Teaching Evaluation Committee
Phase II Final Report and Recommendations

Submitted by: Oren Kosansky, Diana Leonard, Dawn Odell, Julio de Paula

May 9, 2023

OVERVIEW

<u>Introduction</u>

This report from the Teaching Evaluation Committee (TEC) offers recommendations for the revision of the formal assessment of teaching at Lewis & Clark College's College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). These recommendations emerge from a lengthy process of faculty-led research, review, and feedback that began in Spring 2022.[1]

Given that teaching is at the core of the CAS mission and faculty work, our review and recommendations are necessarily informed by a variety of diverse perspectives, institutional processes, logistical considerations, and emergent teaching challenges. Every recommendation we offer directly reflects some combination of LC faculty input, exploration of practices at peer institutions, and consultation with other institutional stakeholders (students, administration, academic programs, etc.). Recognizing that there is no perfect process for evaluating teaching, our aim has been to make recommendations that are feasible and that improve the current procedures in a manner that accounts for diverse teaching contexts in which faculty operate.

The TEC was charged with refining excellence criteria and proposing a process for the formal evaluation of teaching as a component of official faculty review. This task has been taken up in an institutional context that also promotes opportunities for the formative development of teaching excellence that, for important reasons, operate scrupulously beyond the evaluative process. The TEC supports the principle of this division, while also recognizing that official faculty reviews also play an important formative function. For this reason, we have aimed to recommend procedures that are fair and transparent with respect to the stakes of retrospective performance review, while also providing opportunities for prospective teaching development.

The values of equity and inclusion, as emphasized both in the LC institutional mission and extensive faculty feedback, have guided the review process and recommendations discussed in this report. In particular, we have considered the potential and documented disproportionate negative implications that

---

[1] Reports of finding and progress during this period can be found in these documents: <u>Report on the Phase 1 Teaching Evaluation Group</u>; <u>The Teaching Evaluation Committee Interim Report (Spring 2022)</u>; <u>Teaching Evaluation Committee Report (March 7, 2023)</u>.

any given procedure can have on faculty who are subject to the structural effects of racism, sexism, ableism, and other processes of marginalization. This approach has been informed by relevant research, consultation with the Office of Equity and Inclusion, and opportunities for broad faculty input. The results include an emphasis on: 1) specific, observable practices over general commentary in order to mitigate opportunities for bias; 2) establishment of common, transparent, and supported procedures that give all faculty equal access to resources to produce the strongest possible teaching portfolio.

Summary of Recommendations

The recommendations detailed in the body of this report can be summarized as follows:

- Adopt transparent and actionable principles of teaching excellence.
- Retain as required materials in teaching evaluation portfolios:
    1) Course evaluation forms completed by students (revised).
    2) Teaching self-evaluation statement completed by faculty members.
    3) Teaching evaluation component of departmental letters normally submitted as part of existing faculty review processes.
- Add as required materials in teaching evaluation portfolios:
    1) Sampled evaluations from current and graduated students who previously participated in courses, independent studies, research projects, productions, overseas programs and other other teaching situations.
    2) Syllabi and a sample of course materials referenced in the self-evaluation statement.
- Remove the weighting of portfolio elements and eliminate the primacy of student course evaluations.
- Redesign course evaluation forms to: 1) represent principles of teaching excellence; 2) avoid patterns that disproportionately harm underrepresented faculty.
- Clarify and regularize the application of the teaching evaluation process at various stages of tenure-line and non-tenure-line faculty review.
- Consider advising as outside the scope of teaching.
- Charge the Curriculum Committee to review teaching excellence criteria and the assessment process every five years.

Principles of Teaching Excellence

Insofar as faculty are held accountable to demonstrate excellence in teaching as a pillar of official performance reviews, transparent criteria of excellence are critical to the design of teaching evaluation procedures that are valid, reliable, and equitable. The celebrated diversity of subjects, learning environments, and teaching activities in the liberal arts challenges any effort to offer a comprehensive definition of teaching excellence. Seeking an appropriate balance between common values and diverse teaching conditions, we propose that the guiding criteria of teaching excellence be expressed as *principles* rather than elements of a definition.

