

Teaching Matters

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Applying a classroom model to the evaluation of professional work

To help students learn new material or develop a new skill, effective teachers often give students opportunities to practice by asking them to engage in a new activity, such as writing, discussing or problem solving. The feedback students receive on their work is constructive, and they are encouraged to continue to practice so that they will become proficient with the new skill or develop a deep understanding of the new material. At an appropriate time, students will be formally evaluated via exams, papers or labs, and it is hoped that students will perform well as a result of having been given feedback on their work.

This process can also be a model for formative peer review of teaching. Formative peer review is performed specifically with the aim of developing teaching skills. (In contrast, summative peer review is for personnel evaluation.)

The guidelines for evaluating teaching at KU emphasize the importance of peer review. Both the progress toward tenure review and the review for promotion and tenure require information about the development of teaching practices over time. In order for this information to be provided, assistant professors being considered for promotion and tenure, as well as associate

professors being considered for full professor, must submit peer reviews that show a trajectory of progress in their teaching.

Formative review is an excellent way to prepare faculty for periodic summative reviews. This system meets the needs for accountability and for personnel decisions within a context that is familiar to faculty; it is also a system that works well for other parts of faculty members’ lives.

This year, CTE will expand its resources for faculty members who are completing formative or summative peer reviews. Our Faculty Fellows (see p. 7) will lead this work. In addition, we will add examples of exemplary peer reviews to our website, host an encore presentation on peer review given at the Summit, and develop tools for faculty members who are approaching peer review as part of mentoring.

It makes sense for faculty members to be given the same consideration shown to students who are learning something new. Most faculty members believe that professional growth occurs when they give feedback to colleagues about research. The same can be true of teaching.

—JE

Generosity can yield enjoyment: Thoughts on peer review

Dan Bernstein, CTE

One of the cornerstones of academic life is peer commentary on the quality of our scholarship. Initially, peer feedback comes in private settings, from sharing a draft or giving a brown bag to receiving a letter from an editor on a submitted paper. Once refined work is made public, there is feedback from peers in the form of citations by people who build on our work and challenges from people who see the issue differently or identify conflicting evidence. At both levels, our work as scholars is improved by receiving constructive suggestions and by responding to critics' questions.

As a profession, we are amazingly generous in giving time to provide detailed commentary for distant and often unidentified colleagues. In my six years as an editor and associate editor, I was always grateful that excellent colleagues would find time to participate in a community designed to enhance the quality of work in our field. At some level we consider it an honor to be asked for our review, but we often gain because reading other authors' work in progress generates ideas for our own intellectual plans and analyses.

The beneficiaries of peer review are the scholars whose work is improved by the interaction; they refine their work and their presentation of their ideas, and they can enjoy the professional success that those im-

provements bring. Both mature scholars and young investigators keep growing intellectually through participation in a community rich with peer commentary, and their enjoyment of their work increases with its quality.

For the last 15 years, faculty members from around the country have brought that same generosity to another form of intellectual work—trying to generate understanding among students.

Effective practice is improved in teaching just as it is in research, through interaction with others asking the same questions.

As faculty members seek ways to promote student learning, they have benefited from an emerging community of scholars who provide comments on instructional design, ideas for measuring learning, and insights developed from teaching. Effective practice is improved in teaching just as it is in research, through interaction with others asking the same questions.

While some equate peer review of teaching with observing a class period, the new community focuses instead on teaching as intellectual inquiry. Class performance is one part of being a teacher, but peers can also provide feedback on selection of course goals, use of students'

time outside of class, assignment design, and how to look for additional paths to learning. When faculty members have colleagues who share ideas and experiences on teaching, giving systematic feedback on teaching practices and learning accomplishments, they report getting much more enjoyment from being a college teacher.

It is essential that we provide all teachers the same kind of peer audience for teaching that we use so successfully in research and creative work. The student voice is useful for some kinds of feedback, but that source of review alone is incomplete. KU faculty members have noted that for many years, and the best minds in the education world make clear that student ratings should not be the sole or even primary source of information in discussing the quality of teaching (see the Perspectives section for details and references). Our community should promote low-stakes and private peer feedback on a regular basis so faculty members can develop teaching in a richly supportive context. Embedding annual peer review into department mentoring is one good arena, and regular local teaching brown bags sessions might be another.

CTE's resources include examples of peer review processes that colleagues can follow with

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Fall program includes “What Clicks in the Classroom”

This year, CTE and Instructional Development and Support are co-sponsoring workshops on “What Clicks in the Classroom.” The series will demonstrate how KU faculty are using technology in teaching—not how it *can* be used, but ways it *is* being used.

