Multiple Means of Evaluation? Identifying Best Practices with FCQ's

University of Colorado, Faculty Assembly Minorities Affairs Committee (MAC)


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Multiple Means of Evaluation? Identifying Best Practices with FCQ

The University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver), Faculty Assembly Minority Affairs Committee (MAC) is charged with making recommendations on hiring, support, and retention of diverse faculty at the university. To facilitate diverse faculty, the MAC committee focused on identifying faculty assumptions and ideas about multiple means of evaluation and best practices with FCQ's in 2014-15. The MAC Event on Multiple Means of Evaluation? Identifying Best Practices with FCQ's (Faculty and Course Questionnaire) was held on April 3, 2015. This workshop was a follow-up on last year’s MAC event, Reconsidering FCQs (http://tinyurl.com/ReconsiderFCQ), which involved quantitative analysis of FCQ data for CU Denver faculty. The results based on 18,205 courses, with a minimum of 10 students, showed that culturally diverse faculty FCQ’s were approximately 0.15-0.25 points lower on a six-point scale.

These results are consistent with research on teaching evaluations of faculty who are members of non-dominant and diverse cultural groups (Andersen & Smith, 2007; Gilroy, 2007; Reid, 2010; Smith, 2007; Smith & Hawkins, 2011). The MAC report on Reconsidering FCQs (2013-14) included recommendations to address the situation, however, it is unclear to date, if any of these recommendations have been adopted. This year, MAC members wanted to follow-up on the recommendations made by faculty and administrators at last year’s workshop to review best practices with FCQs. The workshop was designed to get input from faculty at CU Denver, to assess and incorporate their perspective on appropriate means of evaluation for
teaching, and what they think are best practices in administering FCQs, and using the data derived from this evaluation.

**Event Location and Participants**

The event was held at the Lawrence Street Center, Room 1150, and attended by 19 individuals who had preregistered for the event, and three additional participants, who came to the event, but had not preregistered; the total number of attendees was 22. Faculty, and staff, and some students from CU Denver attended the event, they represented the following academic units: Anthropology, Computer Science, Engineering and Applied Sciences, Psychology, Mathematics, School of Business, School of Education and Human Development, School of Public Affairs, Institutional Research, Office of Undergraduate Experience, and Student Government. The following members of the MAC assisted with facilitation discussion in small groups: Faye Caronan Chen, Ji Chen, Vera Gao, Farah Ibrahim, Denise Pan, and Carlos Reali.

**Workshop Focus**

All preregistered participants received sample questions to explore the issue of best practices in teaching evaluations: These included:

(a) Administering FCQs in the classroom

(a.1) How can we improve response rates (face-to-face and online courses)?

(a.2) How do you encourage students to provide constructive and positive feedback?

(a.3) Other concerns, questions?

(b) Describing FCQ scores in self-evaluations
(b.1) What aspects of FCQ report do you highlight in your self-evaluation?
(b.2) What information do you provide about the course and students?
(b.3) Other ideas?

(c) Interpreting and analyzing FCQ scores for evaluating others
   (c.1) What do you think are important factors that should be considered?
   (c.2) Is there additional training and mentoring available for evaluators at CU Denver?
   (c.3) Other suggestions?

They were also sent the following links to facilitate review of best practices nationally:

http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching-resources/document-your-teaching/student-evaluation-of-teaching/
http://www.crlt.umich.edu/evaluation/decision
http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/student-evaluations/#tips

More background information on FCQs are available at
http://library.auraria.edu/services/faculty/fcq