The TEC adopted the following principles for the purposes of designing recommendations for teaching evaluation procedures. Excellent teachers:

- Foster classroom, laboratory, field, and studio environments that are conducive to student engagement and learning.
- Promote student proficiencies in critical inquiry, including disciplinary and interdisciplinary argumentation, analysis, research, writing, creative activity.
- Consider and respond collaboratively to student concerns and needs that impact their academic success.
- Actively promote equity and inclusion through pedagogy, curricular choices, and/or mentorship.
- Engage in reflective practices, pedagogical and curricular experimentation, and ongoing professional development.

These principles reflect predominant values that emerged throughout our process of gathering input from faculty, staff and students, along with our review of available departmental statements that pertain to teaching and learning. All of the ensuing recommendations reflect consideration of their capacity to equitably provide concrete evidence of teaching demonstrates these principles.

TEACHING PORTFOLIO RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations for revising the teaching evaluation process refer to: 1) components of teaching evaluation portfolios; 2) guidelines and procedures for collecting and presenting evidence of teaching excellence; 3) guidelines for the use and interpretation of teaching portfolios and their constituent elements.

We recommend continued reliance on the currently required components of teaching evaluation portfolios, including: 1) course evaluations written by students (i.e, "student evaluations of teaching"); 2) self-evaluation narratives; 3) and departmental letters. The discussion below is informed by the aforementioned principles of teaching excellence and includes: 1) recommendations for revision of the

process, content and use of student evaluations of teaching (SETs); 2) the composition of teaching portfolios and procedures for their compilation and use.

Course Evaluations / Student Evaluations of Teaching (SETs)

Guiding SET Principles and Recommendations

Recommendations for the design, distribution and use of SETs are based on principles that reflect consideration of: faculty, student and staff feedback; practices at peer institutions; effective survey strategies.

1) Recognize the limited function that well-designed SETs can play in teaching evaluation.

Faculty feedback, educational research, and a survey of current practices at peer institutions concur on the point that overreliance on poorly designed SETs can have detrimental effects on the efficacy and fairness of the overall evaluation of teaching. Consistent concerns include the limited extent to which SETs provide valid evidence of teaching effectiveness and the significant extent to which they can contribute to patterns of systematic bias against marginalized and minoritized faculty. At the same time, there is broad recognition that SETs can be designed to mitigate, if not eliminate, these disadvantages while fulfilling a limited and specified set of functions in the teaching evaluation process. We suggest that the evaluative function of SETs is best served by avoiding comparative statistical analysis across faculty. More broadly, our recommendations for the design, implementation and use of SETs aim to address these concerns and specify a limited but important role for SETs.

2) Questions must provide direct evidence of the application of the principles of teaching excellence.

This feature is based on feedback from the Dean of Equity and Inclusion that general, summative evaluation questions (e.g. "What is your overall assessment of the instructor") are more vulnerable to bias that systematically disadvantages marginalized faculty, who can be subject to differentiated expectations and judgements. We aimed to avoid questions that promote evaluation of faculty personality that does not directly reflect teaching excellence.

3) Include opportunities to provide written feedback on all questions.

This feature follows from the above by avoiding exclusive reliance on quantitative assessment, which does not provide sufficient opportunity for more detailed consideration of observable materials, strategies, and behaviors. Furthermore, written feedback is important for developmental uses of course evaluations, for example by reinforcing specific effective strategies and identifying ineffective ones, and ensures ratings are supported by reference to observable materials, strategies, and behavior. We recommend including open-ended responses as a required field for each scaled question.

4) Include opportunities for the addition of non-scaled questions by department, programs, or course type.

Departments and programs expressed the desire to add tailored questions that address the specific curricular and pedagogical conditions in which they operate. Likewise, tailored questions may be associated with course type, such as lab and studio courses within or across a given division.

5) *SETs should include at least one question that explicitly addresses the teaching excellence principle of actively promoting equity and inclusion through pedagogy, curricular choices, and/or mentorship.*

Including at least one equity and inclusion question in SETs registers the value of this principle of teaching excellence, contributes to evidence of its achievement, and is in line with practices at our peer institutions. At the same time, we recognize that specific disciplinary, pedagogical, and curricular conditions across academic departments make the design of a universal equity and inclusion SET question problematic. For this reason, we have not included such a question in the Sample SET instrument below. We encourage further consideration of whether a universal equity and inclusion set is productive and/or whether such questions are best tailored to specific departmental forms of knowledge, pedagogy, and curriculum (see Recommendations for Implementation).