Two sessions were held earlier this fall. A final session in this series will be held at CTE:

November 6, 3 - 4 PM

Engaging Students with Clickers with Christine Munson, chemistry, and Steve Shawl, physics and astronomy.

Other CTE programs include:

October 21, 12 - 1 PM

Lunch & Conversation: Social Pedagogies with Amy Rosomondo, Spanish and Portuguese. Ways to develop audiences for student work other than the instructor, thus creating a more authentic purpose for student production.

October 27, 12 - 1 PM

Lunch & Conversation: Working with Multilingual Writers. This session will assist faculty in understanding the second-language writing process, developing models for mentoring graduate students, and referring students to appropriate campus support services. With Chris Sundstrom, Applied English Center, and Terese Thonus, Writing Center.

November 3, 12 - 1 PM

Lunch & Conversation: Peer Review in Real Time. First presented at the KU Summit, this is an encore presentation with Catherine Weaver, political science, and Brian Donovan, sociology. They will demonstrate a “real time” peer review of a teaching portfolio and discuss how in-class observations would be conducted and what teaching material would be examined in a formative or summative review.

November 11, 12 - 1 PM

Lunch & Conversation: Teaching the New Generation. A discussion initiated at the KU Summit of how differences among Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Gen Y can be used proactively to enhance teaching and learning. With Bill Carswell, architecture, and Mary Lee Hummert, Provost’s Office.

In addition, four CTE working groups will meet this semester: Teaching Sustainability Across Disciplines, Teaching the New Generation, Teaching Large Classes, and Teaching Undergraduate Science Courses. Check CTE’s website at www.cte.ku.edu for more information about the groups and for their meeting schedules.

All sessions are open to faculty, instructional staff and GTAs. For more information, contact CTE at 864.4199 or cte@ku.edu.

Generosity can yield enjoyment: Thoughts on peer review

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each other. We have many models and examples of peer interactions about student learning and the intellectual work in teaching, and we can provide guidelines for peer interactions with students (small group analysis) that can initiate and develop conversations about both ideas and challenges in teaching.

In our research lives, we take

advantage of many informal opportunities for comments from peers to develop our creative and discovery skills. Having become better through those opportunities, we periodically engage in more formal peer review through submission of articles, books, grants, and performances to external audiences. If we are as generous toward our KU

colleagues as we are with colleagues in our field around the country, we can provide the same rich community of feedback, ideas, and intellectual support for teaching. Such generosity will help scholars thrive in their teaching and make it more enjoyable and successful for instructors and students alike.

Peer review and evaluating the intellectual work in teaching

Dan Bernstein, CTE/Psychology

Peer review of teaching has traditionally meant only classroom observations in which a faculty member watches a colleague lead a course meeting. An observation of an hour in the life of a course yields a letter describing the performance of a teacher, and that letter becomes the peer review component of the evaluation of a professor's teaching. During the last 15 years, peer review of teaching has evolved significantly, and this resource review will focus on peer review performed specifically with the aim of developing teaching skills and peer review for personnel evaluation purposes.

At some level *peer review* could refer to any evaluation of evidence related to teaching by colleagues asked to render judgment. Here we focus on peer review as an expert evaluation of the quality of a feature of teaching, such as commentary on the depth of understanding demonstrated by students' work or evaluation of the design of a course. This sense of peer review is akin to judgments made of submitted manuscripts or funding proposals that are passed on to editors or grant officers. Combining judgments of many components of teaching into a general evaluation is also done by peers, but that is a general process of decision making that optimally is based upon credible peer review of smaller portions of the total performance.

Key Issues

A number of issues surface whenever peer review of teaching is discussed, and there are useful sources to inform those discussions. Centra's (1993) well cited book, *Reflective Faculty Evaluation*, puts peer review of teaching in the context of all evaluation of faculty members, and Braskamp and Ory's (1994) book, *Assessing Faculty Work*, builds a general view of peer evaluation through the metaphor of the evaluator being *beside* the colleague being reviewed, not above. Both books make the point that any evaluation system (summative review) must be supported by activities that promote development of the critical skills (formative review).

Cavanagh (1996) develops a case for keeping the activities separate and distinct, while Bernstein (1996), in the same issue of *Innovative Higher Education*, describes how a department saved time for faculty members by using the same activities for both formative and summative purposes. Chism (2007) addresses the tension between formative and summative review, noting that the distinction is often difficult to sustain in practice. Hutchings (1996) explains how work begun in collaboration generates products that serve well as the object of peer review. Bernstein et al. (2006) show how a process using local, collaborative peer

review generates course portfolios that are reviewed by external peers. These resources suggest paths to complementary formative and summative review.

