

## Evaluating Faculty Teaching for Tenure and Promotion

### **1. A Multi-Dimensional "Teaching Portfolio"**

The group proposes moving away from single-score metrics toward a standardized Teaching Portfolio. This portfolio would serve as a repository for diverse evidence, specifically highlighting course design and innovation (how a course is built) alongside traditional delivery (how it is taught).

### **2. Measuring Learning Outcomes & Student Experience**

The discussion emphasizes shifting the focus from "did they like the class?" to "what did they achieve?" This involves:

- Learning Outcomes: Tracking longitudinal changes in academic performance.
- Learning Experience: Using trained student evaluators to provide feedback on the actual classroom environment and support structures rather than just "popularity" metrics.

### **3. Valuing Pedagogical Development & Mentorship**

There is a strong call to reward faculty for the "invisible" work of teaching. This includes:

- Professional Growth: Formal recognition of pedagogical development (e.g., CITL workshops or ACUE training).
- Mentorship: Treating graduate and research mentorship as a core teaching activity, evaluated through mentee feedback and long-term placement data.

### **4. Holistic Student Support and Effort**

The group identified student support as a critical component of teaching excellence. Evaluation should consider how faculty guide students toward success and the "progress and effort over time" shown by both the instructor and the students, rather than a static snapshot at the end of a semester.

### **5. The "Standardization vs. Flexibility" Debate**

While there is a desire for a fixed rubric to ensure fairness, concerns remain regarding the administrative burden. The group is weighing a "menu of options" approach that allows faculty to prove excellence in different ways (e.g., through high-level innovation vs. exceptional student support) without making the documentation process too labor-intensive.

**Student Course Feedback for Collective Educational Assessment****1. The "Popularity Contest" vs. Pedagogical Success**

There is deep skepticism that current student evaluations measure actual learning. The consensus is that they often devolve into a "popularity contest" or a venue for student "venting" rather than providing actionable data. Faculty are calling for a way to separate numerical scores from qualitative feedback and for a mechanism to redact abusive or harassing comments that serve no professional purpose.

**2. Solving the Representation Gap**

Current voluntary evaluations suffer from "extreme bias," capturing only the very happy or the very disgruntled. To fix this, the group suggested tying evaluation completion to the release of final grades. This would ensure a more representative sample of the student body, rather than just the outliers.

**3. Questioning "Perceived" vs. "Objective" Learning**

There is a major disconnect between a student's *perception* of their learning and their *actual* performance. The group questioned the utility of subjective questions like "What did you learn the most?" and suggested moving toward third-party validation or external examiners to determine if a student has mastered the material or simply learned how to "play the game" for a specific professor.

**4. The Timing and "Total Picture" Dilemma**

The window for evaluations is currently flawed. If done in the last week of class, students haven't seen the "full picture" of the course; if done after grades are released, the feedback is heavily biased by the student's satisfaction with their final mark. Finding a "neutral" time for reflection remains a significant hurdle.

**5. Improving Student Course Selection**

To help students make better choices, Lehigh needs to provide more than just "time spent on class" data. The group recommends sharing objective course formats (e.g., flipped vs. lecture) and the required level of active engagement (e.g., heavy discussion). However, there is a caveat: faculty self-reporting of these styles is often inaccurate, suggesting a need for more rigorous course descriptions and advising.

Shared (all-Lehigh) Undergraduate Curriculum

**1. Defining the "Lehigh Graduate" Core**

The proposal seeks to move beyond simple credits toward a values-driven curriculum. The goal is for every student—regardless of their college—to develop a shared toolkit of critical thinking, creativity, and empathy, ensuring they graduate with the skills to make a tangible community impact.

**2. Rebranding and Theming Existing Requirements**

Rather than inventing an entirely new curriculum, the university could "rebrand" current universal requirements like First-Year Writing or Math. One suggestion is to "theme" these courses to make them feel like a collective intellectual experience rather than just boxes to check.

**3. Scaling "Big Questions" and Interdisciplinary Hits**

There is interest in expanding high-impact models like the CAS Big Questions Seminars or popular cross-college hits (e.g., *Coffee and Cosmetics*, *Financial Literacy*, or *Da Vinci* courses). The challenge lies in the high resource cost and scaling these small-group experiences for the entire student body.