6) Students must be provided with greater clarification of the anonymity, purpose and audience of SETs.

Through conversations with student representatives, we learned that there are persistent rumors that SETs are not anonymous and their purpose is unclear. Therefore we think it is vital to clarify these issues in order to encourage more honest feedback that is in keeping with the importance of SETs to promotion and tenure.

Sample SET Questions

Reflecting these recommendations, we offer the following sample questions as a basis for redesigning the SET forms:

Sample SET Questions

Scaled Questions

1a. The syllabus described the course clearly and accurately.
    1b. Please provide concrete examples upon which your assessment is based.
2a. The course expanded my knowledge, understanding, and/or skills.
    2b. Please provide concrete examples upon which your assessment is based.
3a. The instructor provided a welcoming place for asking questions and/or expressing ideas.
    3b. Please provide concrete examples upon which your assessment is based.
4a. The instructor responded collaboratively to concerns and needs that impact the academic success of students in the course.
    4b. Please provide concrete examples upon which your assessment is based.
5a. The instructor provided clear expectations for graded material.
    5b. Please provide concrete examples upon which your assessment is based.
6a. The instructor provided feedback that helped me enhance my skills and learning.
    6b. Please provide concrete examples upon which your assessment is based.
7a. The instructor was fair to and supportive of students who hold a variety of perspectives and identities.
    7b. Please provide concrete examples upon which your assessment is based.

Non-scaled Questions

8. What about the course and/or instructional methods helped to support your learning?
9. What changes to the course and/or instructional methods might have better supported your learning?
10. What did you do that supported your learning?
11. What could you have done differently to better support your learning?

Additional questions by department, program, course type

To preserve cohesion across SETs, we suggest three, and no more than five, non-scaled questions. Such questions may be especially useful with respect to specific issues related to laboratory, field, and studio courses. We encourage including at least one question that attends to equity and inclusion in the context of departmental, disciplinary or course type context, ideally in consultation with the Office of Equity & Inclusion. Scaled questions may be considered for specific departmental purposes, such as tracking trends anonymously within all sections of introductory courses or for global curricular assessment related to external program reviews.

Procedures for Administration of SETs

The following recommendations emphasize the importance of providing clear, transparent and consistent opportunities for the evaluation of teaching in all courses. Such consistency promotes equal access to SETs for all students, reduces ambiguity in the procedures, and facilitates comparability of all SETs as a measure of teaching excellence.

1) SETs should be administered in-class during the final week of the semester, with thirty minutes allotted for completion.

Administering SETs during the final week of classes supports the common experiences of faculty and students, while allowing students to reflect on the full extent of the course. In-person administration signals the importance of the procedures, increases response rates and reduces ambiguity in the procedures by providing an opportunity to offer guidance and clarify expectations. Devoting thirty minutes to the SETs supports both the evaluative and development functions of SETs by providing sufficient time for extended written responses.

2) Course syllabi should include such details as the date of administration and statement of purpose of SETs.

Inclusion of the course evaluation date in syllabi would signal the importance of the process and promote course design that allows for SET administration during the final week of classes. A statement of purpose would help to educate students about the aims, uses, and anonymity of SETs..

3) The goals of SETs, along with guidelines and expectations for their administration, should be communicated to students and faculty more clearly and regularly as follows:

• The Dean's office should provide regular opportunities for faculty to review the principles of teaching excellence, SETs, and evaluation procedures. Opportunities include: retreats, new faculty orientations, TEP events, chairs meetings.

• Instructors should be provided with suggested syllabus language regarding SET goals, guidelines, and expectations.

• Instructions for student proctors should be revised to better summarize SET goals, guidelines, and expectations. Revisions should include: 1) an explanation of the importance of providing written responses for all questions to reinforce effective strategies and identify ineffective ones. 2) a clarification that student names are never associated with responses.

