Assessing Teaching Effectiveness Committee-- Report
Spring 2025

Report Outline:

Introduction

For several decades, universities and colleges have relied heavily on student course evaluations to measure faculty teaching effectiveness, due to both the convenience and low cost of administering the evaluations. While these evaluations are frequently used in making high-stakes decisions-- such as promotion and tenure or teaching contract renewal-- they have also faced criticism as an unfair measure of teaching effectiveness.

Much of this skepticism is based on evaluations with broad, vague questions (such as the overall quality of the course or the instructor), resulting in biased responses from students. Several studies (e.g., MacNeil et al., 2015; Mitchell & Martin, 2018; Peterson et al., 2019; Feder, 2020; Wrinkle et al., 2020; Kreitzer & Sweet-Cushman, 20201) show that student evaluations are biased by factors such as class size, course requirements, academic discipline, and instructor characteristics such as gender and race. Potential measurement and equity biases stem from student perceptions (rather than objective measurement of teaching and learning outcomes) and discriminatory tendencies based on instructor attributes, respectively. Additionally, peer (faculty) reviews of teaching, often suggested as a method to assess teaching effectiveness, are frequently found to be problematic and show limited effectiveness in evaluating teaching and in consistently providing useful feedback for meaningful improvement (Zeng, 2020).

The potential unfairness of course evaluations has led several institutions (including Georgia Tech, Purdue, UMass Amherst, and USC) to revise their evaluations of teaching, focusing instead on a more holistic approach to better assess teaching effectiveness. Given the substantial evidence of bias in student course evaluations, and the limited correlation between evaluation scores and actual teaching effectiveness, VCU urgently needs to reconsider its approach to assessment of faculty teaching.

In January 2024, Provost Fotis Sotiropoulos established the Assessing Teaching Effectiveness Committee, aimed at assessing and improving VCU's methods for evaluating teaching effectiveness. The committee comprises the following members:

Committee Members

Name	Title	School/College/Unit
Susan Coombes (Co-chair)	Interim Director CTLE & Associate Professor of Business	Office of the Provost - Faculty Affairs
Jeffery Wilson (Co-chair)	Associate Dean & Professor of Education	Graduate School
Lisa Abrams	Interim Assistant Vice Provost & Professor of Education	Office of the Provost - Faculty Affairs
Amy Armstrong	Associate Dean & Associate Professor in Rehab Counseling	College of Health Professions
Sally Hunnicutt	Associate Dean & Professor	College of Humanities & Sciences
Priscilla Hwang	Assistant Professor	College of Engineering
Hyojin Im	Associate Professor & Faculty Senate Representative	School of Social Work

Judith Kornberg	Interim Executive Director	VCU Online
Mayoor Mohan	Associate Dean & Professor	School of Business
Wendy Rodgers	Associate Professor & Faculty Senate Representative	School of Education
Lisa Webb	Assistant Vice President for Health Sciences Faculty Affairs	Office of the Senior Vice President for Health Sciences

Charge to the Committee

The committee was assigned the responsibility of examining eight charges and delivering specific recommendations for the following charges:

1. Consider a University level definition of teaching excellence. Who will administer and manage the teaching evaluation system at the University level?
2. Use of 2 or 3 standardized effectiveness measures for all courses (preferably reliable and valid set of measures). As proposed in the attached Georgia Institute of Tech report, consider including the following: “Considering everything, the instructor was an effective teacher.” Include an option to add comments for each standardized question/measure.
3. Create a ‘bank’ of measures from which faculty can select and supplement the standardized measures (example- see PICES used at Purdue).
4. Should VCU consider having a statement similar to that used in the study by Peterson et al (2019) to mitigate bias?
5. How would mode of teaching (in-person, hybrid, online) be incorporated in assessing teaching effectiveness?
6. What should be included in a holistic teaching and learning portfolio? Consider the recommendations from the Senate White Paper. Which parts are essential to the definition of teaching excellence (point 1)? Should all parts of the portfolio be considered for those going up for promotion or tenure on teaching and learning? Be sure to consider biases such as in peer observations.
7. Who should have access to the report for each faculty member?
8. Once every three years, consider an analysis of student teaching evaluations of all course offerings at VCU for a broader picture of range of scores by level of course, size of classroom, and demographics of the instructor.

A regular (at least once every 3 years) analysis of the student course evaluations is recommended, to obtain various levels of understanding of these evaluations--including a broader picture regarding scores based on course size, course level, class size, course subject, student and instructor demographics, and how well the evaluation items control for potential student biases. (Charge 8) This will allow for the course evaluations to be assessed regularly, and refined as needed.

The committee's overall objective is to meaningfully improve the existing system used for evaluating teaching effectiveness, to make assessment of teaching effectiveness more fair and equitable for faculty. As such, the committee has reviewed the various structures and processes in place for evaluations, considered the student evaluations currently used to evaluate faculty, developed recommendations for a more holistic approach to assessment, and suggested an implementation plan. The committee reviewed and determined elements critical to an updated teaching evaluation system, including: a definition of teaching excellence, dimensions to consider when assessing the teaching effectiveness of faculty, a modified system for course evaluations, and recommendations for how information should be gathered and used. After careful review, in response to the outlined charges, the committee offers the following for consideration. (An open forum at the beginning of the school year will take place to gather feedback from faculty on this report; a final report will be generated.)

Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness

Defining Excellence in Teaching

As highlighted in the BOV Quest 2028 document, a proposed strategy for enhancing student success involves, "Transform[ing] curriculum so that all students engage in inquiry, discovery, innovation, experiential learning, civic engagement, and creative expression to prepare them for the future of work" (p. 5, SS1, https://quest.vcu.edu/media/quest/pdf/bovdocument.pdf). It is, perhaps, important to consider that teaching excellence is also a, "process of growth, development and flourishing; it is not just an endpoint" (Nixon, 2007, p. 22). This suggests that excellence can be context-specific, changes over time, and centers around faculty recognizing that change is necessary for improving teaching effectiveness. The committee's proposed definition encompasses these elements, emphasizing not only academic learning achievements but also a comprehensive approach to preparing students for success beyond graduation: (Charge 1)

> *Teaching excellence integrates both subject matter expertise and the promotion of student academic and post-graduation success. This includes transformative education approaches to optimize learning, along with core principles that emphasize the creation of inclusive, engaging, and supportive learning environments, as well as a commitment to proactive and reflective teaching practices that foster improved learning. By considering these elements, educators play a vital role in nurturing the development and success of their students through a culture of care.*

Dimensions to Consider When Assessing Teaching Effectiveness

It is clear that student evaluations are subject to student biases (gender, race, etc.), are not always straightforward to interpret, are primarily based on student perceptions and preferences (rather than expertise), and do not consistently align with actual teaching effectiveness. As such, the committee strongly recommends that the use of student evaluations be *de-emphasized*. Department chairs (or relevant supervisors) should use student evaluations only as part of their

overall evaluation of teaching effectiveness. Along with student course evaluations, department chairs (or relevant supervisors) should also *increase emphasis* on other dimensions that serve as a holistic set of indicators of teaching effectiveness when assessing faculty.

