Resolution #34, 1984-85

TO: President John E. Van de Watering
FROM: The Faculty Senate
RE: Resolution on Recommendations on the Report of the Task Force on Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness

SUBJECT: Resolution on Recommendations on the Report of the Task Force on Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness
(see attached)

Date: May 6, 1985

TO: The Faculty Senate
FROM: President John E. Van de Watering
RE: Decision and Action Taken on Formal Resolution

I. Acceptance of Formal Resolution
   a. Accepted. Effective Date: 5/7/85
   b. Deferred for discussion with the Faculty Senate
   c. Unacceptable for the reasons contained in the attached explanation

II. III. a. Received and acknowledged
   b. Comment:

DISTRIBUTION: Vice Presidents: (All attached, list)
Others: (President of the College)

Distribution Date: 5/17/85
Signed: (President of the College)
Date Received by the Senate: 
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
College at Brockport

Faculty Senate Meeting: 4/29/85
Agenda Item VI. C.

Resolution on Recommendations on the
Report of the Task Force on Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness

WHEREAS, there have been competing interpretations of the Senate's recommendations regarding the use of IAS forms in personnel decisions,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty Senate does not mandate the use of any specific standardized evaluation form. It does, however, recommend the inclusion of the four global questions from the IAS form as part of the dossier offered by the faculty member to the department for evaluation.

This evaluation is to be consistent with the limitations and specifications spelled out in sections 3 and 4 of the Report of the Task Force on Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness.
Recommendations on the Report of the Task Force on Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness

After consideration of the Report of the Task Force on Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness and the reaction letters from the departments, the Joint Committee of the Senate Committees on College Environment and Appointments, Promotions and Tenure proposes the following recommendations:

1. By mid-term of the Spring 1984 semester, each department of the College should develop specific procedures and evaluative guidelines within the framework of the Task Force Report, based upon departmental needs, for use in personnel decisions.

2. The individual instructor who wishes teaching effectiveness to be considered for DSI or who must undergo personnel review is responsible for collecting the dossier materials for departmental review and recommendation.

3. The use of Summary Report Letters reflecting an application of the Task Force Report recommendations for DSI or personnel decisions should not be implemented until the academic year 1984-85 to give sufficient time for faculty members to assemble dossier materials. Data should be gathered in 1983-84 for the review process that takes place during the 1984-85 academic year.

4. It is the responsibility of each department to develop and implement a plan for the periodic, systematic review of all departmental instruction, including course content and methods and techniques of teaching, with the goal being the improvement of instruction within the department. Data collected for those reviews are for the sole purpose of improving course content and instructional techniques and are not to be used as part of any personal decision, unless so authorized by the instructor.

5. The improvement of instruction is also the responsibility of the individual faculty member. Data collected by faculty for use in the improvement of instruction should be kept separate from data used in personal decisions.

6. It is the responsibility of the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs to provide resources to the Schools and departments for inservice programs to implement strategies to improve course content and instruction.
7. The members of the Task Force on Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness are to be commended for their diligence, professionalism and sustained effort in producing a report which shows breadth of perspective and depth of research on the nature and evaluation of teaching.
Report of Task Force on Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness

INTRODUCTION:

In October, 1981 the Task Force was charged by Dr. Donald Douglas to review the literature on evaluation of instruction in higher education, to review the modes of evaluation employed at Brockport, and to extract from our study recommendations for implementing "accurate, reliable, fair, flexible and manageable teaching evaluation methods that will serve two purposes:

a. assist individuals to improve teaching;

b. assist departments, faculty committees, and deans to assess and weigh teaching in personnel actions."

The primary task undertaken during the 1981-82 academic year was to perform a careful and thorough review of the relevant published literature and to correspond with other institutions that were actively seeking improvements in their own methods for rewarding effective instruction. Four recent review documents have been identified which reflect an analysis of the "state of the art" consistent with what the task force discovered:

1. Jason Millman, Handbook of Teacher Evaluation, Sage, Beverly Hills, 1981. (Published in cooperation with the National Council on Measurement in Education)


SUMMARY (in a nutshell)

The focus of attention, in the literature as well as in practice, has been on student evaluation of instruction. Student evaluation instruments have provided data that are easy to collect, easy to quantify, and (from a researcher's point of view) easy to study. "Base" is not a salient characteristic of other alternatives, so few options have been broadly explored. While student evaluations have been shown to be a reliable, valuable source of data, they are not (nor should they be) the sole source of data regarding effectiveness of instruction. As dissatisfaction with an over-emphasis on student evaluation has increased, other viable sources of information have begun to emerge.

