

Excellence in Teaching

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Most universities require excellence in teaching as one of the criteria for promotion and tenure. However, the promotion and tenure policy statements for such universities do not explicitly define or describe the concept of excellence in teaching. Hence, the typical faculty member is not given adequate guidance for developing excellence in teaching.

Failing to receive adequate guidance on developing and documenting teaching excellence, many teaching dossiers for promotion and tenure demonstrate only a minimum competency in teaching. Hence, it is often difficult to distinguish among the many applications for promotion and tenure on the basis of teaching. Thus, the criticism that teaching does not count for promotion and tenure arises, because there is not adequate evidence to separate applicants on the basis of teaching (Louis). Research results are more easily quantifiable, thus distinguishing applicants. If truly outstanding teachers did a better job in documenting their case, distinguishing themselves from others, then teaching would be relied on more heavily in the promotion and tenure decision process.

What constitutes excellence in teaching? To answer this question, it is useful in turn to other information than promotion and tenure guidelines. In particular, excellence in teaching is addressed in the numerous teaching awards that are offered by Colleges of Agriculture throughout the nation. Selected faculty and others interested in the concept developed and approved the criteria used to assess excellence in teaching. The objective of this paper is to identify the criteria used by Colleges of Agriculture in determining excellence in teaching. Knowing these criteria should help improve our understanding of the concept of excellence in teaching and provide guidance on what activities can be pursued to develop and document excellence in teaching.

Related Literature

The literature on excellence in teaching is limited in scope, focusing almost exclusively on formal classroom teaching. This is true both in the areas of educational research (e.g. Rosenshine and Furst) and practical teaching applications (e.g. McKeachie). Put quite simply, the essence of quality classroom teaching involves

1. having a message (mastery of subject matter),
2. implementing a plan (objectives),
3. using appropriate teaching methods and techniques,
4. communicating the ideas of students, and
5. stimulating students to learn.

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Effectiveness in formal classroom teaching is a necessary but not sufficient condition for developing excellence in teaching.

The number one tool used in measuring teacher performance is student ratings. While the merits of such ratings are widely debated, research has often found a positive correlation between ratings and achievement (Sullivan and Skanes). Nevertheless, several problems can arise with the use of ratings as the major criteria in determining teaching excellence. First, the validity of ratings in measuring achievement is still questionable. A high correlation between ratings and achievement does not ensure that ratings are perfect discriminators. There is always a concern that "poor" but popular teachers might get high ratings, or "good" but demanding teachers might get low ratings. Secondly, ratings are an end result with little guidance in themselves on how to get good ratings. A faculty who receives low ratings may not know to change teaching techniques in order to improve. Thirdly, there is a tendency to rely too heavily on student ratings to the exclusion of other important information. Student ratings are of necessity narrowly focused, being limited to direct contact between students and teachers.

In order to overcome this latter problem, there is a growing effort to identify other forms of documentation for measuring teaching performance. Louis describes numerous methods and rationale for documenting teaching performance. However, all the

Table 1. Potential Documentation for Teaching Excellence

Innovative teaching materials or instructional techniques
Student questionnaires
Compiled student comments
Evaluations from former students
Peer evaluations by faculty
Accomplishments of former students
Student performance on uniform examinations
Attraction of students from other universities
Direction of individual student work
Advisement of students
Publications related to teaching
Development of instructional materials
Adoption by others of instructional materials
Teaching awards
Selection for extra-university teaching activities
Membership on special bodies concerned with teaching
Receipt of instructional grants/contracts
Membership on panels to judge proposals for instructional grants/contracts
Selection of teaching in honors courses
Selection for membership on Graduate Faculty
Invitation to testify before governmental groups concerning educational programs
Supervision of students being trained
Presentation of papers on teaching

Source: University of Georgia, "The University of Georgia Guidelines for Appointment, Promotion and Tenure," Athens, Georgia, May 1988.

documentation that he suggested relates directly to formal classroom teaching. An in-depth list of potential documentation for teaching excellence is shown in Table 1. The problem with such a list arises, because these are end results and the activities leading to these results are not described. Clearly, a faculty member who could provide such a documentation would be considered an excellent teacher. But what are the activities that can be followed to achieve excellence?