The committee agrees that teaching effectiveness may differ from semester to semester, as new students will continually bring new challenges to be addressed. As noted in the VCU Faculty Senate white paper, "A key component for evaluation should be evidence that shows efforts to improve and innovate teaching through self-reflection, pedagogical training, and experimentation (p. 9, 2017). To overcome the outdated reliance on student course evaluations as the primary metric used for assessing teaching, the committee recommends a holistic approach that takes into account multiple elements (beyond course evaluations). Based on this, we present other dimensions (in addition to student course evaluations) that should also be considered when assessing teaching effectiveness. We propose a more comprehensive assessment, that considers the following seven dimensions of effective teaching:

- ***Student Course Evaluations***
- ***Course Design and Development***
- ***Pedagogical /Curriculum Innovation***
- ***Collaboration and Mentorship***
- ***Professional Development Specific to Teaching and Learning***
- ***Grants and Program Development***
- ***Community Engagement***

Each dimension, as they specifically pertain to teaching and learning, is discussed below (see Table 3 in the appendices, for a summary of the dimensions). Please note that while we argue for de-emphasizing the weight of student course evaluations when assessing teaching effectiveness, much focus in this report is also placed on proposing ways to meaningfully improve the course evaluations used by students.

Dimension: Student Course Evaluations

Student course evaluations generally provide information that factors into assessments of teaching effectiveness based on:

- Quantitative data from student course evaluations
- Qualitative information (student comments) from student course evaluations
- (Informal mid-term student feedback may also be gathered, but should not be used as part of a formal assessment of teaching)

While these evaluations are the primary metric used at VCU, they represent only one aspect of a more comprehensive assessment, and the drawbacks of a heavy reliance on these evaluations are noted below.

Limitations to Student Course Evaluations

The practice of using student course evaluations as a primary metric aligns with prevalent methods employed across universities, where student feedback holds significant weight in determining teaching excellence. The current system used for evaluating teaching, based primarily on student evaluations, is rife with potential for bias and inequity-- and consequent inaccuracy regarding assessment of teaching effectiveness. Research finds that little to zero correlation exists between student evaluations and actual student learning of teaching effectiveness and that, "students do not learn more from professors who receive higher SET [student evaluations of teaching] scores" (Uttle, White, Gonzalez, 2017, p. 40; Kreitzer & Sweet-Kushman, 2022). Inaccurate assessment of teaching in these evaluations is further confounded by the fact that students are frequently unaware of how much they have learned in a course, and reported learning is not equivalent to actual learning (Weinberg, Hashimoto, & Fleisher, 2009). As such, placing such a strong focus on student evaluations, especially when students themselves often cannot adequately assess how much they have learned, and when response rates are often low, is a flawed practice and does not make sense when evaluating the teaching effectiveness of VCU faculty.

Further, it is imperative to acknowledge the limitations of this approach-- i.e., heavy reliance on student course evaluations as part of teaching assessment-- as research shows that these evaluations introduce biases and prioritize subjective preferences over objective measures of teaching effectiveness. A recent (July 11, 2023) article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* addressed this point, noting that almost 80 articles find evidence of gender and racial bias. For instance, faculty of color routinely receive evaluation scores lower than those of their white colleagues (Hamermesh & Parker, 2005; DiPietro & Faye, 2005). In another article from January 2019, the Chronicle discussed inherent flaws in student course evaluations, due to students' biased opinions and lack of expertise in assessing teaching effectiveness. This reflects the consensus in a 2017 white paper drafted by the Academic and Professional Status Committee of the VCU Faculty Senate, which notes that student evaluations of teaching "demonstrate consistent bias, particularly against women and underrepresented instructors" (p. 1). Not only might such discrimination have a substantially negative impact on decisions such as promotion, tenure, and raises, but it could also lead to Title IX violations by the university (e.g. Mitchel & Martin, 2018). The following sections provide suggestions to start addressing the multiple limitations previously discussed.

Addressing Bias in Student Responses on Course Evaluations

To the knowledge of this committee, deliberate widespread efforts that both recognize and mitigate potential bias in student evaluations of teaching, have not been made by VCU schools and colleges. Since these student biases are well-documented, an important strategy would be to call students' attention to the propensity for such bias before administering assessments of

teaching. As found by Peterson et al. (2019), including a statement regarding anti-bias language can potentially help mitigate gender bias in student evaluations of teaching.

In light of this, the committee recommends including an anti-bias/equity statement at the beginning of all student course evaluations. (Charge 4) The committee also suggests that student acknowledgment of the statement (e.g. *"I have read and understand the content of the above statement."*) be required, before gaining access to the main content of the course evaluation. We offer the following statement, adapted from Peterson et al. (2019):

> *"Student course evaluations play an important role in the review of faculty. Your opinions influence the review of instructors that takes place every year. Virginia Commonwealth University recognizes that student course evaluations are often influenced by students'* ***unconscious*** *and* ***unintentional*** *biases about the race and gender of the instructor. For example, women and instructors of color are systematically rated lower in their teaching evaluations than white men, even when there are no actual differences in the instruction or in what students have learned. As you fill out the course evaluation, please keep this in mind and make an effort to resist stereotypes about professors. Focus on your opinions about the content of the course (for example, the assignments, the textbook, the in-class material, clarity of how course concepts were explained) and not unrelated matters (for example, the instructor's personality or appearance)."*

Student Course Evaluation Items

Because student course evaluations are heavily subject to student biases (gender, racial, etc.) along with personal preferences, these evaluations are that much more difficult to accurately interpret when assessing actual teaching effectiveness of faculty. The committee recognizes that various items in the current student course evaluations may be prone to biased responses. In fact, the VCU Faculty Senate white paper notes that, "Based on our evaluation, the majority of the schools and colleges have not changed their course evaluations in this century" (p. 5, 2017). Along with the suggested anti-bias statement (above), strong consideration should be given to altering current evaluation items, to help further mitigate potential biases (Charge 2).

