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A SoTL Approach to Learning-Centered Peer Review of Teaching for Tenure and Promotion

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A SoTL Approach to Learning-Centered Peer Review of Teaching for Tenure and Promotion

28 March 2013
The SoTL Commons

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The Entry Point

Revising Peer Review of Teaching
Questions

- How would you describe peer review at your institution?
- How credible and useful is peer review at your institution?
  - For summative purposes?
  - For formative purposes?
Current Status of Peer Review

- Peer reviewers visit a class period and observe the faculty member teaching.
- Peer reviewers write a letter.
- Tenure and promotion committees read the letter, but rely on student ratings.
The impact of peer review on summative evaluation is **MINIMAL**

However, everyone agrees that peer review would be valuable if we could get it to work well.
Pilot One

Shifting the Emphasis from Process to Outcome
Shift to a Learning Paradigm

- The shift in higher education toward a learning-centered paradigm enables a similar shift in peer review of teaching.
Traditional Peer Review

- Reviewers evaluate the process of teaching. If the process is sound, the outcome of learning is assumed.
Learning-center peer review of teaching

- Focus shifts to the intended outcome of student learning. However, to adequately evaluate outcomes you need to know about process.
Focus of learning-centered peer review

- Learning-centered peer review of teaching focuses on these components related to student learning—
  - Learning outcomes
  - Learning activities
  - Learning assessments
  - Evidence that students achieved the learning outcomes
Learning-centered Peer Review Pilot

- College of Humanities
- College Dean very supportive
- Implemented for one year
- Peer reviewers expected to cite evidence of student learning
- Preliminary feedback very positive
Results

- Participants thought the learning-centered approach was an improvement philosophically; however...

- Still too much work for too little gain.
  (evidence still lacking)
Conclusions from First Pilot

- It took too much time to conduct an adequate evaluation.
- Reviewers had little to gain and more to lose by investing time in peer review of teaching.
- The letter format does not allow for adequate discussion of evidence.
Pilot Two

Shifting from Evaluative Model to Scholarly Review Model
Changing the model

- **Evaluative model**—Peers enter the classroom as “external, objective observers.” Faculty member is a relatively passive subject.

- **Scholarly model**—Faculty member engages in scholarly documentation and analysis of evidence of teaching and learning. Peers function as reviewers of method, evidence and conclusions much like peer review of research.
Shifting the Burden of Proof (and Work)

- In the scholarly model, the faculty candidate has the burden of proof to demonstrate that teaching results in learning.
- The faculty candidate has more to gain, both summatively and formatively, from investing time in a scholarly review of teaching and learning.
Scholarly Review of Teaching & Learning

- Course learning outcomes function as research questions.
  
  *Did students achieve expected learning outcomes as a result of my teaching?*

- Faculty candidate writes a scholarly manuscript documenting evidence of student learning.

- Manuscript drafts are reviewed annually with department chair.

- Final drafts are submitted to peer reviewers at 3rd year review, 6th year review, and application for full professor.
Review by Peers

- Peer review functions much like peer review of research—
  - Are learning outcomes are clear and appropriate for the course?
  - Is the methodology is sound?
  - Are claims are supported by appropriate evidence?
  - Are conclusions reasonable interpretations of the evidence?

- Peer reviewers may also observe classroom sessions to clarify or corroborate the candidate’s claims.
Conclusions from Second Pilot

- Reaction by faculty and administrators is very positive
- Writing the manuscript and reviewing the manuscript are more familiar activities.
- This approach accomplishes both formative and summative purposes of peer review.
At the Intersection

- Learning Outcomes Assessment
- Scholarly Peer Review of Teaching & Learning
- Peer Review of Teaching
- Scholarship of Teaching & Learning
Differences from SoTL

- The main differences are—
  - Is not “grassroots”—The manuscript is required for tenure and promotion.
  - Is not open topic—The research question is essentially the same for everyone.
However…

- The major benefits of SoTL are still achieved.
  - The perception of teaching and learning is elevated
  - The drive for teaching and learning improvement becomes more intrinsic rather than extrinsic.
  - Faculty gain more confidence being public about teaching and learning.
Questions?