would be applicable regardless of the scope of the portfolio.

TABLE 1
POSSIBLE ELEMENTS TO INCLUDE IN A TEACHING PORTFOLIO

- Teaching responsibilities
  - Courses taught
  - Number of different preparations
  - Number of students in each class
  - Level of students taught
  - Ratio of majors to nonmajors in classes
  - Discussion of and hours per week spent on teaching-related activities
  - Course content
  - Off-campus, overload, and summer teaching
  - Advising and office hours
  - Internship or mentoring responsibilities (i.e., theses, dissertations)
  - Nature of class schedule
- Teaching philosophy
  - Basic goals and outcomes desired
  - Your image of students
  - Different goals and missions for different courses
  - Role of your discipline in students' education
  - Teaching style
  - Lessons from mentors and role models
- Evidence of teaching effectiveness
  - Self-evaluation
  - Statements from observers of your classes
  - Colleagues' evaluations of course materials
  - Student evaluations
  - Teaching awards/honors
  - Audiotape or videotape of teaching with outside evaluation
  - Pretesting/posttesting
  - Samples of student work
  - Evaluation by alumni and/or business community
  - Evidence of curricular revision
  - Student performance on standardized tests
- Instructional improvement
  - Participation in teaching seminars
  - Participation at sessions at professional meetings dealing with teaching
  - Papers/presentations related to teaching
  - Texts published or reviewed for publishers
  - Evolving course content
  - Innovative activities
  - Integrative and cross-functional approaches

Step 1: Describe Recent and Current Teaching Responsibilities

Most teaching portfolios begin with a description of teaching-related activities. This description should include a listing of courses taught, the course content, the number of different preparations, and which courses are required and which are elective. The courses should also be described with respect to undergraduate and graduate classes, class enrollment sizes, and ratio of majors to nonmajors. However, in addition to describing teaching responsibilities, this section should also include other activities that are related to teaching, such as being a faculty advisor for a student organization, academic advising activities, office hours, internship and mentoring responsibilities, or any other information related to teaching responsibilities. This factual description can typically be accomplished in less than one page.

While this step is basically descriptive, it can also be enlightening. For example, one faculty member was surprised to learn that of the 50 or so students enrolled in one of his courses, a marketing elective, marketing majors comprised only 30% of the students. This realization led him to analyze enrollments for previous semesters to learn if this semester was unusual. He found that for the previous 3 years, the majority of students enrolled in that particular course were not only nonmarketing majors, but they were non-*business* majors taking that course for a required marketing minor. This information led him to revise how he taught that course, resulting in better student understanding, not to mention better student evaluations of the course. Knowledge of this fact also encouraged him to analyze why he was attracting so few marketing majors to this elective, which opened dialog among faculty members teaching "competing" marketing elective courses.

Step 2: Construct a Statement of Teaching Philosophy and Strategies

While the first step is a factual statement of teaching responsibilities, the second step is a reflective statement of teaching philosophy, strategies, objectives, and methodologies, which encompasses the standards of clear goals and appropriate methods espoused by Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff (1997). This step requires a faculty member to reflect on his or her teaching philosophy and the methodologies that are employed to implement this philosophy to achieve learning-based outcomes for different courses. It may also require an individual to explore his or her image of students and the role of his or her discipline and course in the lives of students.

On reflection, a faculty member should develop a concise statement (two to three pages) narrating his or her teaching philosophy and pedagogy. In this reflective statement, the faculty member should discuss what he or she hopes students will accomplish and why these particular learning objectives are important and how they fit the content of the course. Detailed descriptions of instructional methods used to achieve these objectives will make the teaching portfolio more effective.

In truth, one of the most significant parts of the portfolio is this self-reflection on one's teaching philosophy. Preparing it can help an individual unearth new discoveries about oneself as a teacher (Seldin 1997). Seldin (1997) cautioned against rushing through this step and compiling portfolio contents and supporting data prematurely, however. This is analogous to putting the cart before the horse. Taking time to reflect on one's teaching philosophies and strategies should serve as a guide to constructing the rest of the portfolio. This philosophy and approach to teaching should guide subsequent steps, including selecting portfolio items, arranging the order of the items in the portfolio, and compiling supporting data for the portfolio appendix. The emphasis is shifted from what is done in the classroom to why it is done.

Step 3: Select Items for the Portfolio

The original guide for developing a portfolio proffered by Shore et al. (1980) listed 45 different potential items that could be included in a portfolio, which was later expanded to 49 items (Shore et al. 1986). Of course, no one portfolio could, or should, contain all the items listed, as each portfolio is unique, especially when constructed without guidelines as to what items are required. Regardless of whether specific items are required, it is recommended to include a balance of material from (1) products of good teaching, (2) material from oneself, and (3) information from others (Seldin 1991, 1993, 1997; Shore et al. 1980, 1986). While the statement of teaching philosophy and strategies outlines a faculty member's goals and methods, this step provides evidence of adequate preparation, significant results, effective presentation, and reflective critique, the other standards by which scholarly activity should be assessed (Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff 1997).