For instance, acknowledging the negative impact of student biases inherent in their course evaluations, the Georgia Institute of Technology (GIT) Task Force on Teaching Effectiveness modified questions in their student course evaluations. (When assessed by the GIT Task Force, responses to the items showed minimal gender bias.) Purdue University further adapted the GIT course evaluation items. A primary objective behind the GIT revision to their measures was to, "improve clarity of questions, reduce redundancy, and add an inclusivity question" (p. 22, 2017). VCU's efforts to enhance accuracy and fairness within student evaluations leads to consideration of similar assessments.

The VCU committee concurs this approach is logical, and adopted and further refined the evaluation items modified by both the GIT, and then the Purdue, Task Forces. Reasoning behind this was three-fold:

1. Identify and modify/remove items that seem prone to student bias;
2. Identify and modify/remove items that are not action-oriented and not clearly tied to student learning outcomes or effective teaching (action-oriented items provide an opportunity to help identify where teaching can be improved, versus general or vague items that are commonly used to assess teaching); and
3. Identify/create items that will be common across all end-of-semester evaluations, for all VCU courses.

The version adapted by the VCU committee includes a total of 9 items, plus one section for student comments. (Charge 2) A note of "where relevant" is also made available for items where applicability might be affected by course content or modality. (Charge 5)

Perhaps notably, the committee did not include the GIT item, *"Considering everything, the instructor was an effective teacher."* (Charge 2) We advise against including this statement (or any that are similar), and do not recommend relying on such statements for evaluating teaching quality. One of the important goals of teaching evaluations is to identify areas for improvement so that faculty can work to enhance teaching and learning in the classroom. The above item (and similar items) are NOT action-oriented. Instead, these types of questions are based on students' subjective satisfaction, often addressing if they 'liked' the instructor's teaching or the course itself, rather than providing objective evidence of teaching effectiveness. However, these types of items generally do not yield actionable feedback for enhancing teaching effectiveness. Further, it provides no practical meaning or validity. While individual student preferences may offer some insight, they frequently do not align with whether or not effective teaching has occurred in a course. As such, 'effective teacher' items should not be part of course evaluations. Instead, the focus should remain on items that help assess how a course was conducted, elements within a course, etc.

The items adapted and suggested by the committee are found in Table 1, below. The goal of the committee was to structure a course evaluation that reflects how well the knowledge and skills in a course were mastered by students, where the proposed items are designed to measure particular characteristics of the learning environment created by the instructor of the course, rather than use broad measures of instructor/course likeability. The committee suggests adopting these 9 items, plus a section for student comments (also listed in Table 1), as well as a pre-evaluation anti-bias statement as standard for all university end-of-semester student course evaluations. Standardizing evaluation items across all courses at the university level can provide a more consistent and reliable assessment of teaching effectiveness. As noted in the VCU Faculty Senate

white paper there is, “great variability across units-- both in terms of length and types of questions asked.” (p. 2, 2017). (The number of items ranged from 9 to 32, depending on the school/college.) Standardizing course evaluations, to the greatest extent possible, will help create a shared understanding of evaluating teaching across all academic units, as well as create consistency and clarity in establishing best practices for this process.

Table 1
VCU Committee Suggested Items for Student Course Evaluations
(Adapted from Purdue and Texas A&M student course evaluation items)
5-point scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree;
3=neither agree nor disagree; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree

ITEM	SCALE
1. The class activities are well-prepared and organized.	1-5
2. The assignments support me in achieving the course objectives.	1-5
3. The projects or laboratories support me in achieving the course objectives. [where relevant]	1-5
4. The examinations align with the concepts taught in the course. [where relevant]	1-5
5. The instructor clearly explains the material so that I better understand it.	1-5
6. The instructor is open to my questions and effectively answers them. [where relevant]	1-5
7. The instructor willingly makes time to help me during office hours or by appointment when requested. [where relevant]	1-5
8. The instructor consistently applies clear criteria when evaluating my performance in the course.	1-5
9. The instructor fosters an inclusive classroom environment in which to learn. [where relevant]	1-5
Comments (200 words maximum) [include reminder statement, discussed later in this report, here]	Open-ended

The general items suggested in the modified student course evaluation address the following

areas:

1. Class preparation
2. Assignments
3. Projects/labs
4. Examinations
5. Clarity of communication
6. Engagement with students
7. Availability to students
8. Feedback/assessment
9. Environment

Options for Student Comments

Student comments on course evaluations can help provide context to the numerical data gathered in these evaluations and may provide valuable information about the course and its instructor. It is also recognized that these comments can be problematic (e.g., racist and/or sexist, not focused specifically on the item in question, are more reflective of a student's likes, dislikes, and personal preferences versus knowledge of what constitutes effective teaching, and/or lack of student accountability regarding their effort in the course). Students may use course evaluations as a format to complain, rather than provide reasonable and constructive feedback. While potentially insightful, supervisors should remember that student comments may not directly relate to the actual teaching effectiveness of the instructor, or even be statements of fact.

The committee recommends that an option for comments be made available in student course evaluations (Charge 2). In addition, a reminder statement regarding the purpose for commenting should be provided. For example:

> *"Please use this comment section to provide specific and constructive feedback directly related to the course and your learning experience in the course. Avoid addressing complaints or issues not relevant to the course content or your learning, or specifically about your instructor. Be mindful of the VCU's anti-discrimination policy when writing your comments, and ensure that your feedback is constructive, respectful, and focused on the context of the course. Your thoughtful input is greatly appreciated."*

Along with concerns regarding bias in student course evaluations, concerns also exist regarding comments that may exhibit a lack of civility, inappropriateness, or hostility. To mitigate this, the committee suggests that future evaluations utilize software to identify comments containing inappropriate or hostile language. If identified as containing this sort of language, both the student comments and their ratings will be deleted, and will not be included as part of an instructor's course evaluations.

Options for Customization of Additional Student Course Evaluation Items

Student course evaluations, alone, refrain from capturing an individual faculty member's unique contribution to teaching effectiveness in the classroom (along with the many limitations previously mentioned). To begin addressing this particular issue, each faculty member should also have the option to customize evaluations with up to 5 additional items that they feel most directly capture effective teaching and learning in each of their courses. A university-wide item catalog should be established for this purpose. (Charge 3) Currently, Purdue University utilizes its PICES item catalog (containing 607 items), allowing faculty or departments to select items to be included in student course evaluations. It is recommended that the PICES catalog be adapted for use at VCU, from which individual VCU faculty can select items that are most relevant for each of their courses. Providing faculty with a range of evaluation items, such as those offered by the PIECES framework, can allow for customization while maintaining consistency in evaluation standards.

