

# Teaching Assessment at UWT

Report of the Teaching Evaluation Campus  
Fellows

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# Outline of this Presentation

Campus Fellows Charge and Work Timeline

Background: Prior Efforts, Current Efforts, UWT Context

3 Types of Assessment

Student Ratings

- Current practices, best practices, recommendations

Peer Review of Teaching

- Current practices, best practices, recommendations

Self-Assessment

- Current practices, best practices, recommendations

Conclusion

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# Charge from UWT Faculty Assembly Chair

“Teaching assessment is important to ensuring the quality of teaching on campus, as well as providing appropriate metrics for use in promotion and tenure decisions.”

“Faculty Fellows shall research best practices in teaching evaluation and develop a specific action plan of policies and procedures for improving teaching assessment at UWT”

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# Work of this Faculty Fellows group

- Began in fall 2014, chaired by Dr. Sushil Oswal.
- Met monthly to discuss assessment in our units and best practices from the literature on teaching assessment.
- Winter 2015 prepared telephone survey questionnaire for UWT unit chairs.
- Spring 2015 student worker implemented the survey. Drafted online survey for all UWT instructors.
- Fall 2015 chaired by Dr. Tom Koontz (Dr. Oswal on sabbatical). Finalized and implemented online survey
- Winter 2016 began drafting report based on survey results and best practices literature.
- Spring 2016 finished report.

# Prior Efforts to Improve Assessment

- 2005-2006 UWT Teaching and Learning Roundtable led a pilot project to explore “alternative pathways” to evaluate student learning and faculty teaching
- Assessment workshops trained the 10 participating UWT faculty in the use of four tools: New assessment tools, peer review, self-reflection, portfolios
- However, UWT did not implement this comprehensive program of faculty evaluation

# Current Efforts Related to Teaching Assessment

- UWT Strategic planning includes goals of fostering student success and aligning tenure & promotion criteria with mission
- UWT High Impact Practices work group (promoting HIPs requires assessment beyond student ratings)
- UW Center for Teaching and Learning (Seattle) developing best practices guide to assess teaching for promotion and tenure decisions



# The UWT Context

- The commonly used student rating instrument was developed for UW Seattle students.
- UWT has an urban-serving mission catering to underserved student populations from a diversity of backgrounds who face different learning challenges than UW Seattle students.
- Faculty at UWT have considerably higher course load than UW Seattle.
- Over half of the courses on UWT are taught by lecturers

# Attitudes Toward Teaching Improvement

UWT faculty survey, 101 respondents

Q: Overall, how important is it to you to improve your teaching?  
(scale: 1-not at all important to 5-extremely important)

91% indicated 4 or 5

Q: How much of a barrier are the following items to improving your teaching (scale: 0-not a barrier to 4-very much a barrier)

Barrier	% indicating 3 or 4
Other obligations crowd out time to improve teaching	59%
Teaching load (number of courses taught) is too big	47%
Class sizes (number of students) are too big	36%
Lack of rewards/recognition for improving my teaching	32%
Lack of opportunities to participate in events to improve my teaching	23%
Lack of information about how to improve teaching	20%
Lack of interest on my part in improving teaching	3%

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# Assessment Type: Student Ratings

- Current Practices at UWT
  - Most units require every course to be evaluated by students, although this is more than required by the faculty code
  - All units use the IAS instrument. 1/3 of faculty use additional instruments.
  - Half of instructors deliver the instrument online, half on paper
  - For improving their teaching, 70% of survey respondents reported using numerical data, and 93% use the free-form comments
  - 46 % of survey respondents perceive student evaluations account for at least 50% of the teaching criteria for tenure and promotion.
  - 47 % of survey respondents perceive student evaluations account for at least 50% of the teaching criteria for annual/merit review
  - On a scale from 0 (not effective) to 4 (very effective), 29 % rated the numerical student ratings above the midpoint of the scale (3 or 4)
  - Open ended comments most frequently mentioned: too much emphasis on numerical data, inappropriate use of data in P & T review, lack of transparency in what the data will be used for

# Assessment Type: Student Ratings

- Best Practices from the Literature
  - Student ratings can be useful as one part of suite of assessment, but should not be the sole focus
  - Student ratings are influenced by instructor's gender, race, ethnicity, and disability; also by course delivery method and evaluation delivery method (paper vs. online)
  - As with any assessment tool, the uses to which the data are put should be clear and transparent.

# Assessment Type: Student Ratings

- Recommendations
  - Continue to allow paper and online format for student ratings
  - Be transparent about how the numerical forms and the free-form sheets will be used
  - Do not rely primarily on student ratings to assess teaching
  - Use student ratings data with the caveat that format, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, and country of origin affect student rating.
  - Use student ratings data with the caveat that innovative practices that represent a departure from traditional teaching methods may encounter student resistance and affect student ratings.