As noted earlier, in practice much peer review of teaching consists of brief reports based on a class observation, and there are many sources essential to maximizing the benefit of those visits. Chapter 6 in Chism's (2007) sourcebook is devoted entirely to systems and materials for observing contact time with students and providing feedback to colleagues, including narrative reactions used as conversation starters and detailed checklists of teacher behavior often found in good learning environments. The AAHE model of peer review (Hutchings, 1995) provides a two-stage process in which peers first learn exactly what a colleague intends to accomplish in several class periods and then provide feedback on how well those goals were achieved. Many university websites give descriptions of appropriate rules for peer observation of classes; both teaching centers (e.g., University of Minnesota and North Carolina State University) and faculty governance bodies (e.g., The Ohio State University) present best practices and policies.

Other sources make a strong case that class observations should yield formative review only, unless multiple samples are undertaken by well-prepared

observers using standardized protocols. Cohen and McKeachie (1980) review research on the validity of observations, and Arreola's (2007) book, *Developing a Comprehensive Faculty Evaluation System*, gives a summary of research on reliability of class observations, as typically conducted by unprepared peers. DeZure (1999) identifies the preparation of observers and observation protocols that can optimize the utility of observation data, for either summative or formative use. Anyone considering using classroom observations as part of peer review of teaching would be well served by consulting these resources.

All of the resources cited agree with Chism (2007) that there is great formative benefit for the teacher from the conversations before and after peer observations of class or other contact time with students. Because informal observations do not generate valid evidence for comparisons among faculty or with established standards for classroom practice, most resources recommend they *not be used as evidence* in summative review. These sources also recommend a different use of colleague time, often referred to as *small group instructional diagnosis*. Braskamp & Ory (1994) and Centra (1993) describe colleagues' meetings with groups of students from a class, resulting in a summary for the teacher of strengths and concerns. Morehead and Shedd (1996) and Shepard, Leifer, and Carryer (1996) provide useful accounts of the value of this alternative to direct observations.

Teaching as Scholarship

Widespread discussion of the scholarship of teaching and learning has focused attention on the meaning of peer review in the context of teaching construed as scholarship. McKinney (2007), in her book *Enhancing Learning Through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, urges teachers to use conventional scholarly skills to develop their teaching. She

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gives extensive guidance in using disciplinary research tools and theory for constructing problems that can be addressed as scholarly projects.

Bass (1999) also sees teaching issues as researchable scholarly problems, and he offers strategies for disciplinary teachers to contribute to the development of theory in learning. Bernstein (2002) uses the analysis from *Scholarship Assessed* (Glassick et al., 1997) to frame four sets of questions to prompt peer reviews of course portfolios. Bernstein and Bass (2005) discuss the benefits and costs of the scholarship metaphor; reading that dialogue can help a community identify an appropriate level of

going public and being exposed to peer comments. There is not a single correct strategy for any community; reading these works facilitates discussion of optimal engagement with reviews.

When teaching work is not published, peer review is typically applied to items gathered as a portfolio. Seldin's (1997) book, *The Teaching Portfolio*, describes the elements of a typical portfolio and provides examples of collections put together by faculty members. Savory, Burnett and Goodburn's (2007) book, *Inquiry Into the College Classroom: A Journey Toward Scholarly Teaching*, reports the development of exceptional course portfolios through a peer review community. Readers looking for innovative ideas for making teaching work visible for peer commentary will find many examples in these resources, and they all highlight the wisdom of providing ample formative programming in support of whatever summative peer evaluation practices are used.

In other parts of academic life, the term *peer review* has a very specific meaning. I recall a meeting in which a chief academic officer told chairs to highlight the *peer reviewed* items in promotion and tenure documents. She clearly valued published or funded work that presented thoroughly analyzed products of research or creative activities. Peer review in the research context implies an arm's length judgment of quality by a colleague with specialized knowledge of standards of excellence in a field.

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A response to “Peer review and evaluating intellectual work in teaching”

Steve Kapp, Social Welfare

In the past year, peer review and the overall process of evaluating teaching practice has received significant attention. At KU, an institution that frequently boasts a balance between the teaching and research enterprises, there seems to be support for modifying the process for evaluating teaching. While the former process, which relied on select numerical summaries from student evaluations and brief testimonials based on drive-by observations, has inherent inefficiencies, there are some inadequacies. Specifically, there is an imbalance between the rigor and effort associated with evaluating scholarship and the corresponding evaluative energy invested in the review of teaching. Additionally, beyond completing necessary requirements, there are few

benefits for those whose teaching practice is being evaluated.