Although the portfolio is very individualized, there are certain items that seem to consistently appear across all disciplines. Seldin (1997) reviewed more than 300 portfolios and found that the statement of current teaching responsibilities and the reflective statement by faculty members discussing their teaching objectives, strategies, and methodologies are both commonly included in teaching portfolios. Other items most often included are student evaluation data; representative course syllabi detailing course content and objectives, teaching methods, readings, tests, and assignments for all courses taught; and teaching enhancement efforts, such as participation in seminars and workshops.

Evidence of teaching effectiveness can take many forms. Consequently, it is probably the most difficult aspect of the teaching portfolio to document. Included items should be applicable to teaching responsibilities, philosophy, and instructional methods. The choice of items for inclusion may

depend on personal preferences, teaching styles, one's discipline, and the nature of the courses taught. As can be seen in Table 1, some of the items come from the faculty member, while other items may come from students, colleagues, administrators, and alumni; still other items may be products of teaching/student learning.

In addition to constructing a description of teaching responsibilities and a narrative statement of teaching philosophy and methodologies, other reflective statements might be included, such as (1) a description of curricular revisions including new course projects, materials, and class assignments; (2) a personal statement describing teaching goals for the next 5 years; and (3) a description of steps taken to evaluate and improve one's teaching including changes resulting from self-evaluation and/or time spent reading publications on improving teaching. A faculty member may also describe instructional innovations and how the effectiveness of these innovations are/were assessed.

Colleagues may contribute items to a faculty member's portfolio. Peers who have observed one's class(es) or reviewed one's teaching materials are equipped to make powerful statements that attest to teaching excellence. Team-teaching and integrative learning assignments can facilitate this process. Audiotape or videotape of teaching with outside evaluation is another alternative. Certainly, honors or recognitions from colleagues for teaching excellence should be included in the teaching portfolio. Statements from alumni or members of the business community can make positive contributions to the effectiveness of the teaching portfolio. An example would be letters from companies/organizations employing interns under a faculty member's supervision. For marketing classes that engage in client-based projects, statements from the clients can provide evidence of effective teaching.

In addition to letters from clients, there are many other products of teaching/student learning that may be selected for inclusion in a teaching portfolio. Such items may include student scores on pre- and postcourse examinations, examples of graded projects/assignments along with the professor's explanation of the grading system, student publications or conference presentations that resulted from course-related works, and performance in student competitions.

Finally, the purpose of a teaching portfolio is not to supplant the use of student evaluations but rather to supplement them for purposes of evaluating and improving teaching effectiveness. For this part of the portfolio, students' responses to individual questions on the evaluation questionnaire can provide evidence of teaching/learning achievement, and this can be highlighted in this part of the portfolio. While some simply include student evaluation reports in an appendix, others use them to effectively illustrate achievement of specific goals. For example, one faculty member's objective in a specific course was to make students aware of current events/issues facing marketers through discussion of articles from the trade and popular presses. This was adequately explained in the statement of philosophy and strategies used, but to show that students actually became aware of current events, she highlighted students' responses to one question on the student evaluation form with the following table:

Item	*MKT 355 Section 1 Mean*	*MKT 355 Section 2 Mean*	*All College Mean*
Instructor adequately discussed current developments in field	4.86	4.83	3.92

She also supplemented this information with students' open-ended comments reflecting the successful attainment of this goal. Even though the entire student evaluation report and the open-ended responses were provided in an appendix of her teaching portfolio, this faculty member made her case much more effectively than relying on her chairman to sift through the reports/comments to find this information. This allows information from student evaluations to be used effectively rather than merely relying on the overall scores at the end of the report, which is recommended by Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff (1997).

Step 4: Prepare Statements for Each Item

Once the portfolio items are carefully selected, each should be described. Seldin (1997) cautioned that unexplained evidence is difficult for readers to understand and interpret. For example, including two course syllabi from different years provides evidence of instructional change over time. But the significance of the change and why it took place are not apparent. That is why the addition of a commentary explaining why specific changes were made as well as the impact of those changes on student learning provides more convincing evidence about the professor's efforts to improve instruction (Seldin 1997).

For the portfolio to provide hard-to-ignore evidence on which to make judgments about teaching effectiveness, it must be user-friendly. Preparing statements for each item enhances the ability of the user to understand the significance of the items included in the portfolio.

Step 5: Arrange the Items in Order

The purpose of the portfolio will influence the sequencing of items. If the purpose is to improve teaching over time, items reflecting teaching enhancement efforts, reflections, and self-evaluations may be stressed. If the purpose of the teaching portfolio is for tenure and/or promotion evaluation, items specified by the institution's tenure and promotion guidelines may be emphasized. In the absence of such guidelines, it is imperative for the faculty member to arrange the items such that they communicate adequately, clearly, and persuasively one's teaching effectiveness.