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# Assessment Type: Peer Review

- Current Practices at UWT
  - UW Faculty Code Section 24-57 Part A requires a “collegial evaluation of teaching effectiveness” but is silent on how to do this
  - For most units, there is no formalization of how to do PRT
  - Frequency: 46% of survey respondents reported being peer reviewed at least annually, 23 % at least biannually
  - On a scale from 0 (not effective) to 4 (very effective), 46 % rated PRT above the midpoint of the scale (3 or 4)
  - 18 % of survey respondents perceive PRT accounts for at least 50% of the teaching criteria for tenure & promotion, and for annual/merit review.
  - Open ended comments most frequently mentioned: should develop formal processes based on evidence-based practices, have peer reviews done more regularly, have peer reviews foster constructive feedback among colleagues to improve teaching, reward faculty who provide thoughtful peer reviews
  - Most common PRT practices and their perceived usefulness . . .



# Frequency and Usefulness of Various Peer Review Practices

Practice	% of respondents using practice	% of respondents rating practice above midpoint of scale from Not Helpful to Very Helpful
Met with me before the review to talk about my teaching	47 %	70 %
Observed one or part of one class session	93	86
<b>Observed more than one class session</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Used a rubric to guide the class observation</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Talked with students in the course</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>75</b>
Reviewed my course syllabus	78	67
Reviewed my course handouts, assignments, tests, etc.	60	77
<b>Reviewed my grading/feedback to students</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>72</b>
Met with me after the review to talk about my teaching	69	91
Provided me or my supervisor/unit chair a letter of Evaluation	90	87
<b>Provided me or my supervisor/unit chair other kinds of written feedback</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>81</b>

# Assessment Type: Peer Review

- Best Practices from the Literature
  - Peer Review of Teaching (PRT) can help assess dynamics of teacher-student interactions, and course design
  - Assessing pedagogy does not require content expertise
  - Teaching materials + classroom observations should be included
  - Training and protocols are needed to provide reliable data
  - “unstructured observations by untrained observers are too often used to assess faculty teaching effectiveness, resulting in inconsistency, lack of specificity about what practices or incidents are considered important, and charges of subjectivity” (AAAS 2013)
  - Effective peer review must be situated within a comprehensive system of teaching assessment. Developing such a system requires leadership at the dept, college, and institutional level. It will require sustained conversations and resources (Chism 1999).

# Assessment Type: Peer Review

- Recommendations
  - Units should engage faculty in developing protocols for peer review of teaching
    - Who will conduct the peer review
    - Which course components will be included
      - Increase components exhibiting low frequency and high usefulness
    - How the peer review will be conducted
    - What it will be used for
    - Also how to free up resources and reward faculty for doing PRT
      - E.g., course buyout for a faculty member to conduct multiple PRTs
      - E.g., count literature-based PRT feedback as scholarship of teaching akin to reviewing a journal article or book

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# Assessment Type: Self-Assessment

- Current Practices at UWT
  - UW Faculty Code Section 24-57, Subsection on Yearly Activity Report: “each faculty member will have the opportunity to provide information on professional activities carried out during the prior year. ... and shall be used as reference and as a source of information for consideration of promotion, merit salary, or tenure”
  - Across campus there is substantial confusion and inconsistency related to the use and purpose of teaching self-assessment
  - On a scale from 0 (not effective) to 4 (very effective), 25 % rated self-assessment above the midpoint of the scale (3 or 4)
  - 3 % of survey respondents perceive self-assessments account for at least 50% of the teaching criteria for tenure & promotion, and for annual/merit review. 59 % perceive self-assessments carry no weight in T & P decisions, 75 % perceive no weight in annual/merit review

# Assessment Type: Self-Assessment

- Best Practices from the Literature
  - Self-assessment, in conjunction with other sources, improves the faculty review and teaching assessment process
  - Self-assessment can take a variety of forms
    - Compare student ratings to faculty self-ratings on same items, and reflect on differences
    - Teaching portfolio including description of teaching responsibilities; teaching philosophy; evidence of excellence; and artifacts such as course material and samples of student work
  - It is important to be clear about the uses of self-assessment, whether formative or summative

# Assessment Type: Self-Assessment

- Recommendations
  - Define teaching excellence and student success
  - Support and encourage effective teaching
  - Promote use of self-assessment along with student evaluations and peer review as a holistic approach to teaching assessment
  - Recognize the centrality of assessing and promoting effective teaching to the UWT urban serving mission
  - All instructors should include a teaching self-assessment in their annual activities report

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# Concluding Recommendations

- Each unit should review its teaching assessment guidelines to ensure that they match best practices for student, peer, and self assessment as described in this report and the UW best practices document (Beth Kalikoff). These guidelines should clearly identify which kinds of teaching assessment will be used for which purposes, and how much weight they will be given in merit and promotion and tenure decisions.
- Each unit should define teaching excellence for their unit
- Promoting high impact practices and other teaching innovations, and providing effective teaching assessment, require resources and the removal of barriers. This includes but is not limited to: reducing faculty teaching loads to allow time for training and provision of thorough and systematic peer review, recognizing self-assessments as a critical component in merit review and promotion and tenure decisions, and supporting the participatory development of appropriate teaching assessment systems for each teaching unit level.