Results

The discussion of the three main questions generated meaningful results, although, all responses to all three questions seemed to blend together to a certain extent, although, they address different aspects of administration, self-report by faculty, and evaluation by others. Majority of the faculty attending the workshop were junior faculty hoping to achieve tenure at CU Denver, or graduate students who were teaching undergraduates and hoping to move into an academic career. The results are presented in Tables I, II, and III. The first question generated the greatest amount of input from the attendees. Several useful recommendations were provided for all three questions.
Table I: Summary Results for Question 1: Administer FCQs' in the Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improve Response Rates</th>
<th>Encourage Students to Provide Constructive Feedback</th>
<th>Other Issues</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| ▪ Require students to provide feedback  
▪ If students have a mobile device, faculty can provide time for responding to FCQ in class  
▪ Mention in the syllabus that feedback on the course, and instructor would help improve instruction  
▪ Flexibility in timing when FCQs are collected, not all CU-Denver courses follow the 15 week schedule  
▪ Response rates differ for face-to-face courses vs., online courses-require feedback on course and instructor before releasing grade  
▪ Provide computers for online FCQ administration in face-to-face classes  
▪ Administer FCQ at the end of semester, instead of two or three weeks before the course ends  
▪ Make FCQs course-specific | ▪ Faculty model appropriate feedback skills and behavior  
▪ Use videos to demonstrate meaningful feedback  
▪ Include information and examples about productive feedback in the syllabus  
▪ Provide training sessions  
▪ Use exemplary students in each class to encourage others to participate  
▪ “Fun” courses get better ratings  
▪ Faculty needs to be humanistic and holistic  
▪ Create and inclusive community in the classroom | ▪ Check with students mid-semester on satisfaction with the course, and instructor's teaching style  
▪ Different schools have different evaluation practices  
▪ Cultural differences have an effect on evaluations. Students with hierarchical and patriarchal values-downgrade diverse and women faculty  
▪ First generation college students may not be comfortable communicating with faculty  
▪ Getting RTP evaluation committees to consider multiple means to evaluate teaching  
▪ Difference in response between undergraduate and graduate students  
▪ Faculty needs to be better informed regarding FCQ results, statistical comparisons, different rates, trends and other aspects of the FCQ report  
▪ What is the value assigned to FCQ's for
Table II: Results for Question II: Describe FCQ Scores in Self-Evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Aspects of FCQS do you highlight in your self-evaluation</th>
<th>What Other Information Do You Provide about the Course and Students</th>
<th>Other Ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Provide charts/graphs to show improvement based on student feedback from FCQs</td>
<td>▪ Provide mean/median GPA of the course along with FCQ scores</td>
<td>▪ In describing your teaching evaluations, try not to be too defensive, e.g., “do not state that diverse and female faculty get lower FCQs”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Include mid-term evaluation results, along with final FCQ information</td>
<td>▪ Provide demographic profile of your course enrollment, especially, when you have local, national, and international students, along with gender diversity, and possible impact on your evaluation based on published research</td>
<td>▪ Present information on cultural differences, lack of understanding of plagiarism, cheating, note that you are seeking consultation with the Office of International Students, and Faculty Development Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Include peer evaluations, using “peer review instruments” listed among best practices*</td>
<td>▪ Evaluate your college/school multiple sources of information for teaching versus other colleges/schools</td>
<td>▪ Develop a support group with peers at the same developmental stage (tenure or clinical faculty) to discuss teaching and feedback methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Add questions to the FCQ form, e.g., “is this an elective or a required course?” Or, “are you interested in this subject?”</td>
<td>▪ Present the value of different aspects of your teaching portfolio, and your contributions to teaching and scholarship at CU-Denver</td>
<td>▪ Consider getting feedback using written and/or drawings (stick figures) to evaluate how they feel in your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Present information about your subject, teaching methods used to access students, understanding learning styles, and matching teaching methods to learning styles</td>
<td>▪ Provide information on how you model</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Provide your course
and instructor evaluation from a strength perspective, focus on facts, e.g., required or elective strategies you used to teach effectively
- Share information on training you participated in to teach effectively

professional, constructive feedback practices in your teaching
- Share information on what you state in your syllabus about providing productive and constructive feedback to students

*
http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/resources/peer/instruments/index.html

Table III: Question III Results: Interpreting and Analyzing FCQ Scores for Evaluating Others

<table>
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<tr>
<th>What Do You Think are Important Factors that Should be Considered?</th>
<th>Is There Training Available for RTP Evaluation Committees</th>
<th>Other Suggestions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ All aspects of the teaching portfolio needs to be evaluated, possibly weights should be assigned to each area to ensure a fair evaluation</td>
<td>▪ CU Denver has Skill Soft Training for individuals who serve on search committees, people serving on RTP committees need to get training to evaluate peers on teaching</td>
<td>▪ Ensure that RTP Committee members have education and training on understanding statistical information</td>
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<td>▪ Recognize innovative teaching modes going beyond textbooks, and give due credit to faculty who use innovations to make learning meaningful for the students based on developmental stage of students, subject matter (dance, art), information age technology (digital media), etc.</td>
<td>▪ Training must be provided to analyze and evaluate FCQ scores, and the complete profile must be considered not just two numbers, course mean/median and Instructor mean/median score</td>
<td>▪ Check how different colleges and schools prepare faculty for RTP committees and innovative methods used to weigh each aspect of the teaching portfolio (Clarity of syllabi, FCQs, courses developed, programs developed, certificate programs developed, teaching and collaborating with multiple programs, mentoring students, thesis and dissertations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Faculty who are able to develop learning communities (empowering and</td>
<td>▪ Mentoring to serve on RTP Committees,</td>
<td></td>
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inclusive) should be recognized for using collaborative strategies to enhance learning and student satisfaction

in the SEHD, each year the dean and associate dean address the RTP committee on guidelines for evaluating peers

supervised, etc.)

Discussion

The issues identified and recommendations made by the participants provide several guidelines for mentoring junior faculty for achieving tenure as it relates to effectiveness of teaching. Teaching activities include several important variables that define the career path of an academic. It is critical that faculty and evaluators consider teaching activities in a holistic manner, and consider the depth and breadth of the teaching portfolio (Marsh & Roche, 1997; University of Colorado, http://www.cu.edu/ope/aps/1009; University of Michigan http://www.crlt.umich.edu/tstrategies/guidelines;). Further assigning weights to aspects of teaching activities as reflected in institutional policy (http://www.cu.edu/ope/aps/1009) would reduce confusion about aspects of teaching that are valued and rewarded. Marsh and Roche (1997) cite several researchers who have noted that teaching is a complex and multidimensional activity, teaching evaluation instruments need to be designed reflect all aspects of the complexity that teaching represents.

