

Center for Teaching Excellence

This is the eighteenth of a series of newsletters encouraging faculty enrichment and excellence in teaching by announcing opportunities, sharing ideas, and promoting collaboration.

Volume 2.8

March 2009

Have a great spring break!

Be sure to let Doug Swartzendruber or me know if you are willing to give your classes online evaluations this semester.

I have attached an article entitled "How to Make Course Evaluations More Valuable" from Faculty Focus, February 25, 2009.

Meetings to Share Teaching Tips

Faculty Dining Room

Fridays at Lunch

March 27

April 10

12:00 to 1:00 p.m.

Bring your own lunch.

On Friday, March 27

Michele Langford, Professor of French, will share some of the teaching tips she learned from attending the POD Conference on Teaching.

These tips will apply to everyone!

We will all share our experience and talk about our successes as well as our challenges.

Seaver Faculty Colloquium

Thursdays

4:00 p.m.

Kresge Reading Room

Payson Library

March 19 Cynthia Colburn

“Adorning Power: Exoica and the Early Minoan Elite”

April 16 Lincoln Hanks

“Till Day Breaks: Seaching for Transcendence Now in Art Music”

A Second Teaching Writing Workshop

will be conducted by

Theresa Flynn,

Director of the Writing Center,

Thursday, May 14, 2009

Kresge Reading Room, Payson Library

Make plans to attend!

This will be primarily designed for those who did not participate in the Teaching Writing Workshop on May 6, 2008.

However, you are welcome to attend even if you were a part of the workshop on May 6, 2008.

If you teach a course that is designated as “writing intensive,” you are urged to attend.

Information Technology Training Sessions

Once again you are invited to attend training sessions on Blackboard, Elluminate, and TurnItIn.

Please visit the following links to read descriptions of the training sessions and to register.

Descriptions: <http://services.pepperdine.edu/it/training/descriptions.htm>

Register: <http://services.pepperdine.edu/it/training/registration.htm>

This article is from the online journal Faculty Focus, February 25, 2009.

[How to Make Course Evaluations More Valuable](#)

By Robert T. Brill, PhD.

The major benefit any conscientious professor seeks in course evaluations is in gaining useful student feedback. Yet most rating instruments generate vague, unjustified student comments. Quantitative scales provide ambiguous statistics for such generic instructional areas as preparation, fairness in grading, etc., but they don't include any formative commentary. Open-ended questions ask students what things the instructor should continue to include in or eliminate from the course, and students list items but often without any kind of rationale.

I try to add value to the feedback collected for administrative purposes with a course evaluation form tailored to the particular course. I use the same format in all my courses, and I think this approach contains some good, practical ideas that might benefit faculty, even those who already use other assessment methods to obtain student feedback.

The three-option feedback system I've developed is user friendly, requests connections to targeted student learning outcomes, prompts students to reflect on specific components of the course (e.g., the books used, assignments completed, etc.), and requires students to justify their evaluative decisions about those components.

The form starts with basic instructions that direct students to answer candidly, anonymously, and with as much detail as possible. The students are instructed to respond to each designated course component with one of three options: KEEP AS IS, KEEP BUT MODIFY, or REMOVE FROM THE

COURSE. Each option is accompanied by an additional request: Justify why it should stay, be changed, or be removed.

The final instruction asks respondents to keep in mind the targeted student learning outcomes of the course that are provided for them directly on the form, cut and pasted from the actual syllabus. Then I list the course components about which I'm requesting feedback, leaving plenty of space between them for student responses. Typically I list such course components as each text, each substantive assignment or classifications of assignments (e.g., journal, reaction papers to books, presentations, etc.), general lecture format, discussion opportunities, course policies, and exam formats.

These feedback forms could be completed in class, but I distribute them during one class and request that they be thoroughly completed for the next class. For those students who may prefer to type their responses, I provide a Blackboard electronic form.

Students return with this supplementary feedback form completed the day they do the more general course evaluation required by the institution. I believe having already reflected on the important components of the course prepares students to complete the in-class evaluation. The supplementary form and the general course evaluation forms are collected in separate envelopes.

I have benefited from feedback that students have provided on the supplementary take-home course assessment. In 15 course sections (seven different course titles) across six

semesters, I have always had at least two suggestions that led to course improvement changes. Over half of those changes were based upon sound justifications related to the student learning outcomes stated for the course.

Robert T. Brill, PhD., is an associate professor of psychology at Moravian College. He can be reached at brillr@moravian.edu

Excerpted from Three-Option Feedback: A Strategy for Improving Course Evaluations, *The Teaching Professor*, June-July, 2007.

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If you have suggestions for improving this newsletter or any aspect of our teaching, please let me know.