We suggest this be utilized at the individual faculty course level, rather than customization at the department level (as department courses can be highly variable, as can the same courses within a department). This will help to ensure that the items chosen are specifically based on the curriculum developed by each faculty member for each of their courses and will, therefore, more accurately reflect levels of teaching effectiveness in their courses. These customized items will also allow instructors to ask questions that may help to improve pedagogy for their courses based on the feedback received (Charge 3), and will also allow individual faculty to select items that more closely align with their course modes (in-person, online synchronous or asynchronous, etc.) when necessary. (Charge 5)

To facilitate use of the customized items, the following protocol is suggested:

1. At the beginning of each semester, faculty in each school/college/department (Monroe Park and MCV campuses) will be emailed a reminder, informing them that they have the option to select up to 5 custom items from the PICES catalog. Access to the list of items will be available to faculty through the Blue evaluations system; faculty will select directly from this list.
2. Items selected by individual faculty should apply specifically to the course(s) that will be evaluated at the end of the semester, based on the curriculum developed/taught by individual faculty for their course(s).
3. Faculty should be made aware of the deadline by which their selections must be made. (This deadline will be communicated in the email sent to faculty, and will fall within the first two weeks of the beginning of the semester for regular semesters, or within the first three days of the beginning of summer/intersession courses.)

4. After this deadline, faculty will no longer be able to apply the custom PICES catalog items to their student course evaluation(s) for that current semester (and only standardized items will be included in their course evaluations).

All faculty members on both Monroe Park and MCV are expected to undergo yearly teaching assessments for the courses they teach during the academic year. If certain faculty or instructors (e.g., clinical faculty, teaching assistants, etc.) are not required by their department/school to be evaluated for their teaching, then department chairs/deans should adhere to that policy.

Suggestions for a Holistic Approach to Assessing Teaching Effectiveness

In alignment with the above changes-- calling students' attention to the potential for bias (Charge 4), altering standardized evaluation questions to be more related to action-oriented elements directly related to teaching, and allowing faculty to add custom items to more accurately reflect elements relevant to their curriculum (Charges 2 and 3)-- it is also crucial to recognize that relying solely on student evaluations can perpetuate biases and inequities. Student course evaluations should not dictate the evaluation of faculty teaching effectiveness. As previously noted, studies have shown that factors such as gender, race, and age can influence student evaluations, potentially putting certain instructors at a disadvantage. A holistic approach to evaluating teaching effectiveness should take into account multiple dimensions beyond course evaluations.

Diversifying the evaluation process helps mitigate these biases and ensures a more equitable assessment of teaching quality. Along with the anti-bias statement, the committee has considered additional changes necessary to create more equity in the process of evaluating teaching. The current form of teaching assessments (which lean heavily on student course evaluations) may not accurately reflect instructional quality, nor would they capture targeted learning outcomes. By diversifying various dimensions that capture teaching effectiveness, a more comprehensive and fair assessment can be achieved.

One way to address these shortcomings is to implement a multifaceted approach to teaching evaluation that incorporates diverse perspectives and measures. As previously noted, student course evaluations are the most common means of assessing faculty teaching effectiveness (at VCU, as well as most universities). The main purpose behind student course evaluations is not only to assess teaching effectiveness but also to provide instructors with constructive information that allows them to improve their teaching when necessary. Assessment items should be directly related to the course, and allow for action-oriented behaviors by faculty as necessary. Comments and numeric scores may be used as a means by which chairs (and faculty) can preemptively identify possible problems with teaching, discuss these with the faculty member, and then provide constructive and action-oriented feedback for ways to improve teaching. As such, they provide some value.

However, the committee's opinion is that there is a significant overreliance on these evaluations as the primary (if not sole) measure of teaching effectiveness for purposes of the annual review, promotion, tenure, and other rewards (Stark, 2018). Recent research finds that even when student evaluations of teaching are assumed to be valid, reliable, and unbiased means to assess teaching effectiveness, they still are not an accurate indicator of instruction quality (Esaray & Valdes, 2020). While they can serve as an important source of information for students, they are generally based on subjective opinions. They, alone, are not a sufficient way to determine teaching effectiveness. Instead, embracing diverse assessment methods is imperative to capture a comprehensive picture of teaching effectiveness. Additional dimensions that should be considered are addressed below.

Dimension: Course Design and Development

An instructor's approach to teaching directly informs how they choose to design and develop their courses (this assumes that their course and its content are not fully dictated by their department/program). Overall, effective course design should be clear in content construction, well-structured, and exhibit clear objectives, along with relevant activities and assessments that directly relate to the objectives. Course design also evolves, based on an instructor's assessment of how effective activities are in accomplishing course objectives and how well assessments measure student understanding of course concepts. Based on what the instructor determines to be most important for students to learn at any given time, this involves a process of continual adjustment.

Examples of what may be considered regarding course design and development include:

- Overall course design (well-structured with clear objectives, activities, and assessments)
- Adjustments to syllabi and/or course content over time, based on student feedback or instructor observations
- Consistency in revising pedagogy over semesters/years
- Courses are kept current and employ best practices
- Fine-tuning approaches to supporting the learning of course concepts
- Introduction/evolution of assignments supporting course concepts
- Innovative resources
- Events created that directly support the course curriculum

To enhance the effectiveness of course design and effectiveness, the following can serve as examples:

> Example: Regularly revise course content to include emerging topics in the life sciences.
> Example: Developing lecture materials that proactively potentially address student accessibility issues.

Example: Intentionally incorporate multiple voices and perspectives in course materials, to extend students' understanding of diverse contexts.
Example: Include new case studies that directly tie to multiple real-world examples, to illustrate both the evolution and the challenges within society.

Dimension: Pedagogical /Curriculum Innovation

Innovation in pedagogy and curriculum involves the implementation of new teaching strategies, along with continuous/periodic enhancement of course content to improve learning outcomes of students. Defined as, "a planned set of educational activities that presents new ideas in a defined context aiming to extensively improve the ability to learn within a situation of interaction" (Orit Avidov-Ungar & Forkosh-Baruch, 2018, p. 184), pedagogical innovation may involve radical and non-incremental forms of innovation, but it more commonly (and practically) occurs with gradual changes that are implemented in the learning environment. This dimension assesses an instructor's ability to proactively integrate innovative practices, and experiment with and adopt novel teaching methods, to create more impactful, engaging, and interactive learning experiences that cater to diverse learning preferences and promote a deeper understanding of concepts.