Perhaps as important as a broader base for instructional evaluation is the recognition that any data are only a source for evaluation, they are NOT an evaluation. Evaluation occurs only when data are interpreted. This distinction may seem trivial, but its implications for what we do when we evaluate are important:

1. When the purpose of evaluation is to improve instruction, substantial improvement is demonstrated when someone with skill in interpreting data aids in the process. Although ability to understand the information may contribute to this phenomenon, the increased investment of energy and focusing of development activity resulting from consultation may be equally important. Whatever the reason, data collection is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for improvement of instruction.

2. When the purpose of evaluation is to provide reasoned attention to instruction in personnel decisions, the critical power in evaluation lies in the careful interpretation of relevant data and in the preparation of the summary report. The further the decision-maker is from the source data, the more important the focus provided by a summary becomes. The summary provides clues to the "truth buried in the data" that may or may not be discovered without the summary. Although a glowing summary cannot completely mask negative data, a poorly executed summary can greatly weaken a potentially positive case.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of the task force has been to identify accurate, reliable, fair, flexible and manageable teaching evaluation methods that will serve two purposes:

1. assist individuals to improve their teaching;

2. assist faculty and departments in developing and presenting the strongest possible cases in support of instructional contributions. (There might change in emphasis from the change to the task force. The task force believes that the best means for improving instruction and improving administrative decisions relating to rewarding effective instruction is to focus as much as possible on the many positive aspects of instruction at Brockport.)

The task force recommends action in four domains:

1. Faculty should be better informed regarding available services to assist them in improving instruction, and the development of additional services should be encouraged.

2. The base of data used to assess teaching should be broadened to reduce what is clearly an over-emphasis on student questionnaires.

3. A format to assist faculty and departments in interpreting this broader range of data should be provided.

4. The existing Instructional Assessment System for collecting student evaluations is fundamentally equivalent to most other major student evaluation forms used around the country. However, there are some revisions in format and implementation procedures that should improve the quality of data provided.

1. Support Services: Evaluation of teaching effectiveness more often leads to actual improvement of instruction when instructional consultation and support services are coordinated with evaluation. At present, the Educational Communication Center offers consulting services for evaluation analysis and instructional development. In addition, in recent years there have been a variety of workshops and seminars relating to developing and improving instructional skills. There is a fund of largely untapped resources in the leaders of Chancellor's Awards for Excellence in Teaching that perhaps could be applied to improving instruction.

1.A. The college should continue to offer a variety of instructional consultation services and provide workshops and seminars to stimulate continued growth in instructional skills.
1.B. The college should develop a means of publicizing the availability of these resources and of focusing attention on instructional improvement (perhaps through some reincarnation of the Faculty Teaching Exchange).

1.C. The college should offer additional workshops and seminars on topics related to instruction and related to effective use of evaluation data.

2. Broadened Data Base: The fairest and most practical means of broadening the data base for documenting instructional contributions is the collection of an instructional dossier. Although many of the contents of the dossier are not unusual in academia, faculty do not often have all these materials in one place when needed. When documentation is necessitated, a mad scramble often ensues. Much of the hassle (and hustle) of documenting effective instruction could be eliminated if materials were routinely placed in an instructional dossier when those materials are most available.

2.A. Each department (or instructor) should be responsible for keeping a current instructional dossier of materials for each faculty member.

The actual contents of dossier will vary from department to department. Differences in content among individual dossiers should reflect differences in the characteristics of courses taught and in the instructional objectives unique to varying instructional styles. While it is crucial to adapt dossier contents to the particular needs of individual instructors, a reasonable set of categories can guide the construction of dossiers.

2.B. The dossier should contain the following kinds of documents (as appropriate). Individual departments should be encouraged to add to or delete from the list in order to reflect special instructional situations.

i. Course materials
   a. course outlines
   b. syllabus
   c. reading lists
   d. list of required texts
   e. study guides
   f. examinations and quizzes
   g. descriptions of non-print material (audio-visual material, computer assisted instruction, etc.)
   h. problem sets
   i. assignments
   j. handouts
   k. case studies
   l. simulations
Task Force Report

ii. Evidence of efforts to improve instruction.
   a. workshops attended
   b. participation in instructional development projects
   c. participation in curriculum review and/or revision
   d. description of strategy or plan for improving instruction

iii. Student evaluation data
   a. results from student questionnaires (note section 4 of recommendations)
   b. comments from students (including description of method used to obtain them)
   c. results from student interview by review committee or consultant

iv. Self evaluations
   a. statement of course goals or objectives
   b. statement of teaching philosophy
   c. description of learning environment sought
   d. description and explanation of new approaches tried and assessment of the success of efforts

A word about self evaluations is in order. Self-satisfaction is not likely to assist either the individual or those who must review the dossier documents. On the other hand, a clear statement of the individual's instructional objectives and a summary of evidence relating to those objectives has proven very useful. Such a statement provides a fair framework within which to review other dossier documents and insight into the care with which the instructor has considered and planned instructional goals.

