ED405759 1997-00-00 Successful Faculty Development and Evaluation: The Complete Teaching Portfolio. ERIC Digest.

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New York Governor George Pataki says of SUNY faculty in the "Rochester Democrat and Chronicle's" Labor Day edition: "I think they can get more productivity out of the workforce." The story makes it clear that Pataki is talking about more hours in the classroom, which he believes translates into better learning for students. The newspaper story also notes that Ohio recently passed a law requiring college and university teachers to spend 10 percent more time in the classroom. The sponsor of that law says: "Universities and colleges kind of consider themselves above it all,...where us common folk can't really comprehend what they do....With tuition rising at a tremendous rate, there's got to be some rules."

Much of this type of criticism is based on misconceptions that teaching involves only the time spent in the classroom and that professors spend very little time teaching. Educators must demonstrate that the hours spent in the classroom are only part of the real work of teaching. One means to this end is the teaching portfolio, which can provide professors with a vehicle to document the quality and quantity of their teaching.

WHAT IS A TEACHING PORTFOLIO?

Teaching portfolios can be defined in at least four ways by focusing on their purpose. First, teaching portfolios are vehicles for documenting teaching, with the emphasis on demonstrating excellence (see, e.g., O'Neil and Wright 1992). Second, teaching portfolios are vehicles that empower professors to gain dominion over their professional lives (see, e.g., Seldin 1991). Third, teaching portfolios are vehicles to provide institutions of higher learning with the means to demonstrate that teaching is an institutional priority (see, e.g., Braskamp and Ory 1994). Fourth, teaching portfolios are vehicles for individualizing faculty development (see, e.g., Seldin 1993b; Shore et al. 1986).

WHAT DOES HIGHER EDUCATION VALUE?

The introduction of teaching portfolios requires institutions to critically examine what they value, and what institutions value is ultimately reflected in their reward structure. Unfortunately, four-year colleges and universities on the whole reward research. Until this situation is changed, in actions as well as in words, teaching will always take a distant second place to publications, grants, and the other public marks of the researcher. "[It] is futile to talk about improving the quality of teaching if, in the end, faculty are not given recognition for the time they spend with students" (Boyer 1990, p. xi). A critical first step to recognizing and rewarding good teaching is to develop effective ways to assess teaching performance.

The appraisal of performance must be individualized for it to ultimately affect teaching (Blackburn and Pitney 1988). But "individualization in teaching is threatened by the typical way it is assessed, namely, by student evaluations.... They establish a uniform

set of standards and assume that certain behaviors are good and [that] the absence of those behaviors constitutes proof of poor teaching" (p. 32). Student evaluations appear to have little impact on the improvement of teaching, however (Ory 1991), and something more is needed if colleges and universities are serious in their desire to improve teaching through performance appraisal. "A portfolio system would accomplish the goal of continuous growth and development, the realization of the individual's full potential" (Blackburn and Pitney 1988, p. 32).

WHAT SHOULD A TEACHING PORTFOLIO CONTAIN?

Most portfolios incorporate a statement of the professor's philosophical beliefs about teaching and learning. Philosophical beliefs shape, sometimes in subtle ways, human behavior. When professors reflect on how a particular reading, a specific teaching style, or a particular assignment relates to their philosophy of education, they are examining deeply held convictions. Therefore, much of the remainder of the portfolio details how professors put their beliefs into practice in and out of the classroom. Most important, much of the portfolio should be devoted to reflection on how behaviors are congruent with beliefs. Most portfolios also incorporate a plan for altering behaviors found to be incongruent with the professor's philosophical assumptions about teaching and learning. And the portfolio should incorporate a strategy to assess the appropriateness and success of the new behaviors.

HOW CAN ADMINISTRATORS BUILD INTEREST?

Building interest ultimately means managing change in this case, a significant change in the culture of higher education. Administrators need to become effective change agents. Because of our socialization in graduate education, most of us are well steeped in the "traditions" of academe; therefore, it can be quite challenging to guide others through changes seeking to radically alter that hegemony. If the change is to be significant and lasting, administrators should develop methods to include most faculty in the process not simply in the product. For many administrators, it means learning more about how to implement change, garner support, and overcome resistance.

If the improvement of teaching and learning is the ultimate goal of a portfolio project, most faculty will want to learn how to assess the effectiveness of their teaching and students' learning. Although the literature on faculty evaluation has included references to formative evaluation for some time, these references usually fail to include advice on how one might go about this vital task of assessment. Although many faculty are quite capable of knowing when students are not understanding the material, often professors do not know how to go about discovering why students are not learning. Therefore, the complete portfolio project should plan activities intended to help faculty "learn how" to assess their teaching, their students' learning, and the currency of their courses.

The difference between a faculty evaluation system that supports faculty and one that demoralizes faculty can be found in the care that goes into designing a "systematic and comprehensive" evaluation system. Evaluation is effective when administrators and faculty work together to develop the instruments and procedures rather than when administrators impose them on the faculty. Administrators and faculty working together should start by determining the purpose(s) of evaluation, who will be evaluated, how often, who will do the evaluating, and, most important, what will be evaluated.

Department chairs should take great pains to publicly connect the outcomes of faculty evaluation to the reward system. When the faculty evaluation process demonstrates that an individual is a good teacher, chairs must be certain that the institution rewards the individual. For too long, rewards have gone solely to the faculty who excel at research. Teaching portfolios can provide an effective means of recognizing good teaching. And the recognition of good teaching is the first step toward adequately rewarding it.

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