Going beyond the fundamentals, innovations in this dimension might include:

- Meaningful or creative alterations to pedagogy/curriculum
- Evidence of practices that meaningfully increase student engagement
- Inclusive teaching practices
- Implementation of practices to ensure accessibility of course materials and activities for students with diverse learning needs
- Promotion of universal design principles to create inclusive learning environments and accessibility to course materials and activities
- Innovative resources/resources utilized in innovative ways
- Developing/creating/teaching a new course addressing emerging trends/needs
- Introduction of an interdisciplinary course that integrates multiple fields of study.
- Incorporating experiential learning opportunities, such as fieldwork, not typically used in a set of courses

Innovative curriculum design can significantly enhance student engagement and learning outcomes, as listed in the following examples:

Example: Integrate experiential projects that reflect the diverse experiences of underrepresented student populations.
Example: Utilizing maker-spaces and fabrication laboratories, where students in business classes can design and create prototypes as part of their learning process.
Example: Incorporate learning portfolios whereby engineering students both document and deliberately reflect on the development of their concepts.

Example: Create citizen science projects, where students collect and analyze environmental data, and present findings to corporations to better understand their impact on the ecosystem.
Example: Include role-playing exercises, so that students can explore and gain an understanding of diverse perspectives in different contexts.
Example: Use virtual reality experiences to help immerse students in historical events.
Example: Add a service learning component where students can apply classroom knowledge to real-world community needs.
Example: Publishing a case study focused on innovation in pedagogical/curriculum development in a specific course.

Dimension: Collaboration and Mentorship

Collaborating with colleagues allows faculty to share knowledge and skills across disciplines, thus contributing to a more interdisciplinary approach to effective teaching. This partnership can also serve well for cross-unit collaborative efforts where resources can be maximized and potentially lead to new academic program development. In addition, a broader range of courses can be offered while cutting down on duplication or redundancies.

Along with this, collaboration can occur with colleagues across fields, schools, or universities to integrate activities or assignments that are relevant to the various courses, or to further advance scholarly understanding of teaching and learning. A collaborative approach to instruction also presents opportunities to obtain feedback from peers, fostering the development of new ideas and teaching methodologies by leveraging each instructor's expertise and perspective. This can be particularly beneficial when a more experienced instructor is presented with the opportunity to offer valuable guidance and support to new faculty.

Faculty may consider various instances of collaboration and mentorship, including:

- Mentorship of undergraduate, graduate, or post doctoral students in areas specifically related to teaching, learning, and scholarship
- Collaboration with colleagues for course design and innovation
- Collaboration with colleagues to implement inclusive teaching strategies
- Joint efforts across departments/academic units to fortify course concepts and outcomes
- Creation (across departments or academic units) of events, initiatives, and/or programs that supplement courses taught
- Collaboration with colleagues to generate scholarly research specific to teaching and learning
- Optional peer observations of teaching
- Optional peer review of teaching materials

To foster collaboration and mentorship within the academic community, the following engagement examples are offered:

Example: Collaborate with international colleagues to provide/understand a global perspective on teaching and learning.
Example: Develop co-taught courses with colleagues, to provide multiple perspectives and areas of expertise.
Example: Creation of a course project, where, for example, entrepreneurship students provide business plan analyses of engineering capstone project concepts.
Example: Assemble a panel session involving colleagues across departments, to provide students with multiple perspectives applied to real-world issues.
Example: Offer one-on-one feedback sessions to help students enhance their critical writing and research skills.

Dimension: Professional Development Specific to Teaching and Learning

Ongoing professional development, and being provided the resources and opportunity to do so, is crucial for maintaining and enhancing faculty members' teaching effectiveness. This dimension assesses an instructor's commitment to deliberate improvement of their pedagogical skills, and to staying updated about evolving educational best practices. This also potentially demonstrates a willingness to continually improve curriculum and adopt new approaches that benefit student learning.

Professional development in teaching and learning takes on various forms when it comes to improving instructional skills, knowledge, and effective teaching. Examples of these proactive efforts include the opportunity to attend and present at conferences where educators can exchange ideas, not to mention engage in the latest research, best practices, and trends. In addition, enrolling in courses allows for further understanding of a particular topical area. Leading or participating in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) allows for collaborative learning and shared practice in a supportive environment where challenges and effective strategies can be exchanged. Participating in academic panels also serves as a useful tool for professional development as it allows participants to engage in critical discussions with peers and experts, offering diverse perspectives and fostering a deeper understanding of various teaching and learning issues. Keeping up on the latest in readings and research can aid in staying current about theoretical and practical applications in teaching and learning. Possible examples include:

- Attendance and participation in teaching workshops or seminars focused on pedagogy and instructional strategies
- Presenting or participating in academic conferences with divisions centered around teaching and learning

- Attendance and participation in professional organizations focused on teaching or pedagogical development
- Engagement in peer mentoring or coaching programs for teaching improvement
- Collaboration with instructional designers or educational technologists to enhance teaching methods
- Attendance and participation at workshops or faculty development retreats or institutes focused on pedagogical innovation and best practices

Engaging in professional development is necessary for faculty to remain current on effective teaching and learning applications. Examples of some professional development opportunities include:

Example: Attendance at an academic conference workshop specific to teaching and learning, where participants and presenter share experiences, research, and advice for improving teaching practices.
Example: Joining a conference division specific to teaching and learning, and being actively involved in presentations or discussion sessions.
Example: Completing training programs on the most up-to-date laboratory techniques and developments in equipment.
Example: Participating in professional learning communities focused on pedagogical innovations.
Example: Volunteer as a panelist in a university session on faculty development, sharing strategies and insight on effective teaching practices.

Dimension: Grants and Program Development

Securing grants, or utilizing already-funded grants in innovative ways, is a crucial strategy for advancing educational programs and initiatives. Grant acquisition provides essential, sometimes critical, resources that support student learning and enhance course outcomes. This dimension involves an instructor's efforts to obtain funding, whether internal or external, which may be directly tied to improving teaching and learning within a course or program.

Pursuing grants demonstrates a faculty member's commitment to identifying resources that can be used to meaningfully improve educational outcomes for students. Developing grant proposals also acts as a signal that faculty are actively engaged in advancing effective teaching practices and are dedicated to continuously enhancing the learning environment of their students. Examples of the applicability of grants to improve teaching and learning include:

- Fund faculty attendance at teaching-focused workshops, conferences, and training programs.
- Support faculty in obtaining teaching certificates or credentials directly related to improving their course instruction.