One source of assessment data has been intentionally omitted from the task force's list of documents. Peer observation of classroom instruction has been used in a variety of educational settings. However, the research on classroom observation suggests some serious problems when used by most department committees. In order to be a reliable measure of classroom performance, observations must be made by several observers, and each observer needs to make several separate observations. In short, classroom observation requires a large time commitment to be done reliably. It should not be done if it is not done well. It is the judgement of the task force that the costs of this evaluation method far exceed the benefits.

2.C. Departments are not encouraged to include classroom observations as a source of dossier documentation.
3. **Suggested Procedures for Departmental Review of Dossiers:** The goal of any evaluative process should be to provide fair and equitable treatment to individual faculty members. Each department has its own unique objectives, standards, and instructional approaches. Concurrently, the institution also maintains its standards and objectives. Any review process must fairly and consistently apply the standards of the institution as well as those of the department. This requires continuity on department APT committees as well as clear communication between those committees and the broader institution. Personnel recommendation stemming from “ad hoc” committees can lead to varying degrees of thoroughness and inconsistent standards in the dossier review process.

3.A. Each department should have a standing APT committee whose membership is staggered, thereby ensuring continuity from year to year. Members should be encouraged to attend training sessions offered by the institution to assist them in reviewing and evaluating dossier materials and in preparing review reports.

3.B. Each department should develop a system of dossier review which assures each faculty member that the dossier material and the review process will be thorough, consistent, and appropriate to both departmental and institutional standards and objectives.

3.C. The task force suggests the dossier review worksheet presented on pages 7 and 8 as an appropriate guide for department review procedures. This format is a modification of a form that has been widely cited since its development at the University of Pittsburgh.

The purpose of the departmental dossier review is to provide a focused description of data from a wide variety of sources. The departmental summary report is the means of transmitting this description to decision-makers who neither as familiar with the data as the department committee nor have the time for extensive review of that data.

3.D. A concise summary report is the end product of the departmental review process. The goal of the report is to fairly and accurately describe an instructor's contributions in a form that facilitates review by those involved in the APT process outside the department.

3.E. The dossier review worksheet is intended merely to provide a framework for the summary report. Since independent APT committees will use numeric scales quite differently, attempts to compare quantitative worksheet judgments among departments would be dangerously misleading.
WORKSHEET FOR PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING BASED ON DOWSIER MATERIALS  
(this form is not intended to be all-inclusive, and some suggested dossier materials may not be applicable in all cases)  

1. HOW KNOWLEDGEABLE IS THIS FACULTY MEMBER IN SUBJECTS TAUGHT?  

Suggested Dossier Materials  
- Evidence in Teaching Materials  
- Record of Attendance at Regional or National Meetings  
- Record of Colloquia or Lectures  
- Given, Published Works, Consultations and Invitations Related to Teaching  
- Record of Additional Education  

Suggested Focus in Examining Dossier Materials  
- Has the instructor kept in thoughtful contact with developments in his or her field?  
- Is the faculty member sought as a resource in content area by students and peers?  

Peer Reviewer's Rating:  Low----/-------,/------/-------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/------/-----
3. WHAT KIND OF TASKS WERE SET BY THE TEACHER FOR THE STUDENTS (OR DID THE TEACHER SUCCEED IN GETTING STUDENTS TO SET FOR THEMSELVES), AND HOW DID THE STUDENT PERFORM?

**Suggested Dossier Materials**
- Statement of Evaluation Criteria
- Copies of Graded Exams
- Examples of graded research papers/term papers
- Examples of teacher’s feedback
- Descriptions of Student Performances; e.g., class presentation, etc.
- Description of Activities in Supervising Students in the Field
- Examples of Completed Assignments
- Grade Distributions

**Suggested Focus in Examining Dossier Materials**
- Was the level of performance required an achievement appropriate for the course?
- Was an appropriate quality of work given, A? B? C?, etc.
- Are student tasks consistent with the course expectations?
- Was adequate constructive feedback provided, etc.
- How adequately do tests or assignments represent the kinds of student performance specified in the course objectives?

Peer Reviewer’s Rating: Low--------/--------/--------/--------/-------- Very High

Comments:

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4. HAS THIS FACULTY MEMBER ASSUMED RESPONSIBILITIES RELATED TO THE DEPARTMENT’S TEACHING MISSION?

