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ABSTRACT

The need to effectively evaluate teaching performance of university faculty and a suggested approach involving a teaching dossier are discussed. Administrative decisions about the careers of faculty members have tended to be based on publication records rather than teaching evaluation. It is suggested that the curriculum vitae of a faculty member should provide more substantial information about teaching than a mere listing of courses. Teaching accomplishments should be described in terms of the following areas: the agreement that may exist between the instructor and his chairman or dean concerning teaching responsibilities or criteria for success, a statement of formal teaching duties, the supervision of graduate or honors students, and informal teaching activities. A summary statement of data from student ratings of recently-taught courses could be provided as evidence of teaching effectiveness. Real change in student abilities or performance, statements of alumni concerning the quality of instruction, and comments from colleagues teaching the same students in subsequent courses are some of the indicators a teacher can use in the dossier. Some indirect indicators of teaching performance or effectiveness are participation in curriculum development, authoring instructional materials, and conducting research on teaching and learning within the discipline. While there will be resistance to the notion of the teacher dossier, the fact that it provides only a brief addition to the existing curriculum vitae may encourage its use. (SW)

EVALUATION AND TEACHING: BEYOND LIP-SERVICE*

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Most university faculty are evaluated at regular intervals for the purposes of awarding tenure, granting promotion or accelerating progress through the ranks. In North America it is common to recognize performance in four areas: teaching, scholarship and research, administrative duties (e.g. membership of committees) and service to the wider community. Surveys of tenure, promotion and merit pay procedures in both Canada and the United States have shown that, of all the criteria listed above, teaching is regarded as the single most important factor (Knapper, Geis, Pascal and Shore, 1977; Seldin, 1975). Despite apparent consensus about such criteria and formal procedures for this purpose, there is evidence that the real attention paid to teaching when making administrative decisions affecting a faculty member's career is slight, and that tenure and promotion continue to be awarded largely on the basis of publication record (Seldin, 1973).

This is perhaps ironical at a time when the quality of teaching has assumed a particular importance both from the point of view of students and the community at large. It was mainly as a result of public calls for university "accountability" and the student pressures of the late 60's that many institutions of higher education began a serious examination of teaching practices and teaching effectiveness. Three developments that resulted from this impetus were increased faculty teaching loads, the establishment of centres for instructional development and courses on teaching for university faculty, and (especially in North America) the use of student questionnaires to rate faculty teaching performance.

The use of student course ratings had become ubiquitous in North American universities by the mid-1970's. While the ratings obtained in this way were viewed enthusiastically by students as evidence of a new-found influence on the

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teaching-learning process, and by some administrators who saw the ratings as an additional means of evaluating faculty, many members of the professoriate regarded student rating forms with alarm -- especially if the results were to be distributed widely or to be used with regard to career decisions. The Canadian Association of University Teachers, for example, in its guidelines on the use of student evaluation adopted in May 1973, stated that although student evaluation is a useful form of feedback concerning student attitudes to teaching, student course rating forms are only one source of information about teaching performance and should therefore be used with extreme caution as a source of evidence for decisions on tenure, promotion or merit increases (Knapper, McFarlane and Scanlon, 1972).

Certainly there are many criticisms that can be levelled at the use of student questionnaires to assess faculty teaching performance. Nadeau (1977), following an extensive survey of the research literaure in the area, listed over thirty major criticisms of student ratings compared with only eleven advantages. Of the many problems associated with such assessments, one is of primary concern here. This is that student questionnaire ratings of instruction can at best reflect only one small part of the picture. The most valid and reliable form will give an accurate measure of the student's impressions of the course, the teacher, and their effect on student learning. But such forms generally take no account of teaching that takes place outside the classroom or by informal means, nor do they usually make allowance for matters that may be outside the immediate control of the instructor and his department (such as student motivation and ability, co-operation of the university library, availability of audio visual aids, etc.).

An Alternative to Student Course Ratings: The Teaching Dossier

Every faculty member has a curriculum vitae describing work and experience relevant to his professional status. The main part of the vitae generally

describes publications, research grants and other scholarly accomplishments; teaching experience will normally be confined to a list of previous teaching positions held and courses taught. The curriculum vitae is typically a major piece of evidence in evaluating a faculty member's performance for career advancement purposes, yet it usually devotes only the most cursory amount of attention to teaching, which is a major part of the instructor's professional responsibility and, in theory at least, a major component of the evaluative criteria.

It would seem sensible to compile a rather more substantial compendium of information about teaching that will go beyond a mere listing of courses. If this dossier is incorporated into the curriculum vitae it should provide more valid and substantial evidence of effective teaching performance than the results of student course ratings or the hearsay and gossip that may often be the only evidence available to a department head or review committee. Such a teaching dossier would not be meant as an exhaustive compilation of all the many documents that could be presented as evidence of teaching activity. Rather it would provide a short (two or three page) description that to accurately convey the scope and type of the faculty member's teaching endeavours. Just as a list of publications is usually selective, so too would the teaching dossier contain only some of the instructor's accomplishments; just as statements concerning scholarship and research in a curriculum vitae must be supportable by more complete evidence (published papers or even the actual research data), so the claims made in the teaching dossier should ultimately be supportable by fuller empirical evidence if and when this is required.