• The Associated Student Body (ASB) should promote the dissemination of SET goals, guidelines, and expectations through a variety of venues (e.g., Mossy Log, NSO) and coordinate with Student Life to update the Student Handbook as needed.

<u>Guidelines for use of SETs in faculty review</u>

We recommend a more targeted and limited approach to the use SETs in the evaluation of teaching as follows:

1) Remove from the Faculty Handbook language that prioritizes SETs as the most important form of evidence regarding teaching evaluation.

2) Discontinue the compilation of statistical comparisons between faculty members.

Given a wide range of factors and variables, statistical comparisons are of limited use in the evaluation of teaching excellence. For example, the high-end compression of average scores on SET questions suggests that differences between faculty members may not be statistically significant. Moreover, the availability of numerical comparisons for the purposes of evaluation has the potential to detract from the function of course evaluations as a developmental tool by distracting attention from substantive, written student feedback.

3) Provide faculty and reviewers with guidance on the equitable use of SET statistics.

Both faculty under review and reviewers should be advised that SET question averages should be used as supporting rather than primary evidence of teaching excellence. Additional quantitative analysis (e.g., aggregation) should be discouraged in order to enhance the developmental function of SETs and facilitate interpretation that does not require special skills in statistics.

4) Allow tenure-line and faculty-with-term to exclude SETs from one course during a given review period.

In order to support pedagogical and curricular experimentation as a principle of teaching excellence, we recommend that faculty members be permitted to exclude SETs from one course, in recognition that new and revised courses, as well as other forms of pedagogical experimentation, can be associated with lower scores. All SETs would continue to be available to the Dean's Office and chairs in order to support development of teaching skills and identify pressing concerns.

5) Provide consistent guidance to chairs on the use of SETs between formal reviews.

We recommend that more substantial and consistent guidance be provided to department chairs regarding the evaluative and developmental purposes of SETs between formal review periods. We suggest that this process be managed by the Dean's Office and include the following:

> • Chairs should review SETs of pre-tenure[2] faculty members each semester. Meetings with pre-tenure faculty members should be held prior to spring break and should focus on discussion of SETs in particular and teaching in general.

> • In order to prepare for this meeting, the pre-tenure faculty member should provide a brief written reflection (perhaps submitted as a form) on three teaching practices that are working well, three areas of teaching/pedagogy that need improvement, and questions or concerns they would like to address in the meeting.

Self-Evaluation of Teaching

We recommend that the teaching portfolio continue to include a self-evaluation of teaching activities. To guide the process and give it a common structure, prompts based on the principles of teaching excellence should be provided. Self-evaluations should be both retrospective, assessing past strengths and weaknesses and prospective, charting principled and concrete plans for improvement.

Assessments should include references to course syllabi and other course materials. Numerical summaries from SETs can support self-evaluation, but should not be presented as primary evidence of teaching excellence. Additional quantitative analysis (e.g., aggregation) should be discouraged to promote the developmental function of SETs and facilitate interpretation that does not require special skills in statistics.

Syllabi and Other Supporting Course Materials

We recommend that the teaching portfolio continue to include course syllabi and other materials, such as a sample of assignments, worksheets, quizzes, exams, grading rubrics, and course proposals. Instructors should be encouraged to design syllabi and course materials that reflect established principles of teaching excellence.

All materials discussed in the self-evaluation should be included in the teaching portfolio. Guidelines should be set for appropriate quantities of these items for different types of performance reviews (tenure, promotion, periodic salary reviews.) The requirements must be conveyed by the Committee on Promotion and Tenure via the annual professional development information sessions hosted by the Dean's Office.

---

[2] Contingent faculty planning to apply for the "with term" distinction may benefit from this process.

Summary of Course Enrollments

Because course enrollments can have an impact on how teaching excellence may be demonstrated, the Dean's Office currently compiles these data for triennial salary reviews. We recommend extending this practice so that teaching portfolios include a table of enrollment data for each course taught by the faculty member during all formal review periods.