Dan’s article does a good job of describing the range of viable tools to enhance the process for evaluating teaching. However, in the face of this type of change, a number of things have become apparent. Any adjustments in the evaluation of teaching fly in the face of daily operations and upset the status quo. Our current teaching evaluations are an integral part of merit pay, workload, and tenure and promotion review processes. Additionally, administrators rely on these metrics for a general evaluation of teaching that can be supplemented as needed. Changing these customs is often perceived as more work to faculty struggling to manage their current workloads.

Although there is some general

agreement about the shortcomings of our present system of evaluating teaching, it is going to take informal and formal leadership on behalf of faculty and administration to effectively implement any substantial changes. Hopefully, these efforts will be driven by the potential value of this type of change for improving our teaching efforts. The trick of this initiative will be to develop and manage this innovation in a manner that accommodates the structural demands for a system of evaluation without sacrificing the promise of a more rigorous process and the inherent benefits, including but not limited to better feedback for teachers, more informed exchanges around teaching, and the development of organizational supports attuned to identified challenges.

Peer review and evaluating the intellectual work in teaching

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When people describe teaching as serious intellectual work, or offer it as discovery scholarship, we are challenged to affirm that the products of teaching can also be evaluated for excellence by a community of peers. The challenge is even greater now than a decade ago, because the consensus vision of successful teaching today includes successful learning. It is no longer enough to demonstrate that we teach in accord with the

best models of practice; we must demonstrate that our students learn a substantial amount. As in the review of a research or creative project, merely documenting good practice is not enough; the activities are judged in part based on their impact on the intended community.

It will not be easy to meet that challenge, but many authors have generated conceptual analyses of the process and practical

guides for carrying it out. There are also suggestions for integrating peer feedback into the development of teaching to improve teaching and learning over time. Faculty members and students will benefit from using these resources to guide our systems of professional accountability.

See box on page 7 for resources used in this article.

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Donovan, Register and Williams named CTE Faculty Fellows

CTE is pleased to announce that three faculty members have joined our staff as part of the Faculty Fellows program. These Fellows will serve the KU community beginning fall 2008 through spring 2010. As part of their work, all three will be developing new resources for peer review, as well as expanding various CTE programs.

Brian Donovan is an associate professor in sociology. Donovan has been part of CTE's working group on Teaching Large Classes and is currently a participant in the Faculty Seminar. His work with CTE will be focused on developing new communication strategies for the Center and expanding new faculty programs.



Photo Univ. Relations

Brian Donovan

Dena Register is an associate professor of music therapy. She has been active in several CTE programs, including the Best Practices Institute, Faculty Seminar, and Service Learning Institute. She also has developed a course portfolio on CTE's website. Her CTE work will focus primarily on new faculty.

Susan Williams is an associate professor of chemical and petroleum engineering. Williams has served as her department's Ambassador to CTE, and she has participated in CTE's Faculty Seminar. In addition, she was on the KU Faculty Senate's Task Force on the Assessment of Teaching and Learning. Her work with CTE will be focused on developing an enhanced Ambassador program.

Catherine Weaver, political science, will continue her work as a Faculty Fellow this fall. Weaver will focus on peer review.



Photo Univ. Relations

Dena Register



Susan Williams

Resources for Bernstein article:

- *Arreola, R.A. (2007). *Developing a comprehensive faculty evaluation system* (3rd ed.). Bolton, MA: Anker.
- *Bass, R. (1999). The scholarship of teaching: What's the problem? *Invention* (1).
- *Bernstein, D.J. (1996). A departmental system for balancing the development and evaluation of college teaching: A reply to Cavanaugh. *Innovative Higher Education*, 20 (4), 241-248.
- Bernstein, D.J. (2002). Representing the intellectual work in teaching through peer reviewed course portfolios. In S.F. Davis & W. Buskist (eds.), *The teaching of psychology: Essays in honor of Wilbert J. McKeachie and Charles L. Brewer*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- *Bernstein, D.J. & Bass, R. (2005). The scholarship of teaching and learning. *Academe*, 91 (4), 37-43.
- *Bernstein, D.J., Burnett, A.N., Goodburn, A., & Savory, P. (2006). *Making teaching and learning visible: Course portfolios and the peer review of teaching*. Bolton, MA: Anker.

