

THE TEACHING EXCHANGE

BROWN UNIVERSITY • VOLUME 4 / NUMBER 1 • SEPTEMBER 1999



The Scholarship of Teaching: The Carnegie Teaching Academy Campus Conversation Phase I

In October 1998 the Sheridan Center, on behalf of the University, was invited to become a participant in the Campus Program initiated by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The Campus Program is designed to foster a nation-wide discussion of the issues involved in a "Scholarship of Teaching." The invitation to Brown was the result of the keynote speech by Dr. Lee Shulman, President of the Carnegie Foundation, at the Sheridan Center Dedication in October 1997. (See *The Teaching Exchange*, Winter, 1998)

Under the leadership of the Center's Faculty Teaching Fellows, Brown's participation in Phase I of the Campus Conversation program was organized into two different types of forums; a small Faculty Seminar and a Teaching Forum on the same topic which was open to the entire campus. Both explored the issue of how faculty feel they should document the quality of their teaching, for the purposes of both improvement and professional assessment. On March 20, 1999 Dean of the College Nancy Dunbar, Associate Dean Karen Romer and Associate Dean of Medicine Lynn Epstein attended the Campus Conversation Colloquium at the AAHE conference in Washington, along with Sheridan Center Administrative Director Rebecca More.

The first Faculty Seminar on the "scholarship of teaching" was held on March 9 1999. The group of eleven faculty and staff, from across the academic disciplines, had read in advance "Course Anatomy: The Dissection and Analysis of Knowledge

Through Teaching" by Lee S. Shulman to set the discussion into a context. It is Shulman's contention that all scholarship must be: Public, subject to Critical Review and Evaluation and accessible for Exchange and Use by colleagues. Among the many ideas which came out of the very lively discussion were:

1. Self-reflective statements: some faculty write statements of self-reflection each year. They must assess pedagogical innovations and failures attempted the previous year, and propose revisions and innovations for the year ahead. The use of Teaching/Course Portfolios, adapted as appropriate to needs, could be used to achieve a balance between a wide variety of evidence with an emphasis on teaching as work-in-process, demonstrating goals and changes. The goal is to make explicit: "This how I teach my research and here is how I know that students have learned from me." A Sheridan Center ITC could assist in this process.
2. Peer Collegial Exchange: analogous to peer exchange of research scholarship, including mentoring and ongoing peer review, perhaps from colleagues outside the department as well as within it. This would also assist junior/new faculty and graduate students to establish good habits of reflective teaching.
3. Evidence: faculty should use of as wide a variety of evidence of teaching; including syllabi, advising, laboratory work, self-reflective assessments, as well as student evaluations
4. Professional normative culture which supports and rewards teaching in accepted and concrete ways which emphasize its relationship to research and demonstrated student learning. University should reinforce this normative climate with appropriate salary, merit and service rewards.
5. Student Evaluation forms: theses need to be revised to provide substantive information. Furthermore, it would be helpful to develop a means of getting feedback from alumni at regular intervals after graduation:
 - a) Was it an effective learning experience?
 - b) How could it be improved?

The related Teaching Forum "Giving Teaching Its Due: How Does Your Department Document the Quality of Your Teaching?" was held on March 16, 1999 and co-sponsored by The Offices of the Dean of the Faculty and the Dean of the College, and the Sheridan Center. Four department chairs, Profs. Cynthia Garcia-Coll (Education), Thompson Webb (Geological Sciences), Karen Newman (Comparative Literature), Susan Gerbi (Bio - MCB) described the processes by which their

departments documented the quality of undergraduate instruction by their faculty. Following the presentations, the Dean of the Faculty moderated an open discussion among the speakers, a representative each from ConFRAT and the CCC, Calvin Goldscheider (Judaic Studies/) and Jonathan Waage (Bio-EEB), and the audience.