- Support pilot programs that encourage faculty to experiment with innovative teaching methods or technologies.
- Provide assistance with faculty research that investigates innovative and/or best practices to improve teaching and learning outcomes.
- Facilitate initiatives for collaboration across departments or schools, to develop interdisciplinary courses or events.
- Give opportunities for faculty to purchase technologies that support course instruction.
- Provide resources to allow faculty creation of new courses.
- Development of student-oriented events that directly supplement course concepts/curriculum.
- Support student experiential learning opportunities that require travel.

Securing and effectively using grants is essential for advancing educational programs and fostering innovation. Examples may include:

Example: Use of an external grant, to fund a capstone competition where senior students present concepts addressing marginalized social needs.

Example: Secure a grant that funds a study abroad program or an alternative spring break opportunity to provide unique cultural learning experiences for students in another country.

Example: Secure funding to establish academic centers focused on specialized areas (e.g. an entrepreneurship hatchery, or a center for cybersecurity studies).

Example: Use of grant funds to develop new programs in emerging life sciences fields.

Example: Grants that fund international research projects exploring learning dynamics across different cultural contexts.

Pedagogical research is critical to professional development, driving evidence-based improvements in teaching practices and student outcomes. Faculty can integrate findings from pedagogical studies into their classrooms or pursue grants to explore innovative teaching strategies. Supporting faculty engagement with pedagogical research through workshops, seed funding, or grant-writing assistance can foster teaching effectiveness and create scalable models for broader institutional impact.

Dimension: Community Engagement

Community engagement and outreach enrich the learning experience of students by connecting academic learning with real-world applications of relevant concepts. This dimension involves an instructor's efforts to directly involve students in community-based projects, partnerships, service-learning opportunities, and/or mentoring of students by community members. Engaging with the community potentially cultivates civic responsibility, broadens student perspectives, and allows for a deeper understanding of how theoretical course material is directly tied to practical

outcomes.

From a teaching and learning perspective, a community-engaged approach can include elements such as:

- Engagement with local community organizations or stakeholders in course projects or initiatives
- Integration of community-based learning experiences into course curriculum
- Assignments/projects that require students to engage with the community in a meaningful way that includes service learning opportunities, internships, or collaborative research endeavors with local organizations
- Teaching within the community (as part of a university position)

Engaging the community through various initiatives can significantly enhance educational experiences while serving local stakeholders. Some examples consist of:

Example: Invite community guests as speakers on a relevant course topic, or to provide critiques on a course deliverable.

Example: Organize events that directly engage high school or middle school students in the local community (e.g. high school hackathon STEM design challenge competition, with university STEM majors acting as mentors).

Example: Identify a struggling business in the community, and have multiple capstone student teams develop strategic analyses of the organization. Teams would present to the owner(s) and management of the organization, and make feasible recommendations to improve its performance.

Example: Collaborating with local schools or community partners to promote diversity in STEM education.

Example: Work with local agencies to develop community service projects that help students understand central issues and explore potential solutions in their coursework.

These multiple dimensions (as well as other items that may fit within the various areas suggested), in combination with faculty statements of reflection and self-evaluation, should make up the elements used for assessment of faculty teaching effectiveness. Multiple measures--beyond the oft relied-upon student course evaluations-- help to generate a more complete and accurate assessment of teaching. The committee recommends that faculty strive to identify multiple items in the listed areas that best provide a holistic representation of their teaching effectiveness. Faculty are encouraged to compile this additional evidence and provide a narrative that provides context for these additional dimensions of teaching, to help strengthen their case when being assessed. The process of building a portfolio that includes this information not only provides an ongoing opportunity for faculty to provide evidence of teaching strengths and

accomplishments, it also allows faculty (and those evaluating faculty) to identify areas for improvement in their teaching practices.

It is important to note that none of these items is specifically required for faculty to include in their holistic portfolios. This includes items such as peer observations of teaching. While these observations may be encouraged, or even required, by some schools or departments, it is important to note that they are not equivocally recognized as a valid indicator of teaching effectiveness. For instance, observers may have their own limited expertise in a particular field or may not provide a comprehensive picture of an instructor's overall teaching effectiveness . Additionally, some faculty may be reluctant to participate in these observations due to concerns about judgment or a lack of trust in the process. Also to consider is that, "good teaching practice does not guarantee expertise in teaching" (Zeng, 2020, p. 6). If required by certain schools or departments, they should be viewed as formative resources, rather than mandatory elements to include in faculty teaching portfolios. (Charge 6)

Based on the seven proposed dimensions to be used for the assessment of teaching effectiveness/faculty statements, the committee recommends the use of this general set of rubric guidelines (seen in Table 2, below) to help determine overall ratings of teaching effectiveness (ranging from excellent to unsatisfactory). It is also recognized that not all faculty will regularly engage in all seven dimensions of teaching, not all faculty should be expected to be evaluated on all of the dimensions, nor will all faculty be expected to achieve 'excellent' in each of the dimensions. To better address this, it is recommended that individual departments determine a minimum number of dimensions that faculty will be evaluated on, and individual faculty should then select the specific dimensions on which they wish to be evaluated. Individual departments should determine the relative weights assigned to each dimension of teaching effectiveness, keeping in mind that this report advocates for de-emphasizing the weight of student course evaluations, while placing greater emphasis on other dimensions. For assessment by their department chair or supervisor at the end of the academic year, the faculty member would self-assess, providing supporting analysis and documentation for each of the selected dimensions they had previously identified. The department chair or unit supervisor will independently assess <u>each</u> dimension of teaching effectiveness selected by the faculty member, and then determine an overall rating of teaching effectiveness (as determined by the rubric outlined in Table 2).

First-year faculty should focus on the specific responsibilities outlined by their department or supervisor, free from expectations to take on additional roles. Chairs and supervisors should ensure evaluations are based solely on these agreed-upon dimensions, avoiding comparisons to colleagues who may voluntarily take on more. Emphasis should be placed on quality over quantity, allowing new faculty to establish a strong foundation in their primary responsibilities. Clear expectations and fair evaluations are essential for supporting their success and growth.

It is imperative to implement the evaluation recommendations as outlined, ensuring faculty are assessed based only on a finite number of domains they select, rather than across all possible areas. This approach recognizes the differing workload expectations between term and tenured/tenure-track faculty. Term faculty typically devote a larger percentage of their workload to teaching and service, whereas tenured/tenure-track faculty balance teaching, research, and service. To ensure fairness and consistency, additional clarification may be needed to tailor evaluation criteria to reflect these distinct roles. This differentiation will support equitable and transparent evaluations aligned with faculty responsibilities.

