

TFELT Report Executive Summary

June 4, 2021

Tripartite Charge

To enhance learning and encourage teaching excellence, the Office of the Provost together with Faculty Council, convenes this campus-level faculty-led Task Force to Enhance Learning and Teaching (TFELT). The Teaching for Learning Center (T4LC) will serve as a resource to this group, which will have three main goals.

1. To propose a campus-wide multi-measure approach to the evaluation of teaching
2. To propose a system to support, recognize, and incentivize teaching excellence
3. To establish a plan to measure the long-term impacts of these changes on student learning and success

Visit the TFELT website for the link to the [full charge](#).

Executive Summary

Teaching is an essential component of the work faculty do and is key to students' success and retention. Despite its importance, there is wide disagreement, skepticism, and mistrust about how teaching should be evaluated, particularly at research institutions (Wieman, 2015). Student ratings of teaching tend to comprise the main or only form of data used to evaluate teaching despite concerns about how these data are flawed, biased, often unrelated to actual effectiveness, and unable to identify substantive areas for improvement (Wieman, 2015). A variety of educational and professional associations, including the American Sociological Association (2019), American Educational Research Association (2014), American Association of University Professors (n.d.), and Association of American Universities (n.d.) have all released reports or statements related to concerns about current teaching evaluation strategies and suggestions for more effective approaches. These reports collectively call for the need to use evidence-based criteria, to incorporate multiple forms of data related to teaching, and to build structures of support for faculty development and rewards of good teaching.

The University of Missouri convened a teaching scholarship taskforce in 2013, that was tasked with four teaching-related objectives, including providing guidance about the criteria for evaluating teaching in promotion, tenure, merit, and annual evaluations. The taskforce also recommended principles related to the formative and summative evaluation of teaching, including the recommended instructor reflection of student feedback data, peer evaluations, and self-evaluations, the consideration of student feedback over time, and the use of all of these data in the P&T process. They also recommended that chairs, faculty, and administrators “should be educated about the proper use and interpretation of student evaluations in summative processes”

(p. 7). Peer reviews of teaching were particularly endorsed, as was the use of a campus-level guidelines related to guidance and rubrics for these reviews. This work was furthered five years later by an Intercampus Faculty Council (University of Missouri Intercampus Faculty Council, 2018) taskforce for the UM system, which concluded that teaching should be valued and rewarded, should use multiple strategies or sources of data, and that student ratings should be improved to account for sources of bias related to gender, race, years of experience, discipline, course size, course content, and timing of the evaluation. To date, these recommendations have not resulted in a change in university-wide practices.

Building on these previous efforts, the Office of the Provost charged Faculty Council with the task of convening a 12-person campus faculty-led task force, TFELT, related to teaching effectiveness and stipulated that our recommendations should include both formative and summative evaluation recommendations. Faculty Council's Chair made recommendations as to the taskforce's membership, which drew from as many colleges or schools on campus as possible and also drew upon scholars with expertise in teaching, learning, measurement, assessment, college students, and higher education. TFELT was asked to "seek input from all constituents including but not limited to students, graduate teaching assistants and instructors, faculty, department chairs, associate deans and deans." TFELT was charged with reviewing past task force documents, the MU strategic plan, the intercampus faculty council report referenced above, as well as developing recommendations that draw upon student feedback, peer assessment, and self-assessment data in alignment with the research on measuring teaching effectiveness, all of which we have done. Our efforts at seeking collaborative input and engagement over the past two years were recognized by MU Faculty Council in March 2021, with the awarding of their Group Shared Governance Award.

While the Office of the Provost has the ultimate authority in determining the directives contained within the P&T Call document regarding required evidence related to teaching and the materials and data sources required for inclusion for the purposes of tenure and promotion, we hope that the collective efforts of faculty and other stakeholders over the past two intensive years—as well as from previous task forces before us representing nearly a decade of work related to this topic—will be utilized and incorporated. We truly believe that these recommendations will enhance teaching by offering faculty meaningful and evidence-based feedback on how they can improve their teaching, which directly relates to student success outcomes. New systems and strategies take time to learn so we are also proposing a phased approach to implementing these recommendations, offering corresponding sources of support for each of the recommendations offered, and suggestions for how effective teaching might be rewarded and incentivized.

Our campus community engagement work, review of the literature, and search of promising and evidence-based practices at other institutions led us to create a new model, the

Dimensions of Inclusive and Effective Teaching that has specific elements that we believe should be captured across multiple data sources, including:

1. a new student feedback survey instrument,
2. a structured peer review process, and
3. a reflective self-assessment of teaching.

We also note that while our recommendations might feel new and extensive, they are also in many ways more effective ways of implementing current practices. Making these measures of effective teaching rigorous, valid, and trustworthy will increase their likelihood of being helpful in improving teaching and in informing tenure, promotion, and annual review processes. Our report also describes how the evaluation of teaching might be permanently subsumed by the Faculty Council committee for Academic Affairs so that ongoing assessment of the elements described in this plan can be fully integrated *and* modified where needed and appropriate, and in ways that align with evidence-based practices and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Part One: Multi-Measures System to Evaluate Teaching

Evaluating effective and inclusive teaching is a complex endeavor. No single data stream provides sufficient evidence alone (Appling et al., 2001). For example, properly constructed student feedback provides unique learner insights in the classroom and is helpful for formative processes (Spooren et al., 2013), but it does not provide sufficient insight into other vital aspects of course structure and learning objectives. Similarly, peer feedback and self-reflection are all necessary but insufficient means of measuring effective and inclusive teaching. Furthermore, multiple measures provide a check against arbitrary promotion and tenure decisions by keeping leadership accountable for the way in which they make decisions. Affirming the scholarly literature and MU's *Teaching Scholarship Task Force Report* (2014), the Provost tasked TFELT to create a multi-measure system that would "contribute to a balanced data set" and to "limit the number of acceptable measures" to ensure consistency across all units.