Step 6: Compile the Supporting Data

As previously discussed, there are certain key items, such as syllabi and student ratings, that are commonly found in portfolios and, consequently, that are expected. Supporting materials for these items should be included to validate the contents of the portfolio. These materials may be retained by the professor and made available for review, or they may be placed in an appendix. If the supporting data require substantial physical space (e.g., videotapes, large bound student projects, and compact discs), it is best to discuss these materials in the narrative of the portfolio and make them available on request.

For the appendix to be effective, it must not be overwhelmingly large. Other materials to be submitted as supporting data should, like the items of the portfolio, be painstakingly selected. Items included in an appendix should be clear to readers of the portfolio, especially those readers outside the faculty member's discipline.

Step 7: Incorporate the Portfolio into the Curriculum Vitae

Depending on its purpose, the teaching portfolio can serve as a stand-alone document, or it can be incorporated into a curriculum vita under the heading of "teaching." Anderson (1993) recommended similar treatment with respect to service activities as well, demonstrating a broader picture of one's total scholarship. In essence, the teaching portfolio, combined with one's list of publications and service portfolio, is one's professional portfolio, similar to the dossier developed for major personnel decisions, such as tenure and promotion. It is generally recommended that this dossier be organized into a single document. A three-ring binder works well. In fact, for promotion and tenure decisions, many institutions restrict the curriculum vitae to such a container, often with size restrictions. These restrictions would necessarily limit the size of the teaching portfolio.

CONCLUSION

Under the new learning paradigm described by Barr and Tagg (1995), the value of the faculty member's portfolio becomes even clearer. While traditional methods of faculty assessment can easily quantify the amount of instruction offered through documenting the number of courses taught, activities assigned, and exams given, traditional methods do little to help capture evidence of a learning environment. Through construction of a portfolio, the faculty member is better able to provide a complete picture of the learning environment, as well as a thorough description of the dynamics at work within that environment.

Despite the clear benefits of portfolio development for both individual faculty and the administrators who work with them, anecdotal evidence suggests that the portfolio development process may be met with a less than enthusiastic response. Wolverton (1996) reported on the "portfolio paranoia" (p. 300) that accompanied the introduction of a mandatory portfolio requirement at her school. Assessing the situation, she found that many colleagues " viewed the preparation of portfolios as an activity designed to punish them" (p. 300). Through her case study, Wolverton uncovered several trends detracting from the potential benefits of portfolio development. One issue was difficulty in determining what a portfolio should (or should not) be.

Providing a definition of a portfolio is fairly straightforward. Virtually every definition offered explains the portfolio as some compilation of an individual's professional activity. But what is also important is to provide an explanation of what the portfolio is not. Several ideas should be considered here. First, a portfolio is not a "steamer trunk." The successful portfolio should not be viewed as a repository for every activity, quiz, and homework assignment one has ever used in a class (Wolf 1996). The portfolio should not be viewed as an exhaustive collection of everything but rather a selective and carefully chosen representation of one's teaching experiences.

On the other hand, the tendency to create a scrapbook of personal bests or sentimental favorites with the portfolio also misses the point of the endeavor (Wolf 1996; Wolverton 1996). The faculty member will then become an expert at portfolio development rather than a faculty member searching for opportunities to improve his or her classroom performance (Wolverton 1996). One valuable aspect of portfolio development is its ability to truly capture the faculty member's professional evolution in the classroom. Traditional evaluation methods provide only snapshots in time of classroom activity. The portfolio can "capture the complexities of professional practice in ways that no other approach can" (Wolf 1996, p. 34). As it illustrates activities at various points in time, the portfolio can show some less successful classroom efforts, the steps taken to address problems in those areas, and subsequent efforts improving on the first, showing that learning and development are an ongoing process.

The key to successful implementation of teaching portfolios, it seems, is acceptance by faculty as a means for effectively communicating their teaching effectiveness as well as for enhancing their teaching effectiveness. This is best done with open discussion of the uses, standards, and formats expected of the portfolio. However, in the only empirical study conducted to evaluate the added value of teaching portfolios when compared to student evaluations, it would seem that, for evaluative purposes, teaching portfolios provided no added value when portfolios were scored by deans and a dean-selected peer. That is, the portfolio score correlated highly with several measures from student evaluations with respect to a faculty member's motivational, interpersonal, intellectual, and innovative skills, which seems to imply that the traditional method for evaluating teaching is valid and sufficient since it has also been shown that student evaluation

scores and learning are highly correlated (Centra 1994). However, the underlying benefit will be the open discussion of what is expected of faculty and what constitutes excellent teaching, which in the eyes of many is the true power of teaching portfolios in enhancing teaching and learning excellence. Furthermore, while this study may lead one to conclude that student evaluation scores are adequate for evaluating teaching effectiveness, lone numbers do not provide others, particularly colleagues, with information concerning the activities that resulted in those scores, good or bad. By publicizing portfolios, the sharing of experiences can take place among faculty.