Data

The criteria used to select winners of awards for excellence in teaching are often activity oriented. Identifying these activities should be helpful in increasing our understanding of these activities which contribute to teaching excellence. In order to obtain the criteria for teaching awards, All 1862 land grant universities were contacted in June 1988 to select information on the College of Agriculture teaching awards.

Thirty-three responses to these inquiries were obtained from Colleges of Agriculture throughout the country. Only three colleges indicated no college-wide teaching awards for excellence were offered. Ten colleges indicated that college-wide awards were offered, but the criteria for selection were not explicit. However, the type of required documentation was often identified. Either student committees, faculty and student committees, or a student-body election was used to determine award winners with no criteria specified. Twenty colleges offered college-wide teaching awards and explicitly identified the criteria to be used in selecting the award winners. The criteria used by these 20 Colleges of Agriculture are summarized in the remaining portion of the paper.

Survey Results

As expected there is considerable variability in the criteria used by Colleges of Agriculture in selecting winners of awards for excellence in teaching. Although no two awards have exactly the same criteria, certain patterns emerge. In particular, teaching excellence is based on effectiveness in formal classroom teaching and on effectiveness in instruction-related activities outside the classroom.

The fundamental criteria for identifying teaching excellence based on these college-wide awards are summarized in Table 2. The most frequently cited criteria for teaching excellence were related to the use of innovative teaching techniques, the ability to stimulate students to learn, student advisement, and professional improvement in teaching.

As expected, most awards had at least one criterion specifically related to formal classroom teaching. These criteria related to mastery of subject matter, use of innovative teaching techniques, and ability to communicate and to stimulate student learning.

Many of the criteria related to activities outside the classroom. Academic advising and participation in

Table 2. Frequency with Which Selected Criteria Are Used in Identifying Teaching Excellence

	Percentages of Awards Explicitly Using the Criteria
Effectiveness in Formal Classroom Instruction	
Master of subject matter	50
Effectiveness in utilizing innovative teaching techniques	65
Effectiveness in communicating and stimulating students to learn	80
Effectiveness in Instruction-Related Activities	
Concern for student welfare and willingness to help students	55
Effectiveness in student counseling and extracurricular activities	65
Teaching publications	40
Professional improvement in teaching	65
Curricular improvement	40

student extracurricular activities was important in determining excellence in teaching. Concern for educational, social, and/or personal welfare was frequently included in the criteria. Professional improvement in teaching, which includes leadership and/or participation in teaching symposia and workshops, was also frequently cited. Other instruction-related activities cited included teaching publications and curricular improvement. Teaching publications could include articles about teaching, as well as textbooks and other instructional materials. The term curricular improvement relates to leadership and participation on university committees which address curricular activities.

Some of the colleges assign weights to the various criteria. These weights have been averaged and are reported in Table 3. These weights are particularly interesting, because they show that only about half of the possible points relate to the criteria for formal classroom teaching. The other half of the points relate to activities outside the classroom.

Conclusions

Excellence in teaching is a broad concept relating to formal classroom teaching and instruction-related activities outside the classroom. These are the general conclusions of a survey of Colleges of Agriculture on how they measure excellence in teaching. The formal classroom teaching activities most frequently cited

Table 3. Relative Importance of Criteria for Teaching Excellence

	Weights ¹ (Percent)
Effectiveness in Formal Classroom Instruction	51
Effectiveness in Instructional Related Activities	49
Concern for student welfare and willingness to help students	4.5
Effectiveness in student counseling and extracurricular activities	13.8
Teaching publications	5.0
Professional improvement in teaching	7.5
Curricular improvement	11.8
Other	6.3
Total	100

¹Average weights used in selecting recipients of awards for teaching excellence.

included mastery of subject matter, use of innovative teaching techniques, and the ability to stimulate students to learn. While these attributes and activities are widely recognized, the instruction-related activities outside the classroom are often ignored by faculty aspiring to excellence. Such activities as professional improvement (e.g., leadership in teaching workshops), curricular improvement, and writing journal articles on instruction can help distinguish between those teachers who have clearly achieved excellence and those who achieved only minimum competency in teaching. Effectiveness in formal classroom instruction is a necessary condition while effectiveness in instruction-related activities is a sufficient condition in demon-

strating teaching excellence.