Letters From Home Department(s) and Program(s)

We recommend requiring that the teaching portfolio continue to include letters from departments and programs where the faculty member has a contractual appointment and further recommend letters from departments and programs with which faculty are associated. These letters should evaluate teaching from departmental/program perspectives and contextualize a candidate's course enrollment numbers both in terms of the pedagogical imperatives of specific courses and overall departmental course enrollments. The departmental letter should address a candidate's contributions to the department's curriculum, including innovating new courses, team-teaching and taking on teaching assignments that fall outside of the candidate's area of expertise. When appropriate, the letter should address the candidate's participation in teaching that takes place outside of the classroom, for example: research labs, supervision of internships and independent studies, and participation in studio critiques.

Evaluations from Previous Students

Several of our peer institutions solicit evaluations from current and graduated students who have previously taken courses with the faculty under tenure and promotion review. This process complements SETs by providing student perspectives on the long term value of a faculty member's instruction and the quality of their teaching. Moreover, this process can also capture current students or alumni who have worked with faculty in teaching contexts beyond the classroom, including independent studies, research projects, productions, overseas programs, etc.

We recommend developing a strategy for including opportunities for past students and alumni to contribute to tenure and promotion reviews. We recommend the following guiding principles in developing such a strategy:

- By default, letters from students and alumni will be shared anonymously with the faculty member under review. Students may be given the option to disclose their names.

- The questions asked of evaluators should be based on adopted principles of teaching excellence.

• Sampling strategies should maximize response rates and ensure wide and equitable representation of the student population. Possible sampling strategies include (i) a random sample of students that is stratified by final course grades, (ii) students chosen from required and elective courses, (iii) sampling across demographic categories, and (iv) sampling that includes both small and large classes.

Letters from Second and Fourth-year Reviews (candidates for tenure only)

We recommend that the teaching portfolio for candidates for tenure include the developmental review committee's and the dean's letters from the candidate's second- and fourth-year reviews, as well as any letters the candidate may have written in response to the dean and/or their developmental review committee.

Portfolio Equity

The recommendations above aim to balance flexibility for faculty and departments with promoting equal opportunity to present effective and comparable teaching portfolios that can be evaluated consistently in all cases. We recommend the implementation of guidelines and procedures that support a process in which faculty avail themselves of the same opportunities, work within the same constraints, and are judged based on comparable portfolios.

In this spirit, we recommend that teaching portfolios be limited to the materials specified above. Such regularization can help to mitigate against advantages that may accrue unevenly to faculty based on factors beyond their control, including those that disproportionately affect marginalized and minority colleagues. At the same time, we want to emphasize that faculty members are free and encouraged to include reference to practices, challenges, and strategies in their letters as they see fit.

We also recommend that the Committee on Promotion and Tenure (CPT) provide faculty preparing teaching portfolios with examples of self-evaluation statements and guidance on what kinds of teaching materials are typically included and effective in portfolios. For example, the CPT might share anonymized samples of self-evaluation statements, which may include combinations of sections from previous letters redacted to preserve anonymity and reflect best practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

With this report, the Teaching Evaluation Committee completes its delegated charge to:

• Foster faculty input and ownership through regular communication throughout the process of developing these recommendations
• Develop a definition of "teaching excellence" that reflects our values as an institution

- Determine what kinds of evidence should be employed to evaluate excellence (and their relative weighting)
- Determine a form and process for obtaining this evidence
- If changes are recommended, outline a timeline for implementation

In doing so, our hope is that the CAS faculty is in position to move expeditiously towards revising, approving and implementing the CAS teaching evaluation process based on our recommented principles and procedures. Towards that end, we turn to our recommendations regarding a strategy and timeline for implementation.

We recommend the formation of a Teaching Evaluation Implementation Group (TEIG) during the 2023-24 academic year. The Group should refine the recommendations in this report and involve the CAS faculty in a process that leads to their adoption. We recommend that the TEIG be composed of the following stakeholders, ideally including a junior or recently tenured faculty member, in the teaching evaluation process:

- A continuing member from the Teaching Evaluation Committee
- A representative from the Teaching Excellence Program
- A member of the Committee on Promotion and Tenure
- A student representative from ASB

We also recommend ex-officio participation, as invited, from the:

- Office of Equity and Inclusion
- Office of the Dean
- A member of the Curriculum Committee

Timeline and Tasks

In order to complete their work during the 2023-24 academic year, we recommend the following timeline and tasks be completed by the Teaching Evaluation Implementation Group. Most of these tasks expand on recommendations discussed above. Some, however, refer to possible strategies that we think are worth considering but that merit further attention before a recommendation can be made.