The promise of portfolios lies in their ability to professionalize the scholarship of teaching, similar to the promise of student portfolios. By incorporating student portfolios for marketing students, Goldgehn and Soares (1986) reported that students added more effort and professionalism to the projects included in the portfolios, faculty reported an increase in office-hour visits related to class projects, the quality of the curriculum improved, students were provided with a competitive edge in the job market, and faculty members had concrete information at their access when called on as a reference for a student seeking a job. While student portfolios allow the benefit of providing employers with information of identifiable and measurable job skills for marketing students, requiring teaching portfolios in hiring decisions for faculty would seem to offer the same benefits. Perlman and McCann (1996) gave guidelines in how to use teaching portfolios when recruiting new faculty, stressing that portfolios should be required. Otherwise, how will you learn about the teaching skills of candidates? Certainly, two lines on a resume that mention the teaching interests of the applicant cannot convey this information.

In conclusion, the concept of the teaching portfolio has gone beyond theory and is realizing many useful purposes, the least of which may be the evaluation of teaching. While it may provide a richer picture of a faculty member's teaching effectiveness, its true value is its ability to stimulate interest in teaching as a type of scholarship. This value can only be realized, however, if there is open disclosure and trust in the system in which the portfolio will be used. If implemented in a consistent and constructive manner, benefits will befall those who develop portfolios as well as those who evaluate them by encouraging an open dialog of what exactly is excellence in teaching.

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Appendix Five: Some ideas for the development of websites for Students and Faculty regarding Evaluations.

These two websites would serve as useful tools in educating both constituencies about the new Evaluation Form. They should be well designed, friendly looking, and positive in tone. Below are suggestions for some materials, but the Committee is not the right body to develop this. We believe that the Center for Teaching, with consultation with a range of faculty and students, would be the best unit, provided they have adequate resources. In addition to the suggestions below, Appendix Six is a brief article, "Encouraging Your Students to Give Feedback" that might be linked to the site for faculty, and quoted (or linked) on the student site.

Potential Materials for the Student Website:

Introduction:

> Evaluations are an important component of the Vanderbilt teaching mission. Please take them seriously. Because the faculty does, each course will dedicate 20 minutes of class time to complete the evaluation. Answering questions thoughtfully allows both you and your teacher to reflect on the course and serve future students better.

An explanation of the uses of the form: for teachers, students, and administrators.
A reminder of when faculty have access to the results and when students do. This should emphasize both that teachers only have access after grades have been posted, and that they never have access to the identity of specific students.

Design of the form, i.e., how many questions; what kind of questions; which questions students will see the results of. Explain why not all are identical: i.e., the bank questions are individually tailored. (Note: this form has been designed by a committee of faculty and students, and will be periodically reviewed for potential improvements. Add more to this, if the web design of the form allows for feedback about the form itself)

A note on the use of NA: this is for when a question is just not appropriate to your experience of the course. It does not affect the numerical average for that question. We hope this will be an infrequently used response.

A note on the written comments: No set of multiple choice questions can cover all important topics. Use written comments to elaborate multiple choice responses, to address additional points, to offer concrete praise and criticisms that can help a teacher or course improve on weaknesses and maintain or augment strengths. We might include the following additional messages about feedback, drawn from 'Encouraging Your Students to Give Feedback' by Marilla Svinicki (Appendix 6):

- Feedback should be specific and concrete, providing examples to clarify one's point.
- Feedback should focus on observable behavior, not on what you think an instructor is thinking or feeling.
- Feedback should describe the effect the instructor's choices or actions have on you so that the instructor can see the learning experience from a different perspective.

- If you are critical of some aspect of the course or the instruction, provide practical suggestions for improvement.
- Be sure to point out positive aspects of the instruction. Doing so helps the instructor receive criticisms with more openness. Also, instructors who know what's working can keep those elements in future offerings of the course

In support of those points, we might include some samples of helpful feedback along with examples of less effective feedback, although again these would need to be experienced as helpful and not coercive. Having students involved in the design of the webpage would be crucial for this.

This website may also represent an opportunity to help students think through their own responsibilities for courses, by offering the follow ideas:

- The course evaluation form focuses on the instructor of the course, but this does not minimize the *student's* role in a successful learning experience. As you reflect on a course and its instructor, be sure to consider the ways you contributed to your own learning experience.
- Learning, when it is meaningful and transformative, is hard work for the learner. An instructor should provide appropriate support for students in doing that work, but an effective course is not necessarily an easy one.
- There are a variety of effective ways to teach, with the effectiveness of a particular method depending on a number of factors: the course content, the instructor's experience, the students' backgrounds, even the physical environment of the classroom. An instructor's choice of method that strikes you as unexpected might, in practice, be effective in helping you learn.
- Merely reviewing evaluations is often not the best way for students to select courses. In addition to conversations with advisors, they should consider reading syllabi and book lists, and when available and appropriate, looking at work produced by students on blogs and other public forums.