The description by the chairs of their departmental processes indicated that the documentation of teaching across the disciplines varies widely. The **Education** department has developed new criteria for evaluating teaching. They have also instituted peer review, studied the significance of course evaluations and how they change over time to assess patterns in the course evaluations by students. They include the evaluation of syllabi, exams and assignments and they are beginning to use Course Portfolios to describe demonstrations of student outcomes, and the responsiveness of evaluatee to criticism over time. The **Geological Sciences** department has had a peer review system in place since 1979. A team of colleagues rotates among all departmental faculty throughout the year. Senior faculty are reviewed once per year; junior faculty are reviewed twice per year. The reviewing faculty sits in the course 1 or 2 times, review all course materials (syllabi, exams, and assignments). The goal of this review is constructive criticism. Mentoring between senior and junior faculty is intended to foster exchange, not hierarchical advice. An advisory committee to the chair studies the ratings, etc. and then recommends merit raises, etc. **Comparative Literature** is a small department teaching to a large undergraduate population. A peer review process is only for junior faculty. Junior faculty are reviewed annually during their six-year apprenticeship. Senior faculty visit them once per year and look at syllabi as well. There is a discussion about the observations between them before a final report goes into the file. Student evaluations form a department narrative, and are not quantified. The senior faculty are evaluated every 3-5 years to gain a larger perspective on the teaching process. Furthermore, team teaching provides both peer and senior evaluation. Finally, the **Bio - MCB** department begins by selecting faculty who want to do both teaching and research. During the first year, mentoring and peer review is done through team teaching, in which both faculty teach together throughout the semester. Tenure prospects must conduct a formal presentation of research and teaching. The department does assess student evaluations. Graduate students are required to teach for one year and faculty serve as mentors during that process.

Dean Spoehr opened the discussion with the observation that there are two kinds of evaluation: formative to improve teaching, and summative to assess tenure and promotion issues. Can the same process be used for both improvement and reward? Evidence based solely on student evaluations fail to account for a variety of issues; for example, student comprehension of the assessment criteria, the scale of teaching (introductory lecture vs. specialist seminar), or departmental pedagogy. The subject raises questions which include: Are faculty teaching their research? How should we assess teaching beyond the classroom (advising, directing graduate students, honors theses, presentations of research)? The concept of 45% to measure teaching effectiveness is a guide not the total and 30% of that 45% is supposed to account for advising. There was a consensus that the faculty need to describe better what is going on in their teaching and that Portfolio of teaching needs to be developed and produced for ConFRAT reviews. Prof. Newman noted that for many faculty 75% of their time is spent on teaching, but that it is only accorded 45% in the tenure and promotion process. The issue of how to determine and document student outcomes in both classroom and extra-classroom settings was raised. Finally, there was a call for self-evaluation guidelines to assist faculty in developing more effective mechanisms for giving their teaching its due.

The AAHE Colloquium on "Campus Conversations" held in Washington, D.C. provided an opportunity for several members of the Sheridan Center staff, the University administration and Advisory Board to see Brown's efforts as part of a national effort. Over the course of twenty-four hours, there were twenty different sessions offered to consider the program, the ways in which different institutions of higher education (and there was considerable variation within the group) were approaching the process. One highlight was the presentation by Randy Bass, Prof. of American Studies at Georgetown and 1998 Carnegie Pew Fellow, on his electronic "Course Portfolio". A former Sheridan Center Fellow (1990-91) and Brown Ph.D. (English), Prof. Bass demonstrated how his "Course Portfolio" could be used to document his teaching and the responses of the undergraduates in his course. Ultimately, the portfolio was used for his tenure review - successfully! (A recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* described his experience).

The Scholarship of Teaching at Brown "Campus Conversations Phase II" will continue this fall with a Faculty Seminar on designing effective student evaluation

forms. We hope that faculty will use this seminar to share ideas and concerns with colleagues across the University.

Rebecca S. More and Hannelore Rodriguez-Farrar