Proposed Revision of Annual Teaching Evaluation Process-Biology
Faculty Leaders: John Geiger, Lou Kim, Suzanne Koptur
Work Group Liaisons: Marcy Kravec and Alok Deoraj

Background:

FIU is committed to enhancing the processes for evaluating teaching, both annually and at critical milestones (including third-year review and tenure and promotion). This project aims to encourage faculty collaboration, learning and growth toward learning-centered, evidence-based and culturally responsive teaching; and to provide academic leaders with more and better data for summative decision-making. The biology department, identified as one of the pilot departments, has begun laying the foundation for a disciplinary perspective on this comprehensive, university-wide initiative. Like other pilot departments, faculty leaders from biology proposed suggestions to improve the annual teaching evaluation process. As Biology begins enhancing the departmental process, we will share our experiences with the entire FIU community which will subsequently embark collectively on improving the teaching evaluation process.

Colleagues, we now invite you to help in the process of crafting a more productive way of documenting all that we already do while continuing to improve our methods for assessing and evaluating our own teaching. All of us utilize some of these best practices in our current teaching. As in other areas of our professional lives, we are being asked to continue learning and adjusting our methods based on the evidence documented in our classrooms as well as in the education and the biology-specific literature.

An important emphasis of this working group was to explicitly incorporate the 3 pillars of teaching excellence: being culturally responsive to our students, focusing on their learning (as opposed to the 'sage on stage' model) and using evidence collected in our own classrooms as well as in the broader teaching community. In addition, the 3 data sources (self, peer and student) provide us with a framework to assess our own teaching in a more comprehensive way. Rather than having one data source driving teaching assessments (i.e., 'student evaluations'), we will now integrate all three voices to inform us. In guiding our continual improvement, we have listed the current practices used in our department including all 3 data sources. This list is not meant to be exhaustive or limiting, but rather a living document that we can expand as we shape or adopt new practices.

This proposal also incorporates the recommended components of teaching (including but not limited to: course goals, sharing and learning from colleagues, student needs, class preparation and reflective self-critique) in the teaching evaluation process. By being reductionists in evaluating our teaching methods, we can identify strengths, weakness and areas of potential improvement. Faculty

realize that enhancing the methods for evaluating teaching will be an ongoing process. Thus, the existing proposal is a draft and a living document.

Current and Proposed Practices*:
A summary of current and proposed practices for evaluating teaching:

I. Course Goals:
- Remaining up-to-date with advancements in course content
- Self-reflection
- SPOTs – can help identify if goals are clear to students

II. Preparation – designing instruction and aligning course design with course goals:
- Self-reflections (annual; qualitative)
- Professional development (Center for the Advancement of Teaching, CAT)
- Peer collaboration

III. Classroom Practices:
- Classroom climate – open and inclusive
- Formative assessment – responsive to students' progress towards mastery of learning goals
- Mid-semester feedback (done by CAT)
- Peer assessment and open dialogue with colleagues

IV. Significant Results – using student data from our classrooms:
- Some faculty use Student Assessment of Learning Gains (SALG) and/or concept inventories
- Peer assessment and constructive feedback
- Collaboration and open dialogue

V. Reflective Practice and Self-Critique:
- Student – SPOTs
- Self-reflections of our teaching
- Peer observations and comments

VI. Effective Communication – sharing and learning from colleagues:
- Self-reflection (annual; qualitative)
- Peer conversations and/or collaboration

*As we embark on our continual improvement of our teaching practices, this list provides many options for us to explore. Some of these are done annually (i.e., overall reflection of teaching) while others are done over the course of the semester (i.e., reflection during or at the end of the semester using feedback from students and/or colleagues). Proposed practices may be used intermittently and/or built-upon.