- Braskamp, L.A. & Ory, J.C. (1994). *Assessing faculty work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- *Cavanagh, R. (1996). Formative and summative evaluation in the faculty peer review of teaching. *Innovative Higher Education*, 20 (4), 235-240.
- Centra, J.A. (1993). *Reflective faculty evaluation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- *Chism, N.V.N. (2007). *Peer review of teaching: A sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Bolton, MA: Anker.
- Cohen, P.A. & McKeachie, W.J. (1980). The role of colleagues in the evaluation of college teaching. *Improving College and University Teaching*, 28 (4), 147-154.
- *DeZure, D. (1999). Evaluating teaching through peer classroom observation. In P. Seldin (ed.), (1999) *Changing practices in evaluating teaching*. Bolton, MA: Anker.
- *Hutchings, P. (ed.) (1995). *From idea to prototype: The peer review of teaching*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- *Hutchings, P. (ed.) (1996). *Making teaching community property: A menu for peer collaboration and peer review*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

- *McKinney, K. (2007). *Enhancing learning through the scholarship of teaching and learning*. Bolton, MA: Anker.
- *Morehead, J. and Shedd, P. (1996). Student interviews: A vital role in the scholarship of teaching. *Innovative Higher Education*, 20 (4), 261-270.
- *Sheppard, S., Leifer, L., & Carryer, J.E. (1996). Commentary on student interviews. *Innovative Higher Education*, 20 (4), 271-276.
- Center for Teaching and Learning (The University of Minnesota). Web: <http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/resources/peer/index.html>
- Office of the University Senate (The Ohio State University). Web: <http://senate.osu.edu/PeerEvalTeach.html>
- Peer Review of Teaching (North Carolina State University). Web: http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/peer_review/intro.html
- *Savory, P., Burnett, A.N., & Goodburn, A. (2007). *Inquiry into the college classroom: A journey toward scholarly teaching*. Bolton, MA: Anker.
- *Seldin, P. (1997). *The teaching portfolio* (2nd ed.). Bolton, MA: Anker.

*Available in CTE's library.

Four components of peer review

Catherine Weaver, Political Science, & Brian Donovan, Sociology

Effective peer review will help you and your colleagues look for examples of excellence and innovation in teaching. The process should include an interactive and constructive conversation between the reviewer and reviewee. Peer review should also consider an individual's activities related to teaching outside the classroom. In general, the reviewer should consider the following four areas:

1. Quality of intellectual content

Review annotated course syllabi that highlight why the instructor included particular material. The conversation between the reviewer and reviewee might focus on how courses have changed over time.

- Is the material in this course appropriate for the topic, the curriculum and the institution?
- Is there intellectual coherence to the course content?
- Are intellectual goals for students well articulated and congruent with course content and mission?

2. Quality of teaching practices

Review an account about the use of students' time in and out of class. Some of this would be found in a syllabus and some as annotations to a syllabus or in conversation with the reviewee.

- Is contact time with students well organized and planned, and if so, are the plans carried out?
- How much of the time are students actively engaged in the material?
- Are there opportunities (in or out of class) for students to practice skills embedded in course goals?
- Are there any particularly creative or effective uses of contact time that could improve understanding?
- What course structures or procedures might contribute especially to student understanding?

3. Quality of student understanding

How does the instructor assess learning? What evidence does the instructor use to evaluate how well course goals are being met? Review and discuss student work: samples of assignments related to goals. The review should not rely solely on students' own evaluation of how much they think they have learned.

- Is the performance asked of students appropriate for course goals, level of course, and institution?
- Does the performance requested include challenging levels of conceptual understanding and critical evaluation of the material appropriate to the level of the course and of the students?
- Are assignments particularly creative or do they provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their understanding using intellectual skills typical of the field?
- Is assignment weight in grade calculation coordinated with the relative importance of course goals?

4. Evidence of reflective consideration and development

Consider how the instructor has changed a course over multiple offerings or based on past teaching experiences. What led to the changes and what results (if any) were noted when changes were made?

- Has this faculty member made a sincere effort to ensure that students achieve the goals for the course?
- Has the instructor identified any relationship between what (s)he teaches and how students perform?
- Is there evidence of insightful analysis of teaching practice that resulted from consideration of student performance?

Teaching Matters is published by the Center for Teaching Excellence. The staff welcomes your comments and suggestions. We will upon occasion invite the submission of articles of special interest to the academic community.

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