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AUTHOR Andrews, Hans A.; Erwin, John
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ABSTRACT

This document presents the results of a forum on faculty evaluation that took place at the 1999 conference of the American Association of Community Colleges. Thirty-four persons participated in the dialogue, including 31 Deans, Vice-Presidents of Instruction or Students, and Presidents; and 3 faculty members. Participants were asked to respond to questions regarding obstacles and successes of faculty evaluation at their respective institutions. Prior research on the topic provided information on the key elements of an effective evaluation and faculty buy-in. These components were compared against the comments of the forum participants. Among the obstacles cited were the timing in which evaluation took place, lack of trust in the system and administrators, lack of financial resources to conduct proper evaluation, and lack of administrative training in interpreting the results of evaluation. Participants also gave examples of evaluation successes, such as open dialog between faculty and administrators, perceptions by faculty of evaluation as an opportunity to grow and develop professionally, and an integration of the evaluation process into the organization's ethos. It is concluded that while barriers to effective evaluation do exist, the examples of success indicate that the practice is evolving. (SKF)

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Excellence in Faculty Evaluation...Includes Faculty Buy-In!

Hans A. Andrews
John Erwin

Olney Central College

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Excellence in Faculty Evaluation

..... includes Faculty Buy-In !

By Dr. Hans A. Andrews

and Dr. John Erwin

Most experienced instructional leaders know that you do not walk into a new institution and automatically transport what you have learned elsewhere into the new college. One needs to assess what kind of evaluation system is presently in place, its effectiveness, and determine if it is accomplishing the goals for the improvement of teaching and learning. It is also necessary for the system to be *legally defensible*. It is also critical to learn how faculty feel about evaluation.

Duke and Stiggins (1986) saw both benefits and pitfalls of evaluation. In quality evaluation they saw that, “teacher evaluation can lead to improved performance, personal growth, and professional esteem.” If evaluation is done poorly, they saw, “it can produce anxiety or ennui and drive talented teachers from the profession” (p. 5). Teachers in the study referred to “keys to growth,” some of which follow:

- 1. Administrators and teachers are full partners in the design and monitoring of the evaluation process.**
- 2. There is a clear sense of the goal or purpose of the evaluation process.**
- 3. Recommended and required evaluation procedures are carried out to the letter.**

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In another study, Rosenholtz (1985) found that when faculty were unaware of the criteria being used to evaluate them they were *highly dissatisfied* about evaluation. The most satisfied faculty listed the following “vital functions” to evaluation:

1. It furnishes teachers professional development;
2. It sends a continuous signal to the faculty, administration, and board about the priorities of the school;
3. It informs all who work within the school precisely what constitutes acceptable performance.

Andrews (1995) summarized four necessary elements if faculty support is expected for the evaluation system:

- (1) trust between faculty and administrators;
- (2) faculty involvement in development of the evaluation system;
- (3) both oral and written feedback from supervisors and a chance to respond;

Mary Sue Myers, a physical fitness instructor at Illinois Valley Community College saw the evaluation instrument as follows:

“It is number one, a way of improving instruction. We see this [evaluation] as one of the ways that will help us do a better job. Again, it was important that, in developing the instrument, we had input. I was involved when it was

being set up and I can remember some very tough discussions we had with the administration. I was representing the union at that time, but I think that we came up with some things we can all live with here” (p. 37).

There was a time that it was thought tenured faculty would be very negative about evaluation of their work. Licata and Andrews’ (1992) work found the opposite to be true. Faculty leaders were overwhelming in supporting the *need* for post-tenure evaluation with 96.1% of the 158 faculty leaders saying “yes.” to this need. Licata (1986) found strong support from both tenured faculty and administrators in seven of the nine two-year colleges she studied that such evaluation should be occurring.

At a forum, hosted by these two writers, on *Faculty Buy-In to Evaluation* at the 1999 conference of the American Association of Community Colleges, thirty-four persons took part in the dialogue. Thirty-one were Deans, Vice Presidents of Instruction or Students, or Presidents of two-year colleges and three were faculty members.

Obstacles and success in effective evaluation: One of the questions asked of each participant was, “what obstacles have you experienced with faculty buy-in to evaluation?” The second question was, “what success have you had? Responses were written out as well as discussed.

Obstacles. The following responses were some of the obstacles participants shared:

“Sad to say our faculty are only evaluated within promotion and tenure review process and not by any classroom observation,” stated a Dean

from Alaska.

A professor from Arkansas said there is, “resistance to the idea. (We have) untrainable, uneducable administrators.” In response to faculty: “They totally object to being evaluated. We developed a portfolio plan (faculty and administration). It was approved by the faculty senate, but afterward faculty hate it.”

A dean of continuing education from Colorado referred to a “lack of trust in the system and administrators, problems in training and tying evaluation to pay.”

A faculty union president from Illinois noted, “the administration wants to add student evaluation. There is some faculty resistance because of lack of trust as to how it will be used.”

An Illinois administrator pointed to, “inadequate recognition system and there is too heavy a reliance on student evaluations. Not enough money to tie evaluation to development equitably and consistently.”

In Kentucky a professor indicated, “our system has been driven by student evaluations and has been considered ineffective because administrators have no training in interpreting the results.” Another Kentucky instructor said, after evaluation, no follow-up or resources allowed to improve. Lack of trained evaluators—constantly changing the document.”

A vice president from the Virgin Islands said, “some faculty feel threatened and detest evaluation.”

A Wisconsin vice president for academic affairs listed three things as obstacles: “lack of trust between faculty and administration; lack of rewards or sanctions; and untrained evaluators.”

Distrust between faculty and administrators and a lack of outcomes in recognition for good instructors or sanctions for poor faculty were prevalent in these responses.

***Successes in evaluation:* The following are comments on some of the “successes” which helped bring a balance to the forum:**

A dean in Connecticut saw “dialog” as one of the positive outcomes of faculty and administrators working together on developing an evaluation system.

An assistant dean from a branch campus in Florida stated, “faculty are just as hungry for feedback as students are and are eager to get results of evaluation.”

An Illinois Vice President said, “some faculty (especially new ones) see evaluation as an opportunity to become great teachers...but the motivation to improve is entirely internal.”

The professor from Kentucky pointed to, “professional development for everybody by hosting a teaching / learning conference annually,” was a positive.

The president from Maine saw some hope as there was “some interest in improving the evaluation instrument.”

A Michigan dean saw an outcome as being, “cooperation with union.”

In Minnesota, a president referred to, “accreditation forced faculty to work with us to develop a model for faculty evaluation. Good instructors volunteered to be involved.”

In Texas a vice president said, “faculty now appear ready to have evaluation to be part of the renewal process.”

The Utah vice president saw their faculty “taking evaluation very seriously and spend considerable time and effort in the evaluation process.”

A Washington vice president saw positive in a “strong annual administrative evaluation system with criteria ...and a strong development program to support pedagogical growth.”

A Wisconsin dean summarized a positive outcomes as “the ‘good faculty’ welcome a fair evaluation process. Most want and are willing to improve if there’s support.”

Summary

Only six of the 34 persons present did not list a ‘success’ in their evaluation system. It appears that successful evaluation practices and outcomes are evolving in a number of the institutions that were represented.

Faculty “buy-in” to evaluation is a definite plus for those colleges willing to open up and share with faculty the process of developing the system. The merging of faculty and administrators in the process of developing, administering, and supporting of effective evaluation criteria and systems is of the utmost of importance in defining excellence in faculty evaluation

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