TO: Primary Unit Evaluation Committees (PUEC)  
FROM: Todd T. Gleeson, Associate Vice Chancellor for Faculty Affairs  
RE: Ten Ideas for Satisfying "Multiple Measures of Teaching"  
DATE: October 1998; Updated as Dean, 24 March 2010 to reflect changes in the definition of confidential letters

The Vice Chancellor's Advisory Committee (VCAC) requires that dossiers for individuals undergoing a comprehensive reappointment, tenure, or promotion review contain multiple measures of teaching above and beyond the FCQ documentation. The purpose of this document is to provide ideas for satisfying this requirement to evaluation committees and faculty approaching a personnel review or promotion.

There are several ways that teaching effectiveness can be evaluated. Listed below are several that I have seen recently as Chair of VCAC. Each suggestion is accompanied by commentary, cautions, or instructions. The expressed opinions are my own. But first,

**Two Facts and One Observation**

Fact: Every faculty member under review has legal access to any evaluation of him or her written by another faculty member or administrator. There is no such thing as a "Confidential Memorandum" with regards to an evaluation of a colleague's teaching. Authors should understand that any report or evaluation submitted to the dossier may be read and copied by the colleague under review. The ONLY exceptions to this fact are "external letters" - defined as those letters written by experts in the discipline outside the University of Colorado, and letters written by students (graduate or undergraduate) currently enrolled at the University.

Observation: A strong case for excellent teaching is hard to make when only a single course or a single semester's teaching is evaluated. Evaluating only the course or courses being taught in the semester in which the review occurs reflects poorly on the primary unit and may put the candidate's promotion or tenure at risk unnecessarily. A colleague's best teaching may not occur coincidentally in the semester they are under review. Most faculty teach a variety of courses. A thorough evaluation of teaching attempts to sample and analyze the suite of teaching activities.

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1. Peer Evaluation of Classroom Instruction. This is the most common form of assessment tool VCAC members see in a dossier. Peer evaluation usually involves a
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senior colleague or colleagues attending one or more lectures, and writing a review of lecture skills, use of visual aids or technology, and any other pertinent aspects of the instructional activity. These visitations may be pre-announced or not. Peer evaluations are most effective when they involve multiple courses and multiple evaluators so that common trends and common impressions can be identified.

2. **Student Letters Solicited in an Unbiased Manner.** Student letters are frequently found as a component in personnel dossiers. Unbiased solicitation may involve asking all students in a class or classes to write, or it may involve writing every Nth student on a course roster and asking for comment. The method of solicitation should always be described as part of the dossier, and a copy of the solicitation letter should be included if one was used.

3. **Other Student Letters.** Faculty under review often contribute letters and email to their dossier that they have received from students. This is fine. These letters should be identified as contributed by the colleague under review. My personal opinion is that these letters have positive impact on a case only in unusual circumstances, but they do no real harm, either.

4. **Classroom Interviews.** Gaining in popularity and my personal favorite assessment tool. This is an idea pirated from the FTEP, where they use it as an assessment-training tool. I find it effective because it provides a good synthesis of faculty perspective and student opinion, it filters out vindictive or irresponsible responses sometimes seen in anonymous FCQ results, yet it protects the confidentiality of students. A model of a class interview might be as follows:

   a. A faculty interviewer (or team of interviewers) arranges to use the last 15-20 min. of a candidate’s class period for purposes of an evaluation. At the appointed time the interviewer arrives and the faculty member under review is excused.

   b. The interviewer explains the purpose of his/her visit. Depending upon the size of the class, the interviewer divides the class into several groups of 5 or more students. Groups of less than four may be problematic.

   c. Each group is asked to discuss and reach consensus on two or three questions: These questions might include

      i. "What is the most effective aspect of Professor X’s teaching?"

      ii. "How can Professor X most improve his/her teaching?"

      iii. "How would you rate Professor X’s interest in helping students to learn?"

   d. After several minutes of free discussion within each group, groups are asked to report their answer to each question. Only answers supported by the entire group can be reported out of the group. These responses are placed upon an overhead or board so that all members of the class can see all answers.

   e. If time allows, the interviewer may elect to lead a discussion or ask for clarification regarding group answers.
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f. The interview is concluded by asking all members of the class to vote on their favorite answer (of those listed on the board or overhead) to each question asked. Votes are recorded.

g. The interviewer then submits a written report based upon the interview in which the questions asked, the group answers, and the rank order or vote on each answer is reported.

5. Student Interviews. A variation of the classroom interview method described above can be used to interview groups of graduate students or undergraduate students. This method similarly protects the confidentiality of students. Student interviews should probably be conducted in the presence of more than one interviewer so as to protect the interviewer from accusations of putting any particular "spin" on the discussion.

6. Committee Assessment of a Teaching Portfolio. The colleague under review may submit a portfolio of their teaching activities for review by the PUEC, or by a separate committee, who in turn writes an evaluative report to the dossier. The Teaching Portfolio could include any items felt to be relevant by the candidate or the evaluation committee. Common materials are sample syllabi, sample exams or quizzes, sample graded essays or term papers, student projects, Web-based or other materials developed for courses, textbooks written, abstracts of student theses, dissertations, or honors projects, or summaries of individualized instruction of students. My personal opinion is that this use of portfolios is under-utilized.

7. Direct Submission of a Portfolio to the Dossier. A faculty member under review may also elect to submit a portfolio of teaching activities directly to the dossier. Candidates are strongly encouraged to be highly selective and concise in what is included in the dossier. Only the most representative examples should be included. Candidates who overwhelm the dossier with portfolio material have the same effect on review committees that students who submit 40 page term papers have on instructors who made 15 page assignments. Candidates whose portfolios are large and not subject to abbreviation should utilize option 6 above, instead.

8. External Review of a Teaching Portfolio. At least one college is experimenting with sending portfolio materials out to external reviewers and asking them to comment on quality of instruction as evidenced by the portfolio. Whether this is received as a good idea or as an abuse of external reviewers has yet to be determined, but it is an idea at least worth considering. Such reports from external reviewers would be held as confidential.

9. Assessment of Non-classroom Teaching. Don't forget that an important aspect of teaching at the University of Colorado, Boulder is graduate mentoring and individualized student instruction. This type of instruction is rarely represented in FCQ summaries. Documentation of accomplishment in this type of teaching is often a hallmark of a case for excellence in teaching. Do not overlook evaluation of this aspect of a faculty member's teaching obligation.

10. The Back of the FCQ Form. The handwritten commentary on the back of the FCQ form is generally considered to be a confidential communiqué between the student and the faculty member. Occasionally a faculty member will wish to include these
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comments. He or she may do so, of course, but all the comments for a particular course should be included for this strategy to have any credibility. My own experience is that roughly one-half of the FCQs from large courses are blank, and to submit blank forms to the dossier in order to demonstrate that no selection has taken place wastes dossier space. My recommendation is that all the forms from a course (blanks and written forms) be submitted to a member or committee of the PUEC, who in turn certifies that all the forms were submitted. The blanks can then be set aside and the forms with written comment can either be submitted to the dossier, or more appropriately, abstracted and analyzed by a committee from within the department and their report submitted to the dossier.

11. Other Measures. The list above is not an exclusive list. VCAC accepts any other legitimate method of teaching assessment, defined by the college/school, primary unit, or by the candidate to fit the unique nature of the teaching activities that are represented in the dossier.