TFELT developed an evidence-based and comprehensive system to evaluate teaching effectiveness using multiple measures to serve University of Missouri educators for both **formative** and **summative** purposes. (Formative purposes are solely intended to assist an educator in professional development. Summative purposes are for both professional development and departmental supervision.) The multi-measures system proposed here uses information from student feedback, peer review, and self-reflection to offer a triangulation of data, and provide necessary contextualization of data. MU's new definition and teaching dimensions were established December 2019, so that a common set of standards could be used across our university. We describe the dimensions below.

Welcoming and Collaborative means that the instructor welcomes and actively includes all students and perspectives in the learning environment. Students in the course collaborate with

the instructor and other students. Key terms for this dimension include: Inclusive, Interactive, Dialogue, Creative, Relationships, Respectful.

Sources: Brookfield (2002), Brown et al. (2005), Deslauriers et al. (2019), and Paris (2012)

Relevant and Engaging means that the instructor helps students discover the relevance of the subject matter to their lives and future professions. The instructor engages students in active learning to produce authentic and creative works. Key terms for this dimension include: Active Learning, Collaborative, Modeling Disciplinary Process, Metacognition, Culturally knowledgeable.

Sources: Freeman et al. (2014), Harris and Bacon (2019), and Weimer (2013).

Empowering and Supportive means that the instructor invites students to set and reach their learning goals. The instructor supports student success through giving constructive feedback, mentoring, advising, and guiding students while listening and responding to student needs. Key terms for this dimension include: Professional, Encouraging, Inspiring student action, Approachable

Sources: Ames (1990) and Cavanagh (2016).

Structured and Intentional means that the instructor plans the course well, describes the course clearly, and aligns learning objectives, learning activities, and assessment. The instructor clearly communicates these expectations and what students need to do to meet them. Key terms for this dimension include: Clear Communication, Outcome based, High Standards, Accessible, Scaffolded

Sources: Ambrose et al. (2010) and Sousa (2011).

TFELT recognizes that what appears in the Promotion and Tenure Call document as the criteria for promotion, as well as what appears in individual departmental bylaws as criteria for both annual reviews and salary increases, is not within TFELT's jurisdiction. TFELT also recognizes that the university's evaluative requirements will influence the way people and departments use the guidance that TFELT offers in this set of recommendations. Therefore, TFELT recommends that those requirements align as much as possible with the definition, dimensions, resources, and protocols that TFELT has built, so as to fully promote and support a culture of effective and inclusive teaching and learning at MU.

References

- Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., & Norman, M. K. (2010). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. John Wiley & Sons.
- American Association of University Professors (n.d.). *Statement on Teaching Evaluation*.
<https://www.aaup.org/report/statement-teaching-evaluation>
- American Educational Research Association. (2014). *Rethinking faculty evaluation: AERA report and recommendations on evaluating education research, scholarship, and teaching in postsecondary education* [Policy brief]. Author.
https://www.aera.net/Portals/38/docs/Education_Research_and_Research_Policy/RethinkingFacultyEval_R4.pdf
- American Sociological Association (2019). *Statement on student evaluations of teaching*.
https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/asa_statement_on_student_evaluations_of_teaching_feb132020.pdf
- Ames, C. (1990). Motivation: What teachers need to know. *Teachers College Record*, 91, 409472.
- Appling, S. E., Naumann, P. L., & Berk, R. A. (2001). Using a faculty evaluation triad to achieve evidence-based teaching. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 22(5), 247.
- Association of American Universities (n.d.). *Framework for systemic change in undergraduate STEM teaching and learning*.
https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/STEM%20Scholarship/AAU_Framework.pdf
- Brookfield, S. D. (2002). Using the lenses of critically reflective teaching in the community college classroom. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 118, 31-38.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.61>.
- Brown, A. R., Morning, C., & Watkins, C. (2005). Influence of African American engineering student perceptions of campus climate on graduation rates. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 94(2), 263-271.
- Cavanagh, S. (2016). *The spark of learning: Energizing the college classroom with the science of emotion*. West Virginia University Press.
- Deslauriers, L., McCarty, L. S., Miller, K., Callaghan, K., & Kestin, G. (2019). Measuring actual learning versus feeling of learning in response to being actively engaged in the classroom. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(39), 19251–19257.

- Freeman, S., Eddy, S.L., McDonough, M., Smith, M.K., Okoroafor, N., Jordt, H., & Wenderoth, M.P. (2014). Active learning increases student performance in science, engineering, and mathematics. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *111*(23), 8410-8415.
- Harris, N. & Bacon, C. E. W. (2019). Developing cognitive skills through active learning: A systematic review of health care professions. *Athletic Training Education Journal*, *14*(2), 135-148. <https://doi.org/10.4085/1402135>.
- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher*, *41*(3), 93-97.
- Sousa, D. A. (2011). *How the brain learns* (4th ed.). Corwin.
- Spooren, P., Brockx, B., & Mortelmans, D. (2013). On the validity of student evaluation of teaching: The state of the art. *Review of Educational Research*, *83*(4), 598–642.
- Teaching Scholarship Task Force (2014). *Teaching Scholarship Task Force Report*. University of Missouri-Columbia.
- University of Missouri Intercampus Faculty Council (2018, June 18). *Evaluating classroom-based, online, blended and laboratory teaching interactions* [Task Force Report]. University of Missouri System.
- Weimer, M. (2013). *Learner-centered teaching: Five key changes to practice*. Jossey-Bass.
- Wieman, C. (2015). A better way to evaluate undergraduate teaching. *Change: The magazine of higher learning*, *47*(1), 6-15.