References

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ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Canadian Diploma in Agriculture Programs 1983-87

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Since 1979, G.M. Jenkinson of the Ontario Agricultural College has annually published enrollment trends in Canadian Faculties of Agriculture in the NACTA Journal, most recently in the March, 1988 edition (Jenkinson, 1988). In his earlier reports, he included enrollment figures for Diploma in Agriculture programs offered at certain degree granting institutions (Jenkinson, 1979). More recently, his reports have included degree level enrollments only.

In Canada, Diploma in Agriculture programs are also offered at institutions other than universities. Accordingly, the earlier information reported by Jenkinson was incomplete, and a more complete reporting procedure would be in order. This report is therefore the first documentation of enrollment trends in Diploma in Agriculture programs in a more complete manner.

Table 1. Member Institutions of the Canadian Association of Diploma in Agriculture Programs (CADAP/APDAC)

Institution	Location	Institution Type
1. Fraser Valley College	Abbotsford, B.C.	NDG
2. Northern Lights College	Dawson Creek, B.C.	NDG
3. Fairview College	Fairview, Alta.	NDG
4. Olds College	Olds, Alta.	NDG
5. Lakeland College	Vermilion, Alta.	NDG
6. Lethbridge Community College	Lethbridge, Alta.	NDG
7. University of Saskatchewan	Saskatoon, Sask.	DG
8. University of Manitoba	Winnipeg, Man.	DG
9. Ridgetown College of Agriculture Technology	Ridgetown, Ont.	NDG
10. Centralia College of Agriculture Technology	Huron Park, Ont.	NDG
11. Ontario Agriculture College	Guelph, Ont.	DG
12. Kemptville College of Agriculture Technology	Kemptville, Ont.	NDG
13. New Liskeard College of Agriculture Technology	New Liskeard, Ont.	NDG
14. Alfred College of Agriculture Technology	Alfred, Ont.	NDG
15. Macdonald College	Ste-Anne de Bellevue, Que.	DG
16. Institut de Technologie Agricole	St. Hyacinthe, Que.	NDG
17. Institut de Technologie Agricole	La Pocatiere, Que.	NDG
18. Woodstock Community College	Woodstock, N.B.	NDG
19. Nova Scotia Agriculture College	Truro, N.S.	DG

'DG = Degree granting institution
NDG = Non-degree granting institution

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Institutions and Programs

Across Canada, 19 institutions offering Diploma in Agriculture programs belong to the Canadian Association of Diploma in Agriculture Programs. These institutions are listed in Table 1. For the purpose of this report these institutions have been placed into one of two types: degree granting (DG) and non-degree granting (NDG).

Five diploma programs are offered in institutions located on regular degree granting university campuses. The remaining 14 programs are located either at regular community colleges, where they are part of a great variety of technical program offerings, or at non-degree granting college institutions which historically have concentrated on technical programs of an agricultural nature.

A wide variety of names and labels are given to various programs in the 19 institutions. For the purpose of this report, these programs have been grouped into 7 categories as can be seen in Tables 2 and 3.

Each of the 16 institutions which provided information for this report offer one or more agriculture production programs. These programs are primarily aimed at individuals who wish to prepare themselves for a successful career in farm management. Most of the other programs are designed to train individuals for off farm jobs although in some cases it could be argued that horticulture programs are also production oriented. In this report, however, all horticulture programs have been included in the "horticulture" category. The miscellaneous category "other" includes programs such as Food Service Management, Agricultural Laboratory, Environmental Sciences, etc.

This report does not include any enrollment figures for Certificate programs which are generally of shorter duration than Diploma programs. For a detailed description of what constitutes a Diploma in Agriculture program in Canada, I refer the reader to the article *Guidelines for Diploma in Agriculture Programs*, page 25, NACTA Journal, Dec., 1986.