Preparing a Teaching Dossier

The material that follows is only a suggested format for presentation of material relevant to teaching. So far the teaching dossier idea is so new and untried that there is little experience of which formats are most useful and

effective. Obviously the mode of presentation should be tailored to the needs of the individual, his department and institution, as is often done for a curriculum vitae or "faculty information form".

It is often wise to begin with a statement concerning any agreement, formal or informal, that may exist between the instructor and his chairman or dean concerning teaching responsibilities or criteria for success -- for example understandings about the numbers and kinds of courses to be taught, about how students are to be evaluated, about teaching methods and content.

Next should come a statement of formal teaching duties, and here should be listed the courses taught at the institution. For courses taught in the immediate past (previous year in the case of an annual review) there should be full information, including the enrolment, whether the courses were required or elective, and a brief (one hundred word) description of the way the course was taught — e.g. by lecture alone, by lecture/discussion, by a project approach, and so on; the course description should also include a brief statement concerning the method of examination used in the course. Any development work done on these or other courses should be described, such as the revision or reworking of course material, preparation of special notes, handouts, outlines, problem sets, laboratory books, etc. Any special innovations in teaching approach should be outlined separately. Formal responsibility for the supervision and organization of laboratory work and non-credit seminars should also be mentioned in this section, using the general format described above.

The supervision of graduate (and occasionally honours) students is a major teaching responsibility for many faculty. The number of students supervised, both currently and in total at the institution, should be recorded, indicating the level at which the student is working. Special mention should be made of students who successfully completed their theses and students who had accomplishments (e.g. presentation of a paper) that can be traced back to the influence of the supervising faculty member.

Although formal teaching duties may occupy a considerable amount of time, it is often the informal teaching activities that mark out an instructor as a particularly effective teacher. Here could be mentioned individual or group tutorials, counselling students with special problems, helping to set up or run a learning resource centre, acting as a consultant to students (e.g. on computer programming, research design, and so on).

So far the information listed has been largely of a descriptive nature, and the question that inevitably arises is how documenting such activity can be taken for evidence that the teaching has been effective. In the case of scholarship, the existence of large research grants and publication in prestigious journals comprises one indication of effectiveness (although a better indicator would probably be the changes brought about as a result of the research in question). In the case of teaching effectiveness it is rather difficult to provide conclusive empirical evidence. As mentioned above, a most frequently cited indicator is the results of student course questionnaires, and a summary statement of data from student ratings of recently taught courses could be provided as evidence of student attitudes and motivation (though not necessarily of student learning or long term attitude change). Effects on learning are notoriously difficult to demonstrate, but might be provided by one or more of the following, if available: real change in student abilities or performance (e.g. a measured difference in scores between pre-test and post-test on course related material); statements of alumni concerning the quality of instruction; comments from colleagues teaching the same students in subsequent courses; the opinions of employers concerning students taught; evaluations by students at the end of their degree programme; publications by students related to course work; student success in graduate school; evidence that career choices were influenced by a course or instructor; the proportion of students electing to take another course with the same instructor; the efficiency (including time

taken) with which an instructor's graduate students proceed through their programme. Ratings by colleagues are particularly appropriate when matters of the instructor's scholarly competence to teach are concerned. Although the impression gained in one or two classroom visits may be misleading (especially if the visit is from the department head at a crucial juncture in the instructor's career), evidence from colleagues involved in team teaching a particular course can be a valuable source of pertinent information. Awards for teaching are made by some universities based upon nominations and appraisals from both students, unit heads, and colleagues, and these presumably constitute some evidence of teaching effectiveness.

Finally, there are a number of activities that are less directly related to either teaching performance or measured effectiveness, but which may provide additional indicators of a serious commitment to teaching. They include participation in curriculum development within a department or faculty (for example by chairing a curriculum committee), authoring a textbook, laboratory manual or some other form of instructional material, including audio visual aids to teaching; and conducting research on teaching and learning within the discipline.

Implementation of the Teaching Dossier Approach

Use of the teaching dossier is presently in an embryonic stage in North America, but there is evidence of increasing interest from faculty and administrators who wish to give credit for effective teaching, but are currently unwilling or unable to do so in the face of inadequate evidence. While the task of compiling a dossier will seem unfamiliar and cumbersome to many faculty, the growing number of instructional development services in Western universities should provide a source of help to individuals. The fact that many instructors are seeking a new way of justifying their teaching performance was evidenced at the writer's university by the number of requests received for information concerning the dossier in the Teaching Resource Office, exceeding requests for

any other of the Office's publications. While there will be resistance to the notion from those who are apparently satisfied with the present evaluation procedures, the fact that the dossier provides only a brief addition to the existing curriculum vitae may well encourage its use. Finally, a note of caution. The teaching dossier approach is not a universal panacea and in itself can do little to alter the fact that the evaluation of teaching is a tricky business. The effectiveness of the dossier will ultimately depend upon the amount of effort an instructor is prepared to put into documenting his case as well as the acceptability of such a procedure in the university itself. Furthermore the dossier cannot gloss over terrible teaching -- it can, however, be a way of documenting good teaching and hence gaining for its compilor the appropriate credit.

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