Potential Materials for the Faculty Website:

The following sections seem important to the faculty website:

- Introduction – Focusing on the importance of evaluations and the transition to the new system.
- Talking with Students about Evaluations – Messages to communicate early in the course (first day, syllabus), including the importance of evaluation and (where appropriate) ways the course has changed over time thanks to student input. Ways to introduce the evaluations themselves near the end of the course.
- Mid-Semester Evaluation – Excerpts from and a link to this page, currently being revised and expanded by the CfT: http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/teaching-guides/reflecting/student-feedback/.

- Making Sense of Evaluations – Information on the data and reports available to instructors. Also, excerpts from and a link to this page: http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/teaching-guides/reflecting/student-evaluations/.

We believe this website should be password protected and available to all teaching faculty (including TAs). It is not designed for students, however, because we do not want to create the student expectation that all teachers will use all the possible components suggests here. However, because the entire process depends on transparency, this issue should probably be revisited once the website is complete.

The suggestions below would each fit into one of the outline components above:

Introduction: With the new form comes a new emphasis on the formative value of course evaluations. The new questions, the ability of faculty to add individual questions for their own use, the efforts to educate the student body about evaluations, and the requirement that evaluations be filled out in class all reflect this new model. In addition, the prior expectation that faculty will not discuss the evaluation process with students has been replaced with the encouragement that faculty will help students understand the purposes and uses of the evaluation.

Ways of Engaging Students

Faculty may take a variety of approaches to helping educate students about the new forms.

- You may wish to have pre-course or mid-course evaluation. Throughout, to develop a culture of reflection, the idea of "one-minute papers" is an easy, informal approach that could be described in detail on the website.
- You may wish to include a comment on your syllabus. Here are three potential ones which you could adapt:
    - At the end of this course, you will be asked to complete an evaluation of this course. It will be a chance to reflect on what we have accomplished and to propose ways the course might be modified for your peers in the future.
    - All learning—and indeed teaching—is self-reflexive and dynamic. Consequently, as this course evolves, in addition to more informal moments for feedback (such as office hours, where I hope you'll all stop by on occasion), we have three brief surveys. The first is a pre-class form which lets you tell me a bit about your expectations for the course, just as this syllabus tells you about mine. Second, roughly midterm, we will have another survey of a few open-ended questions that ask you to consider how the class is going. Finally, in the last week of class, we will have the official evaluation, in which you will answer questions developed both by the college and myself to help assess how the class went well and where it can be improved.
    - Near the end of the semester, you will be asked to complete an online course evaluation form. Your feedback on the course is extremely valuable to me. I read my students' comments carefully and use them to improve the course the next time I teach it.

        - [Optional:] When the time comes, please let me know which aspects of the course helped you learn—and which aspects might be modified to help future students learn more effectively.
        - [Optional:] Please note that the course evaluations are anonymous and that I won't see the results until after the grades for the course are submitted, allowing you to provide honest and constructive feedback.
        - [Optional:] And if you have feedback to offer before the end of the semester, please let me know.
- However communicated—by syllabus or classroom conversation—faculty should provide some version of the following: "Please note that you will be asked to complete the course evaluation online during class. To do so, you will need to bring a laptop or mobile device (smart phone, tablet) to class that day. If you expect this to be a challenge, please let me know in advance so we can work out alternate arrangements." It follows that faculty should understand what simple alternatives are available, and those should be on the website.
- You may wish to ask students to comment explicitly in the last open-ended question ("Do you have any other comments") on elements of the course that are best addressed in writing but are not specifically asked. For example, if you are using a new textbook, you may want student feedback on that text.
- You may wish to discuss with a class how you have adjusted components of the course in response to other student feedback. Note: the expectation is not that any teacher uncritically accept student suggestions, but rather that they consider them in light of their own pedagogical and subject-area expertise.
- Faculty should let their students know ahead of time when they will be devoting class time to course evaluations. Some students will be better prepared to give useful comments if they have a little lead time.
- Some students do not realize that the results of evaluations are available to faculty only **after** grades are submitted. Such misinformation undercuts the value of the evaluation process. Talking with students about the process helps prevent misinformation and helps students appreciate the importance of their participation in the evaluation process. You may also wish to refer them to the Student Web Page on evaluations.

Description of what information, and in what format, the evaluations will be available to teachers, including:

- Aggregate data for all courses with 5 or more students showing the distribution of ratings, the mean, mode, and standard deviation. Interpreters should keep in mind that the mode may be a more accurate indicator of the center of the distribution than the mean, especially when there are few respondents. When few students respond, especially when the responses are variable, readers should exercise considerable caution in interpreting the results. Comparisons (for example, to the ratings of other faculty or to the results of the same faculty member at different points in time) may not be warranted under those circumstances.
- The capability to browse responses for all courses with 10 or more students.
- All written comments.
- Comments from banked questions which will be available only to faculty.