Fall 2023

Refine / Finalize Recommendations

- Final review and refinement of recommendations contained in the Phase II Final Report and Recommendations.

• Final design of SETs and associated procedures.

• Final recommendation on how to address equity and inclusion explicitly in the SET design. We recommend serious consideration be given to charging departments to add equity and inclusion questions that are tailored to the specific pedagogical and curricular conditions in their area of teaching. Decisions should be made regarding: 1) if/how departments should be required to add and vet equity and inclusion focused questions; 2) what forms of support (e.g., workshops with TEP and the Office of Equity and Inclusion) should be provided to departments in this work.

• Final recommendations on the procedures specified in this report as they apply to different reviews (development, tenure, promotion) and curricular domains (e.g., CORE and General Education courses).

• Final recommendations on the teaching evaluation process for adjunct, visiting faculty and faculty with term.

• In consultation with the Office of Student life and other stakeholders, consider if/how the administration of SETs provides an opportunity to educate students about their rights to report Title IX and bias relevant information.

• Consider whether letters of teaching evaluation from colleagues, beyond those submitted by departments and programs, should be an allowable or required element of teaching portfolios.[3]

---

[3] Teaching evaluation portfolios at several of our peer institutions include letters from faculty peers. Alongside departmental / program letters, such letters can allow for assessment of teaching excellence that may not be captured through other forms of evidence. One model would require or encourage letters of teaching evaluation from a relatively senior faculty and relatively junior faculty. Procedurally, the faculty under review might provide the Dean with the names of colleagues, ideally outside of their home department, who may be willing to write these letters. Letters might be guided by a series of open-ended questions that explicitly reference the principles of teaching excellence. We have some concerns with the burdens this might place especially on junior faculty.

- Consider whether selected materials from teaching evaluation portfolios should be circulated for external review in promotion and/or tenure cases.[4]

- Consult with Information Technology and the Registrar about the technical aspects of implementation.

Facilitate Faculty Approval of Recommendations and Associated Revision to Faculty Handbook

- Facilitate a faculty vote on the principles of teaching excellence.

- Coordinate with the CPT and the Office of Equity and Inclusion on draft revisions of the Faculty Handbook to include principles of teaching excellence and new procedures for teaching evaluation.

Spring 2024

Develop Supporting Materials for Faculty, Staff and Students

- Draft sample syllabus language regarding the purpose and administration of SETs.

- Draft updated language for student proctors.

- Draft procedures and guidance to chairs on annual use of SETs.

- Communicate tasks and responsibilities to all offices (e.g. Office of the Dean, Office of Equity and Inclusion), committees (e.g. CPT, Curriculum Committee) and organizations (e.g. ASB) regarding new teaching evaluation procedures.

---

[4] Several of our peer institutions include core components of teaching portfolios in external review files. This practice aligns with the distinctive value placed on teaching at liberal arts colleges and, correspondingly, offers external reviewers the opportunity to provide an overall recommendation that is attuned to an appropriate balance between teaching excellence and other promotion criteria. This procedure may be especially warranted in the case of promotion to full, as associate professors will have had time to hone their pedagogy and benefit most from external feedback. There may also be a benefit to including external review for tenure cases such that it further frames the candidate as a teacher-scholar and communicates our institutional priorities to reviewers. We have some concerns about the logical management of this procedure and the extent to which it would fulfill the desired function of providing a more contextualized reading of tenure and promotion files.

Explore Future Mechanisms for Integration of Teaching Evaluation and Development

• Consult with the Teaching Excellence Program to promote opportunities for productive integration of teaching evaluation and teaching development.

Fall 2025

• The new teaching evaluation process is launched.

• Celebration of the new teaching evaluation at a stand-alone event or rolled into the Faculty Retreat with an emphasis on the principles of teaching excellence.

Beyond Fall 2025

• Every five years: Evaluation and consideration of principles of teaching excellence, procedures for teaching evaluations, and extant SET questions.