II. Toolbox of Educational Practices – these include a variety of examples that can be done annually and others can be done throughout the academic year :

Course Goals:
- Syllabi exchange (w/intra- and interdisciplinary colleagues), comment and feedback with respect to content, application, lower/higher order thinking and real-world connections
- Directly asking students if syllabus is clear and informative (e.g., graphic syllabus, syllabus quiz, discussion that solicits questions from them - not a review of the syllabus)
- Support student metacognition by allowing them time for structured reflection on how they think, and provide self-assessment opportunities to promote learning how to learn.
- Include question(s) in quizzes or exams that explicitly support the course goals expressed in syllabus (i.e., interconnectivity between topics and relevance to life)

Preparation – designing instruction and aligning course design with course goals:
- Intradepartmental dialogue regarding necessary resources
- Promote backward design in order to develop most appropriate methods
- CASE librarians for support in having materials available for both faculty and students
- Implement pre- and post-tests on course content (i.e., Concept Inventory)
- Possibly use SALGs site survey pre/post
- Continue and increase sharing of pedagogies (used in our classes) and SoTL (Science of Teaching and Learning) in faculty meetings and other venues
- Encourage faculty participation in professional development workshops at FIU and elsewhere to facilitate implementing new practices into your teaching

Classroom Practices:
- Structure content incrementally for deep understanding of concepts (i.e.course goals)
- In courses with multiple sections, encourage collaboration among associated faculty
- Encourage mid-semester visits from our Education Committee members or from the CAT (results to be shared only with you)
- Student engagement with material (before, during and after class, as is pedagogically appropriate)
- Assessing learning that encourages students to monitor their own learning, such as in-class clicker questions, activities, problem sets, etc.
- Multiple opportunities for students to succeed (i.e., exams, quizzes, variety of assignments, etc. with equitable weights); varied assignments may include group activities, written, oral, homework/prep assignments, attending departmental seminars

Significant Results – using student data from our classrooms:
- Pre- and post-concept inventories
- Compare performance of groups of students (gender, ethnicity, social economic status)

- End of term project/paper/etc.
- Cumulative final exams that contain both lower and higher order questions

Reflective Practice and Self-Critique:
- Biweekly biology faculty gatherings to share teaching challenges, achievements and aspirations (informal conversations)

Effective Communication – sharing and learning from colleagues:
- Continue and perhaps expand Education Capsules at faculty meetings
- Continue teaching seminars at our weekly bio-seminars
- Fund travel to present teaching innovations at scientific meetings

Rationale:

Ultimately to improve student performance by recognizing where we as instructors excel and where we can improve towards making our classrooms more inclusive, safe spaces to learn and responsive to the ebb and flow of student learning. By having a student-centered classroom, evidence shows increases in students' persistence and sense of social belonging, regardless of subject matter. Considering our unique student body (--% first gen and >80% minority), it is on our shoulders to craft teaching methods to address the culturally diverse needs and strengths of our students. Historically, we have used only 2 of the possible 3 voices in reflecting on our teaching practices, that of students and ourselves and not necessarily that of peers. Our peers, broadly defined, include our departmental colleagues, others at the university (faculty, CAT, STEM, etc.) and even beyond the confines of our own university. We have not yet fully realized the use of our peer's voices in the range of possible exchanges of ideas, practical advice and support. Since teaching is a continuous learning process for us (as well as our students), more widespread engagement in professional development may elevate the art and skills of teaching. Given our training of how understanding the whole is based on appreciating the contribution of the various parts, the Components of Scholarly Teaching[1] enable us to be reductionist in order to improve the overall goal of increasing student success. We recognize the importance of aligning our teaching with the Components of Scholarly Teaching as well as having all 3 voices – student, self and peers – as the foundation for the now explicitly expressed FIU vision of culturally-responsive, learner-centered and evidence-based teaching.

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[1] Components of Scholarly Teaching: 1. Course Goals, 2. Preparation, 3. Classroom Practices, 4. Significant Results, 5. Reflective Practice and Self-Critique and 6. Effective Communication

Resources:

[Brief Guide to Using the Peer Voice](#) includes many ideas for practices that gather *peer feedback* and are aligned with the Components of Scholarly Teaching.

[6 Components principles document](#)

[SPOTs Guide](#) – Student Perception of Teaching survey – interpretation and ideas on how to respond to the student feedback

[mid-semester feedback exercises](#)

Who can you turn to for help, or with questions?
Feel free to contact us with questions:
John Geiger: geigerj@fiu.edu
Marcy Kravec: mkravec@fiu.edu
Isis Artze-Vega (Assistant VP Teaching and Learning): iartze@fiu.edu

Thank you for your leadership!