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Redesigning Teaching Evaluations to Support Professional Development for Faculty at Harper College

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Example Best Practices to Support Non-Tenure-Track Faculty

✓ Faculty Evaluation

✓ Union Collaboration

✓ Instructional Resources

✓ Professional Development

✓ Intentional and Principled Reforms

✓ Reflective Assessment of Reforms

In 2014, Harper College embarked on a process of reflecting on and redesigning the evaluation process for non-tenure-track faculty (NTTF). The efforts began when the college's Center for Adjunct Faculty Engagement (CAFE), created to standardize and improve adjunct faculty teaching evaluations and provide access to better professional development opportunities, learned from NTTF that the classroom observation portion of faculty teaching evaluations may not be contributing to professional growth. To faculty, these observations often felt transactional, in part because the administrators who conducted the classroom observations often did not have content expertise in the disciplines of the non-tenure-track faculty they were evaluating. Further, the vast majority of non-tenure-track faculty were rated as proficient or excellent in the evaluations. This limited the impact of the faculty evaluation process, counter to the center's goal of providing professional development to NTTF.

Thus, the college folded the functions of CAFE into a new center, the Academy for Teaching Excellence — and created a new, innovative evaluation process that gave NTTF more tailored opportunities for professional development.

Updated Evaluation and Professional Development System

To improve its evaluation system, Harper College updated the way classroom observations were conducted to make them more effective and relevant to non-tenure-track faculty. In addition, faculty were given two alternative options to the traditional classroom observation — a goal-based self-evaluation or a reverse peer observation. Today, non-tenure-track faculty can choose from these three different options, outlined below.

Goal-Based Self-Evaluation: With goal-based self-evaluation, non-tenure-track faculty have the opportunity to identify a goal for their evaluation. For example, faculty might set a goal to pursue a specific pedagogical approach to engage students. Once the goal is selected, the evaluation is conducted in alignment with this goal. Faculty submit a planning document and meet with an instructional designer at the start of the semester to finalize goals and discuss strategies and resources

for achieving it. Professional development opportunities and suggested goal topics are provided on the evaluation sign-up webpage to inspire faculty. Non-tenure-track faculty then submit a final report and any artifacts they may have generated during the implementation of their new pedagogical practice, including lesson plans, assignments, student work samples or surveys. Ultimately, this work is shared with the appropriate academic dean and department chair.

Reverse peer observation: With reverse peer observation, NTTF have the opportunity to observe another faculty member's class and meet with the faculty member to learn more about the practices they observed. The faculty then submit a short reflection indicating how the experience may influence changes in their own practice and what support or resources from the Academy for Teaching Excellence may support implementing the new practices. The non-tenure-track faculty member then meets with an instructional designer to discuss the experience and potential professional development or change implementation opportunities that have emerged as a result of the observation process. The reverse peer observation option offers NTTF a menu of observation opportunities that all faculty have the chance to volunteer to provide. Additionally, it dedicates time so that non-tenure-track faculty, who seldom get to observe other instructors due to their demanding schedules, are able to do so in a way that is convenient for them. For further convenience, reverse peer observation is coordinated using an online system.

Traditional classroom observation: The traditional classroom observation still remains a choice for adjunct faculty, but the option has been modified to make it more effective based on feedback from non-tenure-track faculty. First, department chairs, rather than administrators, now conduct the observations, so the evaluators have more knowledge of the discipline in which the faculty member is teaching. The change also moves the evaluative function out of the Academy for Teaching Excellence, better aligning the center with its purpose of providing support and professional development. Instead, the center now provides teaching consultations to non-tenure-track faculty who wish to have them, either before or after the evaluation per the faculty member's preference.

Following Guiding Principles

Harper College established the following three guiding principles in designing the new non-tenure-track faculty evaluation system and options:

Inclusiveness: Harper College wanted the faculty development efforts to be fully inclusive of NTTF. This meant designing an equitable process for non-tenure-track faculty evaluation, which required a focus on the unique needs of non-tenure-track faculty. Thus non-tenure-track faculty were solicited for input in their process of establishing new practices, and non-tenure-track leadership formed a key dimension of the process.

Intentionality: Harper College maintained a sense of intentionality while establishing new practices by placing at the three center of its efforts the goal of continuous faculty improvement and the implementation of new faculty improvement programs. This meant linking strategic goals to faculty development and ensuring that faculty development programs and services were designed to encourage rapid prototyping, classroom implementation, assessment and dissemination.

Integration: Harper College wanted the new faculty development efforts to be integrated with critical teaching and learning processes. Integration moves faculty development efforts from the periphery to the center of change management and critical processes related to teaching and learning. Every institution has processes and procedures that compel faculty to engage with the institution in some way. These processes may be leveraged to embed relevant and meaningful learning opportunities and experiences for faculty that lead to change and improvement in practice.

Non-Tenure Track Faculty Union Collaboration

The alternative evaluation options were developed in collaboration with the non-tenure-track faculty union through the collective bargaining process. The changes were implemented at scale on a pilot basis in fall 2014. Ultimately, the evaluation process was memorialized in the 2017-2021 adjunct faculty contract.

Assessment of the Use of New Evaluation System and the Impact of the New Evaluation Systems on Classroom Practice

Harper College tracked non-tenure-track faculty's choice of evaluation methods from fall 2014 through fall 2016 to evaluate faculty preference and perception of efficacy. During this time, adjunct faculty selected the reverse peer observation at a steadily increasing rate each semester. In fall 2016, 32 percent of adjunct faculty chose this option, compared with 55 percent by fall 2016. This coincided with a decreased selection of the classroom observation option, which went from 46 percent down to 23 percent. Faculty who chose an alternative evaluation option stuck with the alternative option during their next evaluation at a rate of 97 percent, compared to 45 percent who chose the traditional classroom observation option. In examining impact, Harper College found that faculty choosing the alternative evaluation options implemented new classroom practices at rates roughly 30 percent higher than those who chose the classroom observation option.

Learn more about the Harper College Academy for Teaching Excellence at **harper-academy.net**.

Visit The Delphi Project on the Changing Faculty and Student Success for more example practices and a wide range of resources and toolkits to better support faculty off the tenure track at: **pullias.usc.edu/delphi**.

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