

On the Evaluation of TCU Faculty Teaching:  
A TCU Faculty Senate Report  
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(draft 11/03/11)

“The instruction of students is the first purpose of the University and the prime responsibility of every faculty member.”  
--*Handbook for Faculty and Staff*

As it is clearly stated in the *Handbook for Faculty and Staff*, teaching is the primary responsibility for all TCU faculty members. Thus the evaluation of teaching is one of the most critical components in the assessment of faculty performance. In response to the various discussions held on campus this year concerning how teaching should be evaluated, particularly concerning eSpots, the TCU Faculty Senate believes it is essential that faculty take the lead in recommending a set of “best practices” for their evaluation. What follows is a set of principles and recommendations that the Faculty Senate endorses as guidelines for teaching evaluation. In setting forth these guidelines, the Faculty Senate hopes to open up a campus-wide, faculty-led discussion not only of teaching but also of all areas of faculty evaluation, since teaching cannot be isolated from all other areas of faculty performance.

Principle 1: Teaching is an act of leadership; leading students to new pathways of thought and to new discoveries of knowledge is a primary act of leadership. TCU must always recognize and reward this most essential form of leadership.

Principle 2: The development of a great teacher is a journey that begins with self-assessment. Individually, faculty members must make a robust personal

commitment to pedagogical improvement, continually reflecting on their classroom performance and continually aspiring to enhance and enrich their teaching. This commitment is by far the most important component in the development of teaching excellence, and it is a commitment that all faculty members are expected to demonstrate.

Principle 3: TCU must continue to affirm the Teacher-Scholar model; research and creative activity illuminate and enhance good teaching; the synergy between these two vital areas results in an interactive cycle of mutual benefits.

Principle 4: There is no one-size-fits-all formula for assessing faculty performance in the classroom, and each college, department, and program must decide which evaluative practices are best suited to its individual needs.

Principle 5: Faculty evaluation should be undertaken holistically; that is, all areas of professional activity should be considered in gauging faculty performance. In addition to teaching, and depending on an individual's appointment and designation, these areas may include research and creative activity, service, student interaction, and professional development.

**Principle 6: Student input is a crucial—and required—part of teaching evaluation, yet it should never be the sole criterion for evaluation. When evaluating faculty pedagogy, at least three separate evaluative practices should be used.**

Principle 7: All deans and chairs must make sure that all new faculty be made aware of the specific criteria for teaching evaluation used by their departments and colleges soon after their arrival on campus; new faculty should be given a written

set of departmental policies concerning their evaluation and/or alerted to the appropriate URLs.

Principle 7: Stasis and adequacy are insufficient; growth, development, and innovation are essential to effective teaching. TCU faculty members must make a commitment to teaching excellence and to continual improvement in their teaching practice.

To assess faculty performance in the classroom, the Faculty Senate endorses the following “best practices”:

### **Suggested Best Practices for the Evaluation of Teaching**

(Individual academic units should establish guidelines for teaching evaluation through an open discussion, articulating values held in common by all colleagues.)

- Class observation and evaluations (by chairs, peers, non-departmental colleagues)
- **One-on-one discussions between the faculty member being evaluated and designated peers, chairs, or other departmental administrators**
- Teaching portfolios (including all written evidence of classroom performance and a statement of teaching philosophy)
- Professional portfolios (includes all areas of professional activity)
- Chairs and members of the evaluation committee may solicit impressions of a faculty member’s teaching from:
  - tenured faculty
  - non-tenured faculty
  - faculty members teaching similar courses
  - colleagues from other departments
  - students
- Review of course materials (This may include syllabi, assignments, learning materials, student work, and written responses to student work.)
- Evidence of teaching innovation (new courses created, revisions of existing courses, new delivery systems, development of service learning and/or community engagement programs, participation in workshops and/or consultations on teaching, participation in pedagogical programs to develop new areas of learning and pedagogy, and participation in other teaching improvement opportunities)

- Comparison of mid-term evaluations with end-of-semester evaluations
- Teaching awards (nominated and received)
- Outstanding student research and student achievement completed under the instructor's supervision
- Evidence of student interaction beyond the classroom (independent studies, honors theses, graduate committees, student advising, mentoring)
- Evidence of department and campus curricular committee work
- Standardized tools of assessment:
  - eLearning OSAT
  - Learning Outcomes Management
  - other standardized rubrics and evaluation tools.