EVIDENCE IN TEACHING

Evidence of excellence in teaching is sometimes quite elusive. In all cases it should be more than the simple accumulation of student course evaluations. The College encourages you to consider pursuing peer review of teaching performance, a formal review of a course portfolio, and peer review of student outcomes from your teaching in addition to the standard student course evaluation. Each of these activities will lead to evidence that helps document your achievement of excellence.

Course Portfolio: A course portfolio is intended to represent an intensive study of a single course. It is helpful in getting you to focus upon and externalize the process of course development, the thoroughness of materials produced, and timely assessment of performance. It is a view into the teaching activity and can be very useful to the author of a course portfolio and its reader in defining teaching excellence. The information that follows was drawn from a University of Wisconsin web site on course portfolios. You can review the information on this web site at http://www.wisc.edu/moo/cfoliof.html. An outline for a course portfolio that may prove helpful follows.

I Reflective Statement – The course portfolio should begin with a reflective discussion of the Instructor’s core beliefs about learning and teaching. For example, if you are a learning centered teacher, how do you plan to connect the content of this course with the experiences of your students? Will you augment their experience through the course? Will there be an experiment or field trip component to accomplish this experiential learning? Essentially, this is a brief written statement about your core values as a teacher and their connection to this specific course.

II Documentation – This section should include a series of entries that match the course goals and learning objectives with specific items from the course. These entries can include student assignments and results, specific lectures or presentations, classroom activities, effective classroom technique, student feedback, etc. This section should state each learning objective, describe the particular aspect of the course that translates the objective into specific activities or actions, and describes the results.

III Reflections – This section should reflect on successful efforts and areas for improvement. The result of this critical assessment could be a listing of changes or refinements that will be incorporated the next time the course is taught.

IV Appendices
A. Learning objectives
B. Any accrediting criteria met
C. Course syllabus/course manual – see Grunert, The Course Syllabus
D. Course schedule
E. Student assignments and examples
F. Assessment tools (rubrics)
Peer Observation of Classroom Instruction: Cohen and McKeachie (1980) identified ten aspects of teaching that peers are most competent to evaluate about teaching. Articles on peer evaluation of teaching suggest that all of these aspects can be used during the peer review process:

- Mastery of course content
- Selection of course content
- Course organization
- Appropriateness of course objectives
- Appropriateness of instructional materials (i.e. readings, media)
- Appropriateness of evaluative devices (i.e., exams, written assignments)
- Appropriateness of methodology used to teach specific content areas
- Commitment to teaching and concern for student learning
- Student achievement, based on performance on exams and projects
- Support of departmental instructional efforts

The process of peer observation involves faculty peers that review an instructor’s performance through classroom observation and examination of instructional materials and course design. Observations of classroom behavior are intended for reviewing the teaching process and its possible relationship to learning. The focus is on verbal and nonverbal behaviors of both the instructor and the students in the classroom.

Peer observation can produce the following evidence:

- Comments on the relationship between instructor acts and student behaviors
- Comparison with methods peers consider to be good
- Specific suggestions for instructors to improve teaching

Peer observations can be made by staff at the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching. They are a highly skilled and professional staff that can help you develop a protocol for teaching evaluation, including peer observations in the classroom.

Peer Observation of Student Outcomes: One of the teaching traditions in the College of Art and Design is the public review of student work. These student reviews frequently involve visiting critics from other institutions. When these external critics are reviewing the studio work of your students this is an excellent opportunity to solicit peer observations of student outcomes. To be effective, you must first outline your learning objectives for the work under review by the critic. After the review ask the critic to provide a written assessment.