Regardless of the dimensions selected, student course evaluations should always be one of the dimensions included as they may provide relevant insights from a key stakeholder group-- students-- who directly experience the teaching conducted within a course. For example, a department may require faculty to be evaluated on a minimum of four dimensions, including student course evaluations. An individual faculty member of that department might then choose to be evaluated on professional development, course design and development, and pedagogical innovation, along with the student course evaluations dimension.

If the faculty member decides to address additional dimensions at that time, beyond the number agreed upon by the department, this should be allowed. As an example, if the faculty member received a grant during the school year, then this should be taken into consideration by their chair or supervisor when assessing teaching. Faculty members should not be evaluated for not addressing additional dimensions beyond those they selected. Additionally, chairs or supervisors should avoid directly comparing the number of dimensions addressed by different faculty members, if some choose to address more than the number agreed upon by the department.

Table 2
Rubric: Assessment of Faculty Teaching Effectiveness

Faculty teaching effectiveness is influenced by numerous variables beyond student course evaluations. When assessing teaching effectiveness, it is recommended not to rely primarily on student course evaluations. Taking this into consideration, department chairs/supervisors should consider a variety of elements when assessing teaching effectiveness, including those items in the summary list of additional dimensions of teaching effectiveness (see Table 3 in the appendix), as well as other variables (e.g., the modality of the courses being taught by faculty, class size, response rate, required vs. elective courses, etc.). As outlined in the report, departments or units should determine the number of dimensions (out of seven) on which faculty will be assessed, including the student course evaluation dimension. Each faculty member will then select the additional specific dimensions they wish to be evaluated on, from the seven dimensions listed in Table 3). It is also recommended that individual departments determine the relative weights that will be used for each of the dimensions, keeping in mind that this report advocates for de-emphasizing the weight of student course evaluations, and increasing emphasis on other dimensions of teaching effectiveness. This

rubric should be used to assess each dimension of teaching effectiveness proposed in the report independently, to then determine an overall rating of teaching effectiveness.

Rating	Description
Excellent	Outstanding performance in teaching. To achieve this rating, the faculty member demonstrates very strong-to-excellent performance across the multiple dimensions of teaching effectiveness on which they are being assessed, based on demonstrated evidence of exceeding teaching expectations (see list of dimensions in Table 3).
Very Good	Strong performance in teaching. To achieve this rating, the faculty member demonstrates strong-to-very strong performance across the multiple dimensions of teaching effectiveness on which they are being assessed, based on demonstrated evidence of meeting teaching expectations (see list of dimensions in Table 3).
Good	Above adequate performance in teaching. To achieve this rating, the faculty member demonstrates adequate-to-strong performance across the multiple dimensions of teaching effectiveness on which they are being assessed, based on validated evidence of meeting teaching expectations (see list of dimensions in Table 3).
Satisfactory	Adequate performance in teaching. To achieve this rating, the faculty member demonstrates adequate performance across the multiple dimensions of teaching effectiveness on which they are being assessed, based on limited evidence of meeting teaching expectations (see list of dimensions in Table 3).
Unsatisfactory	Below adequate performance in teaching. This signifies that the faculty member demonstrates below adequate performance across the multiple dimensions of teaching effectiveness on which they are being assessed, based on insufficient evidence of meeting teaching expectations (see list of dimensions in Table 3).

Further Performance Considerations for Teaching Assessments

Exploring Further Considerations When Assessing Teaching Effectiveness

It is recommended that only department chairs/direct supervisors/or directors, department/ program coordinators (as determined by supervisors), and respective faculty members have access to student course evaluations. This includes both numeric information on the evaluations, as well as any student comments. Technical systems for administering teaching evaluations will be by IRDS. Any changes to content related to student course evaluations of faculty will happen in consultation with Faculty Affairs. Decisions regarding the items used in evaluations, including

the number of items, will follow the recommendations outlined in this report and their integration into the P&T report(s). The Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs will have access to course evaluations and assessments for purposes deemed necessary, at their discretion. Beyond this, teaching evaluations and assessments should remain confidential. (Charge 7)

The committee recommends that chairs or supervisors approach student course evaluations on an individualized basis, avoiding direct, broad comparisons of scores and comments across faculty members or courses without consideration of critical contextual factors. When using evaluations to establish departmental or school-wide benchmarks or averages, it is crucial to account for variables such as course format (e.g., seminar, lecture, lab, studio), delivery mode (e.g., in-person, synchronous online, asynchronous online), course level (e.g., introductory, major-specific, required vs. elective course, capstone), class size, subject area, and the variation in rigor across similar courses.

In cases where evaluations are used to assess teaching effectiveness, comparisons may be more appropriate only if such variables are carefully controlled. For instance, comparing evaluations for the same course taught by different faculty members under similar conditions can provide useful insights into instructional effectiveness, while reducing biases linked to extraneous factors. This approach ensures that the data is used constructively, aligning with departmental goals for faculty development and accountability, while recognizing the limitations of student course evaluations as a singular measure of teaching quality.

It is necessary to underscore that student course evaluations, while valuable, are not without severe limitations. As previously outlined, these limitations encompass biases, subjectivity, and potential disparities in student feedback, as well as low response rates. Attempting direct comparisons across faculty members can exacerbate these issues, leading to inaccurate or unfair assessments of teaching effectiveness. By adopting an individualized approach to course evaluations and accounting for diverse contextual nuances, along with consideration of additional dimensions of teaching effectiveness, supervisors can ensure a more equitable process and a more accurate reflection of teaching quality and effectiveness. When assessing faculty teaching, the committee urges supervisors to remain focused on the following two characteristics of faculty, and the degree to which the various dimensions support faculty:

1. Effectively communicates the knowledge and skills that are central to the course being taught;
2. Actively seeks ways to improve their teaching.

Evaluating teaching effectiveness at the collegiate level (Charge 5), especially within the context of diverse instructional methods, requires the use of several key strategies. First, it is essential to integrate a specific component into the existing evaluation framework that addresses online

teaching and learning. This ensures that the distinctive dynamics and obstacles inherent in online instruction are thoroughly considered during the assessment process. Specific recommendations aimed at enhancing the assessment of teaching effectiveness in alignment with the designated charge are crucial. These recommendations should be tailored to address the identified areas of improvement and may include adjustments to evaluation criteria, processes, or resource allocation.