The University of Colorado policy on multiple means of evaluation of teaching provides the following criteria in Appendix A: A representative, but not exhaustive list of suggestions for components to be used in the evaluation of
teaching*:

- Course syllabi and examinations
- Student evaluations as reported on Faculty Course Questionnaires (FCQ's) or a similar, campus-approved system and forms
- Grade distributions
- Instructional materials
- Scholarly research and publication on teaching
- Self-evaluation or report
- Student examination performance
- Student mid-term evaluations
- Evidence of risk taking to enhance learning
- Curriculum development that enhances learning
- Willingness to take training in teaching effectiveness and new technology
- Evidence of engagement in the online environment
- Alumni opinions within 2-5 years of graduation
- Peer assessments
- Professional awards related to the education process
- Grants in support of teaching and learning
- Student focus groups

*http://www.cu.edu/ope/aps/1009

**Administer FCQs in the Classroom**

The recommendations provided by the participants in the workshop resonated with several best practices, specifically, grade distributions, self-evaluation, student GPA in the course, peer assessments, curriculum development to enhance learning, training on teaching effectiveness, online engagement, evidence of risk taking and using innovative strategies (Table I, II, and III). Regarding University of Colorado guidelines on focus groups and follow-up with alumni, we recommend schools and colleges should conduct student focus groups, and follow-up with graduates to get an evaluation 3-5 years post-graduation, to reduce implications of bias. These recommendations and CU Denver guidelines resonate with best practices for teaching evaluation in the research literature (Iowa State University http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching-resources/document-your-teaching/student-
Describe FCQ Scores in Self-Evaluations

Several of the recommendations by participants on presenting FCQ information for evaluation are useful, and identified as best practices, e.g., presenting improvements in graphs, such as educating students on how the feedback would be used in improving the course and instructor effectiveness, developing course-specific evaluations, model constructive feedback strategies, creating learning communities, using innovative strategies for teaching, doing mid-term evaluations, and using data from both mid-term and final FCQ’s administered by the university. However, what was missing from the discussion was the faculty members’ satisfaction with the university, issues such stress of the tenure process, lack of collegiality or mentoring, university environment, internal and external stressors, which are addressed in the research literature (Ambrose, Huston, & Norman, 2005; Boyer, Altbach, & Whitlaw, 1994; Matier, 1990). To enhance teaching ability of junior faculty of color, and to reduce excessive stress, especially pertaining to evaluation and success at an academic institution, it is important to provide positive and strength-based mentoring, and support for teaching, and research activities, educate new and junior faculty about all the resources available on campus, and encourage connecting with peer faculty at own and other institutions.

Interpreting and analyzing FCQ Scores for Evaluating Others
The primary anxiety and stress regarding FCQs’ is the issue of how the information will be used in annual review, Reappointment, Tenure, and Promotion (RTP) decisions, for junior faculty of color, and women (Gmelch, Lovrich, & Wilkie, 1986; O’Meara, 2002; Rice, Sorcinelli & Austin, 2000). This question came up several times during the workshop, and we would be remiss if we did not address it. The recommendations in Table III address how faculty would like this concern addressed, specifically, they noted that evaluators should understand statistical information, should possibly have training to evaluate peers, along with an emphasis on giving credit for innovative teaching methods, consider a faculty members overall contributions to teaching, such as new courses developed, grants to enhance teaching, scholarship of teaching, and creating learning communities to enhance student learning and satisfaction, and not focus on the mean score for course and instructor rating.

The pressure on faculty at a Research I University, such as CU Denver is to also publish or perish. O’Meara (2002) notes that Ernest Boyer’s (1990) suggestion that the definition of scholarship used in promotion policies be changed, to include teaching, discovering, integrating, and applying knowledge. Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff (1997) report that 62% of chief academic officers of four-year institutions used Boyer’s recommendations to consider faculty roles and rewards. Several advocates have recommended assessing teaching, and service as scholarship, essentially rewarding multiple forms of scholarship within academic reward systems (Driscoll & Lynton, 1999; Hutchings & Shulman, 1999; O’Meara). We believe that acknowledging faculty contributions to teaching and service as
scholarship would make teaching central in an academic institution, and also result in greater attention to inclusive and positive teaching strategies, enhancing student learning, and satisfaction. MAC recommends that CU Denver administrators, department heads, and faculty consider implementing recommendations offered by faculty at the workshop, and the research literature to lower stress, and anxiety, among junior faculty, enhance satisfaction with the educational institution, and ensure that best practices are in use to promote faculty retention and promotion at CU Denver.
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