Value of Peer Review and Teaching Portfolios (with link to the three articles, Appendices Three, Four, and Six, if appropriate permission can be secured).

The Center for Teaching Resources for mid-term evaluations.

A link to the student website.

2 *Giving feedback is a skill that can be learned. What are the conditions that foster that learning and the later use of that skill for feedback to instructors?*

Encouraging Your Students to Give Feedback

Marilla D. Svinicki

"This class was great!" "This class was horrible." "The instructor was so disorganized." "The tests were soooo unfair."

Are there any instructors who have received these kinds of vague comments from students and have not wondered, "What does this mean?" Even more frustrating is receiving no comments at all from students, just the results from the typical scaled student evaluation survey. This volume is about what to do with such results, but perhaps the best thing to do would be to improve the quality of student comments and prevent the frustration in the first place. This article provides instructors with the kinds of suggestions that will help them help students be better evaluators of instruction.

In the mid-1980s, my university decided to revamp its student evaluation of the teaching process. At that time, the system consisted of a large number of Likert scale items pointing at different aspects of the course and instructor, and a free-response section where students could write whatever their muse inspired them to write. In good assessment methodology, we polled the various users of the form to identify their needs and their preferences. The faculty who responded gave a resounding endorsement to the written comments from the students in comparison to the scaled items. As a result, we proposed doing away with the scaled items altogether and concentrating on encouraging student written comments, but there were too many individuals at various levels of decision making who would be lost without numbers, so both parts of the survey were retained. The revealing part of this story is the solid preference for student written comments exhibited by those faculty who responded, despite the common confusion that the comments sometimes elicit. This finding has been reported in other

work (Ory and Braskamp, 1981; Tiberius, Sackin, and Cappe, 1987). Because this is the preferred mode for faculty to receive feedback, it is worthwhile to think about ways of encouraging more and better student comments.

Why Don't Students Give More Feedback?

Although there are many possible reasons for the frequent lack of student open-ended comments, I believe that two general areas account for the bulk of this problem: student beliefs about feedback and their lack of understanding and practice in giving it.

Student Beliefs About Feedback. The general literature on motivation problems says that an individual who believes that his efforts will not result in any change in the situation is less motivated to make any effort. Taken to its extreme, this phenomenon has been referred to as learned helplessness (Peterson, Maier, and Seligman, 1993). One frequent characteristic of someone experiencing learned helplessness is passivity, that is, a failure to respond at all. If we translate that into the problem with student feedback, we might say that students are not inclined to give extensive feedback because they believe it will have no effect on the ultimate target of teaching. Certainly, they have seen enough examples of continuing poor teaching in the face of student evaluation of teaching to make them skeptical about whether anyone actually reads the feedback. Without evidence of attention to this feedback, students could well conclude that the effort necessary to give feedback is not worth putting forth.

In less psychological terms, we could observe that the same experience of no effect can result in cynicism about the process altogether, another posture that institutions do not wish to foster in students. Cynicism is often followed by withdrawal from the process, as seen when students write nothing at all or leave before the evaluation is completed.

Another student belief about giving feedback revolves around the notion of retribution on the part of the instructor. This has been one of the arguments for making the student evaluations anonymous (Gordon and Stuecher, 1992). Students often feel that if they give negative feedback, it will somehow come back to haunt them. These worries make them less likely to provide extensive comments, particularly if those comments are negative and would suggest "better" ways of teaching.

Lack of Understanding or Practice. This second source of problems with student feedback is both attitudinal and practical. Motivation theory again tells us that if someone does not think he or she can successfully accomplish a task, motivation to engage in it falls. In this case, faced with the request for feedback and a lack of a clear understanding about how to give it, students may choose to say nothing at all or make very general statements that could not be criticized.

Indeed, there has been little opportunity for students to learn the skill of giving feedback to teachers. Learning this skill would require some sort of feedback on the feedback, and the typical student evaluation of teaching usually disappears from students' thoughts once it has been completed. Students have no opportunity to see models of good feedback or receive any feedback on whether what they wrote was helpful or useless. The rise of collaborative learning models is starting to make some inroads into teaching students how to respond to the work of others, but it would be a stretch to assume that students could translate those skills into feedback to their instructors.

Improving Student Written Feedback

Learning to give good feedback is much like learning any other skill: it requires motivation, direct teaching, and optimal conditions for practice.

Motivation. The motivation level that students bring to their giving of feedback is an important determinant of the amount of feedback they will give. The learners must believe that what they are doing will make a difference in a class. How can we convince students that giving feedback is worth their time and energy? One easy first strategy rests on the principle of early success: if the students are given an opportunity to provide early feedback and they see that their feedback is acted on in a positive way, that early success signals to them that this particular instructor is serious about feedback and uses what the class has said in modifying the course. All of the work on midsemester evaluations has shown that gathering feedback early in the semester allows an instructor to turn around even very difficult classes.