**Suggested Dossier Materials**
- Record of Service on Department or College Curriculum Committee, Honors Program, Advising Board of Teaching
- Evidence of Involvement in Student Advisement
- Statement of what activities the faculty member has engaged in to improve his or her teaching
- Description of Activities in a Field Setting (other than supervising students)

**Suggested Focus in Examining Dossier Materials**
- Does this faculty member take an active role in the improvement of instruction in the department?
- Has the instructor demonstrated a willingness to direct efforts toward the improvement of the department or college?
- Does the faculty member accept responsibility for instructing an appropriate number of students?
- Has he or she sought feedback about teaching quality, explored alternative teaching methods, made changes to increase student learning?

Peer Reviewer’s Rating: Low--------/--------/--------/--------/-------- Very High

Comments:
Using dossier material for various types of evaluations calls for differing approaches to the review process. For example, use of a dossier for DSI recommendations may only involve its availability to the committee as documentation in support of the faculty member's annual report. The recommendation, in turn, would be based upon the annual report. On the other hand, review for tenure and promotion decisions requires extensive analysis of the cumulative data contained in the dossier.

3.F. Any system of dossier review should take into account the various reasons for review, recognizing that tenure or promotional reviews should involve more extensive analysis than other recommendations. Extensive analysis of an individual's materials should attempt to identify a consistent pattern based upon several years of data, and a more in-depth analysis than might be performed annually.

4. Student Evaluation of Instruction: Multiple-choice student questionnaires have been the most widely used and extensively investigated form of student evaluation of instruction. However, they allow only a limited range of student responses. While other forms of feedback from students are also desirable (particularly for diagnostic purposes), care must be taken so that students feel they can be candid without affecting their grades. Likewise, when data are collected in support of personnel decisions, data collection procedures must minimize any potential biasing effects.

One non-questionnaire means for collecting student feedback is the Small Group Instruction Diagnosis. This method employs a facilitator to lead a class discussion structured so as to solicit information about the course and potential improvements. Later, the facilitator discusses the evaluation with the instructor and may assist in devising a plan to experiment with alternative instructional strategies.

4.A. Student questionnaires should provide a space for written comments so that instructors can more easily collect open-ended data. The student comments would be returned to instructors with their questionnaire results after the semester grades have been submitted.

4.B. Assistance should be provided to departments that wish to develop additional means for collecting student feedback (such as student interviews or Small Group Instructional Diagnosis).

Since successful use of student evaluation data as a tool for improving instruction is largely dependent upon assistance in interpreting that data, the task force recommends the following:

4.C. The college should develop a means for presenting course evaluation data which can be more easily interpreted. Faculty also should be encouraged to seek available help in reviewing that data.
Global items ("The course as a whole was:") are more reliable and their content is more appropriate for use in personnel matters than are the diagnostic items ("Clarity of instructor's voice was:"). Diagnostic items are designed explicitly as feedback to instructors to aid in developing strategies for improvement.

4.D. The dossier should contain only data from global items (I.A.S. questions 1-4). If particular diagnostic item data are needed to explain anomalies in the global data, those items might be cited in the instructor's self-evaluation.

4.E. A short form of the Instructional Assessment System should be developed that contains only the 4 global items. Instructors can then have the option of using one of the conventional long forms, or employing the short form with or without their own diagnostic items.

There is evidence that students who fill out forms in all of their classes tire of the task and take it less seriously. Consequently, the task force does not recommend that student questionnaires be administered in every course every semester. On the other hand, research on the generalizability of results indicates that results from at least 5 courses are needed to provide a reasonable base for personnel judgments.

4.F. New faculty and those who anticipate needing a complete dossier for personnel decisions should establish a program of data collection well before the semester in which the results are needed.

4.G. Departments should develop a means for rotating the courses in which student feedback is collected during any given term in order to avoid overuse of questionnaires.

When class size falls below 10-15 students, the reliability of the results for any individual class is marginal. This statistical problem can be minimized by comparing results from several similar courses offered by the same instructor (either during a semester or across semesters.)

4.H. Instructors with small classes should be encouraged to group the results from several similar courses together in order to demonstrate consistency in the results.
Although evidence of abuse in the administration of student questionnaires has been almost non-existent, the potential effects of abuse on any individual's results could contribute biases that undermine the credibility of the assessment process.

4.1. Departments should strive to create more uniform conditions for the administration and handling of student evaluation forms. Procedures should include:

a. administration of questionnaires by a peer or a student who will be responsible for giving directions to students, collecting completed forms, and returning forms in a sealed envelope to the appropriate office for processing.

b. use of a standardized set of instructions.