Further, implementing inclusive evaluation criteria that encompass various dimensions of teaching performance is paramount. These criteria should consider factors such as teaching styles, subject matter expertise, contributions to course development, student mentoring, peer collaboration, and interdisciplinary approaches to instruction.

Teaching Portfolios

Lastly, adopting a holistic approach to teaching evaluation goes beyond quantitative metrics to assess the overall impact and effectiveness of instruction. This proposed model recognizes the multifaceted nature of teaching and the diverse ways in which instructors contribute to student learning and success. Creating a comprehensive portfolio-- one that holistically extends beyond student course evaluations and includes other important dimensions of teaching-- provides a better understanding of teaching effectiveness, for both instructors and supervisors.

Over time, teaching portfolios should be used not only for yearly evaluations of teaching and learning, but also for those faculty going up for promotion and/or tenure. (Charge 6) Components of teaching portfolios may vary depending on the assessment guidelines determined by schools or departments, and content will also vary based on whether the faculty is being assessed for yearly evaluation or promotion and tenure (P&T) purposes. For instance if using the seven dimensions recommended in this report, a yearly evaluation of teaching might consist of a statement by the faculty member outlining their teaching accomplishments from the previous year, their goals for the upcoming year, as well as summaries and explanations of the selected dimensions. This process is presumably less rigorous than the evaluation for P&T purposes.

Over time, these portfolios will holistically document insight and growth of teaching and learning that extends far beyond what student course evaluations alone communicate. Rather than faculty creating portfolios that are only partly related to teaching assessments based primarily on student evaluations, yearly assessments using a multi-dimensional approach to evaluate teaching will allow faculty to collect information that naturally and readily integrates into-- and potentially fortifies-- their overall portfolio over time.

Conclusion

The outlined recommendations can serve as a roadmap for fostering a more nuanced and comprehensive approach to evaluating teaching effectiveness. While no dimension or measure alone is without its flaws, using multiple dimensions when evaluating teaching can result in more

fair and useful outcomes. By integrating specific components for online instruction, tailoring recommendations to address identified areas for improvement, embracing diverse assessment methods, implementing inclusive evaluation criteria, and adopting a holistic perspective, VCU schools and colleges can better recognize, acknowledge, and support effective teaching practices.

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Appendix

Table 3
Summary Table: Dimensions of Assessing Teaching Effectiveness

Faculty teaching performance is influenced by numerous variables, extending beyond student course evaluations. Taking this into consideration, supervisors should consider a variety of elements when assessing teaching effectiveness. Presented here is a resource for faculty to identify activities and efforts that indicate a holistic perspective of their teaching excellence, beyond student course evaluations. This list is not exhaustive, but suggests examples of options for faculty to explore and build upon. As a reminder, it is recommended that individual departments determine the minimum number of dimensions that faculty will be evaluated on (as it should not be expected that all faculty will regularly engage in all seven dimensions). It is also recommended that individual departments determine the relative weights that will be used for each of the dimensions, keeping in mind that this report advocates for de-emphasizing the weight of student course evaluations, and increasing emphasis on other dimensions of teaching effectiveness. Individual faculty may then select the specific dimensions on which they wish to be evaluated (including student course evaluations).

Dimensions of Teaching Effectiveness	**General Examples**
Student Course Evaluations	● Quantitative data from student course evaluations ● Qualitative information (student comments) from student course evaluations ● (Informal mid-term student feedback may also be gathered, but should not be used as part of a formal assessment of teaching)
Course Design and Development	Examples include: ● Overall course design (well-structured with clear objectives, activities, and assessments) ● Adjustments to syllabi and/or course content over time, based on student feedback or instructor observations ● Consistency in revising pedagogy over semesters/years ● Courses are kept current and employ best practices ● Fine-tuning approaches to supporting the learning of course concepts ● Introduction/evolution of assignments supporting course concepts ● Innovative resources ● Events created that directly support the course curriculum

Pedagogical / Curriculum Innovation	Examples include: ● Meaningful or creative alterations to pedagogy/curriculum ● Evidence of practices that meaningfully increase student engagement ● Inclusive teaching practices ● Implementation of practices to ensure accessibility of course materials and activities for students with diverse learning needs ● Promotion of universal design principles to create inclusive learning environments and accessibility to course materials and activities ● Innovative resources/resources utilized in innovative ways ● Developing/creating/teaching a new course that does not currently address important trends/needs ● Introduction of an interdisciplinary course that integrates multiple fields of study. ● Incorporating experiential learning opportunities, such as fieldwork, not typically used in a set of courses
Collaboration and Mentorship	Examples include: ● Mentorship of undergraduate students, graduate, or post doctoral students in areas specifically related to teaching, learning, and scholarship ● Collaboration with colleagues for course design and innovation ● Collaboration with colleagues to implement inclusive teaching strategies ● Joint-efforts across departments/academic units to fortify course concepts and outcomes ● Creation (across departments or academic units) of events, initiatives, and/or programs that supplement courses taught ● Collaboration with colleagues to generate scholarly research specific to teaching and learning ● Optional peer observations of teaching ● Optional peer review of teaching materials
Professional Development Specific to Teaching and Learning	Examples include: ● Attendance and participation in teaching workshops or seminars focused on pedagogy and instructional strategies ● Presenting or participating in academic conferences with divisions centered around teaching and learning

	● Attendance and participation in professional organizations focused on teaching or pedagogical development ● Engagement in peer mentoring or coaching programs for teaching improvement ● Collaboration with instructional designers or educational technologists to enhance teaching methods ● Attendance and participation at workshops or faculty development retreats or institutes focused on pedagogical innovation and best practices
Grants and Program Development	Examples include: ● Fund faculty attendance at teaching-focused workshops, conferences, and training programs. ● Support faculty in obtaining teaching certificates or credentials directly related to improving their course instruction. ● Support pilot programs that encourage faculty to experiment with innovative teaching methods or technologies. ● Provide assistance with faculty research that investigates innovative and/or best practices to improve teaching and learning outcomes. ● Facilitate initiatives for collaboration across departments or schools, to develop interdisciplinary courses or events. ● Give opportunities for faculty to purchase technologies that support course instruction. ● Provide resources to allow faculty creation of new courses. ● Development of student-oriented events that directly supplement course concepts/curriculum. ● Support student experiential learning opportunities that require travel.
Community Engagement	Examples include: ● Engagement with local community organizations or stakeholders in course projects or initiatives ● Integration of community-based learning experiences into course curriculum ● Assignments/projects that require students to engage with the community in a meaningful way that includes service learning opportunities, internships, or collaborative research endeavors with local organizations ● Teaching within the community (as part of a university position)