**4. Incentivizing Experiential Learning**

A standout idea is to provide dedicated funding (e.g., "\$x per student") specifically for experiential learning. This would empower students to pursue hands-on projects or research throughout their four years, potentially serving as a capstone to the "shared" Lehigh experience.

**5. Navigating Structural and Accreditation Barriers**

While the goal is to increase flexibility for students to explore other colleges, significant hurdles remain:

- Accreditation: Maintaining strict standards for Engineering and Business.
- Scheduling: Addressing bottlenecks in common requirements like Math.
- Unity: Balancing the distinct identities of the individual colleges with the desire to feel like "one community."

**Grading Practices and Purpose****1. The Reliability Crisis: Grading vs. Learning**

There is a significant tension between grades as a measure of accountability and grades as a product of inflation. While some faculty believe an "A" should be the standard if a teacher does their job well, others worry that "consumer" expectations (students paying for a result) and departmental pressures are diluting the credibility of the degree. The "conflation" of grades makes it harder for outside employers to distinguish student readiness.

**2. The Data Gap and Institutional Consistency**

A major hurdle is the lack of accessible, granular data. Faculty feel they are "flying blind" regarding how their grading compares across departments (like COH vs. IC) or against national standards. There is a call for department-level conversations and better data from offices like OID to help chairs and professors evaluate both student success and their own teaching efficacy.

**3. Systematic Inequities in Course Formats**

The notes highlight a "loophole" culture, specifically regarding online summer courses. Students who struggle with rigorous in-person subjects (like Calculus or Econ) often withdraw and take "less compressed" online versions to protect their GPA. This raised concerns about whether these formats maintain the same standards and if they are truly preparing students for the workforce.

**4. Exploring Alternative Assessment Models**

To move away from "obsessive" GPA culture, several faculty-led alternatives were proposed:

- Contract Grading: Establishing clear benchmarks where grades are "earned" based on meeting specific requirements.
- Collaborative/Alternative Grading: Engaging students in defining what "excellence" looks like in their discipline.
- Major-Only Grading: The controversial idea of only providing traditional grades for courses within a student's major.

**5. Decoupling Faculty Evaluations from Grades**

There is a deep-seated fear that student course evaluations are unfairly linked to grading leniency. Faculty are pushing for a multi-dimensional peer-review system (using rubrics and CITL resources) to assess teaching quality, rather than relying on student surveys, which are viewed as "very flawed" and biased.

**AI at Lehigh: Too Hot, Too Cold, or Just Right?**

**1. The "Adoption Gap" and Policy Friction**

There is a stark disconnect between the student body's rapid, extensive use of AI and the faculty's varied levels of resistance. This is exacerbated by a perceived "policy vacuum," where administrative guidelines are seen as lacking the practical substance needed to handle the messy, day-to-day realities of the classroom.

**2. Redefining Academic Rigor and "Process"**

Because AI can easily simulate a finished product (the "essay" or the "code"), faculty are calling for a radical shift in assessment. The focus is moving away from the final grade and toward process-based evaluation, emphasizing student reflection, self-regulation, and "human-only" cognitive engagement.

**3. The "Goldilocks" Dilemma of Integration**

The metaphor of AI being "too hot, too cold, or just right" captures a community divided. While some see AI as an "innovation engine" that expands creative possibilities, others fear it is a "cognitive crutch" contributing to a decline in foundational skills like reading, listening, and interpersonal communication.

**4. Institutional Fairness and Resource Tension**

AI isn't just a pedagogical issue; it's a political one. The notes highlight friction regarding funding, awards, and AI-related recognition, suggesting that the university needs to be more sensitive and transparent about how it incentivizes AI adoption to avoid alienating faculty who are skeptical or prioritizing human-centric teaching.

**5. Call for Sustained Faculty Support (CITL)**

There is a collective agreement that faculty cannot navigate this shift alone. There is an urgent need for professional development via the CITL, specifically focused on:

- Adapting pedagogy for generative AI.
- Improving peer evaluation and formative feedback systems.
- Developing clear, ethical frameworks for student AI use.