This early feedback success can have an impact on the students as well. A common feedback strategy is the use of the one-minute paper. At the end of the class, students are asked to spend one minute commenting on what helped them the most to learn the day's target content or what is still confusing to them. Regular use of such questions can cause the students to engage in the class differently. If they are constantly being asked to give examples of good and poor practice in the class, they eventually begin asking themselves on a regular basis what has been good and what has not helped. They become more critical, reflective observers of their own learning, which is the first step toward becoming a self-regulated learner. What teacher would not want a classroom full of highly reflective, engaged, self-regulated students?

That point aside, the original value of this early feedback is encouraging and improving later feedback. Students learn that their feedback to the instructor makes a difference; they do have an effect. This success then changes their belief that nothing they say matters; they have proof it does.

A second source of motivation to provide feedback can come from the instructor. A persuasively delivered monologue on the degree to which

the instructor values student input and how he or she has used it can influence student attitudes as well. It is particularly effective to relate the feedback from previous semesters to the changes students have seen in the current semester. In the course of this inspirational narrative, the instructor can even acknowledge the problems that students have had in the past trying to give feedback to other instructors. Communicating expectations about the feedback is often enough to influence the amounts and kinds of information the students think to give.

Direct Teaching of Giving Feedback. Because the skill of giving feedback is becoming a more and more important one as we move toward teamwork in classes as well as the workplace, one possible solution to the problem of desultory student feedback is to take the time in class to teach students how to give feedback.

According to the literature on learning, one of the best ways to learn a skill (and giving feedback is a skill) is to observe a model (Bandura, 1986). It is likely that students have not seen many good models of feedback for improvement, so one solid instructional strategy would be to provide good models of giving feedback. For example, when giving feedback to students on their own work, an instructor can follow the same guidelines that he or she wants the students to follow in any other feedback situation. No definitive list of guidelines that cuts across all fields stands out, but some of the qualities of effective feedback are frequently mentioned:

- Feedback should be specific, using examples familiar to the individual to make the point. For example, feedback on a student's writing should not simply say something vague like, "Good logic," but instead should point out the characteristics of the writing that contribute to the logic, such as, "A good hierarchical structure of the main points with nice examples and supporting citations for each level; also a good use of relational phrases as transitions between points, which makes the meaning and structure much clearer." Given this level of feedback, a student who was looking to rewrite his paper would have some clear guidelines to follow in the revision process.

The same would hold true for teaching feedback. Rather than saying that the instructor was "so disorganized," students can learn to enumerate the observations that led to such a label—for example, "The instructor frequently forgets where he is in the logic of the lecture and has to retrace his steps, which wastes everyone's time," or "On two occasions, the instructor brought the wrong notes to class for the topic listed on the syllabus."

- Feedback should concentrate on observable behavior rather than inferring what the individual is thinking or feeling. For example, it would be counterproductive to say, "Jim doesn't get his work done because he is irresponsible." It is sufficient simply to observe that his work is not being done and to give a few examples to support that observation. In the same way, student feedback should not make inferences about the instructor's level of caring, because that is not directly observable. Students should

instead point out the behaviors that the instructor engages in that make them feel that he does not care. For example, it is much more helpful to say, "I visited his office during office hours at least three times, and he was not there for any of them."

- Feedback should avoid personalization or emotionally charged wording ("This instructor is worthless" or "This instructor doesn't like students"). Sticking to descriptions of actual incidents is much more helpful as feedback.
- Feedback should describe the effect the behavior has on the giver so that the receiver can experience it from a different perspective ("When the instructor uses jargon that we don't know yet, I have trouble taking good notes because I don't understand the words enough to write them down accurately"). Feedback of this type often points toward a solution. In this example, the instructor could stop after the use of jargon and clarify its meaning or give the students time to pause and write it down without breaking the information flow.
- Feedback should offer alternatives to the behavior being criticized. In the previous example, the student might append to that description, "If you could write the technical terms on the board beforehand, I could check my spelling against yours to be sure I had written the words down correctly."
- Feedback should point out good and bad aspects of the instruction. Sprinkling a little praise or understanding throughout feedback helps a receiver be less defensive about negative comments. For example, a student could say, "Although the students who have had more than one prerequisite course probably get a lot out of the more complex examples that you use, I have had a problem understanding the main point because I can't see a good connection. Maybe you could invite us to try to summarize the key ideas, and then go over them briefly to be sure everyone is on the same page."

If the instructor provided that level of feedback to students on their work, it would be an excellent model for their providing feedback too. Spending class time in going over these qualities before asking the students to do any critical feedback, either of the instructor or their peers, would be worthwhile.

Another possibility for modeling can come in peer feedback groups, particularly those associated with editing. When students are asked to give one another feedback, they often find themselves facing the same dilemmas as in giving feedback to instructors: they do not know how to be helpful or want to avoid being perceived as too critical. As a result, they often end up with bland feedback that neither offends nor assists the author. A little time spent as a group in constructing feedback norms or expectations can give the students more confidence in their own ability to handle the situation effectively.

Because we are trying to teach the students to give better feedback, we should not wait until the end of the semester to institute the process. It

would be most beneficial to schedule periodic feedback sessions early in the semester. For example, after about the first third of the course or around a critical initial assessment like the first test, conducting a teaching feedback session would make a lot of sense.

The instructor would discuss the rationale for asking for feedback so that the students understood why they were being asked for input and what the possible consequences might be. He or she would also describe the characteristics of good feedback, as outlined in this article, and show some examples of student comments that followed the guidelines. In the initial session, the instructor might make the task a little easier by giving specific prompts to guide student thinking. In later sessions, those prompts could be removed as the students learned the kinds of comments that are the most useful.

Students might work initially in groups to create a set of feedback comments. This would have the benefit of peer modeling as well as alleviating some of the anxiety associated with being the sole evaluator.

Once feedback has been received, it is important for the instructor to respond in a positive way with his or her own reactions, both responding to the specific comments and suggestions made and commenting on the characteristics of the feedback that were most helpful. This would then help shape the students' feedback-giving skills, as well as increase their motivation to respond again next time.

Optimal Conditions for Practice. Once students have learned how to give useful feedback, the instructor needs to establish the conditions under which they can both practice and perform that skill. The practice part of this suggestion simply means that once is not enough; providing students multiple opportunities to practice giving feedback is a necessary supplement to the direct teaching of it. The multiple practice opportunities also provide a good mechanism for an instructor to keep up with students' progress and opinions, an important aspect of responsive teaching.

Perhaps even more important, however, is providing the optimal conditions for giving feedback. There are several ways to improve the conditions under which students give feedback and as a result improve the chances of their providing more thoughtful and useful information. The first of these is giving adequate notice. To elicit carefully considered comments from students requires giving them time beforehand to think about the questions. It is very difficult to come up with coherent, thoughtful feedback with only five minutes' notice. Students will be able to provide much better information if the instructor tells them before class that he or she will be asking for their input at the following session. While it is naive to think that all the students will take the opportunity to ruminate over their responses during that time, it is reasonable to think that enough of them will to make it worthwhile. Certainly, nothing is lost as a result. I have even had students come to the next class period with an essay assessing the various components of the class.

The second way that an instructor can improve the conditions under which feedback is given is to provide adequate instructions, especially the first time: a description of the purpose of the feedback and how it will be handled, how the instructor intends to respond to it, and thanks to the students beforehand. It is also quite useful for the instructor to provide some specific prompts appropriate to the time of the semester. For example, a feedback session early in the semester prior to any exam might have prompts that focus on student understanding of what is being done in class, the nature of the reading assignments, procedural questions, and other things that would indicate that students were adjusting to the flow of the course. A feedback session scheduled on the heels of an exam would have prompts that focused on the difficulty of the exam, what the instructor did that helped or interfered with exam performance, and suggestions for how the instructor could provide more help for the next exam. It would probably also be interesting always to include a prompt that says, "What question should I have asked about the class, and what would your response have been?"

Another condition that might help students give better feedback would be to assign one or more students in the class to be the administrators and summarizers of the feedback. Spence and Lenze discuss this team concept in more detail in their article in this volume. I reinforce it here because of the concern that some students have about retaliation. Having a team of students serve as the go-between should address those concerns. Of course, it is more likely the case that instructors who engage in this kind of ongoing feedback gathering will have a good rapport with the class, such that these concerns are minimized. Nevertheless, the interjection of a third party between the critic and the critiqued can benefit both parties.

A final condition that increases the quality of feedback is providing adequate time for students to think and write. Too often, student feedback is solicited as an afterthought during the last few minutes of the class, when students and instructor are more concerned about getting to their next appointment than doing a thorough job of analyzing the class. Instructors who ask students for their feedback must be sure to give it the time it deserves. Their willingness to take class time to gather feedback makes a statement to the students about its importance. This activity should be treated with the same level of commitment and attention as any other learning activity in the class. And if the instructor has prepared the students and is giving them good prompts to guide their thinking, they should be able to put the time to good use without needing the whole class period.

The Final Step: Be Prepared to Receive the Feedback

Once instructors have high-quality feedback from the students, they must respond to it. Certainly the other articles in this volume provide lots of ways to gather and respond to student feedback. To their suggestions I add my own caution: these efforts will come to naught if the feedback falls on deaf

ears or a defensive ego. Teaching is a very personal act, and it is hard to accept criticism of something so close to our essence. But if we cannot or if we react defensively, we destroy all hope of getting honest and useful student feedback from that class again.

I have found that the suggestions discussed in this article decrease the possibility of offensive or useless feedback and increase the quality and instructional value of the comments students will make. We must remember that none of us is so good that we cannot be better.

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