

USING SoTL IN UNIVERSITY FACULTY PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Colleges of Agriculture have become increasingly diverse assemblages of both traditional academic units and less traditional professional programs. As a result, differences in academic training, skills set development, and classroom assignments among faculty in these colleges, have made faculty performance evaluations increasingly difficult. This fact, along with greater expectations relating to external funding and peer-review publications, is creating unbalance in scholarly academic pursuits. This paper examines the findings of a consultancy project designed to learn how universities currently define teaching as “scholarship”. The purpose was two-fold: 1) to bring greater balance in, and inclusiveness to, the standards and criteria used to evaluate teaching, research, and outreach work in faculty performance reviews; and 2) to re-establish the significance of teaching to its central role as a “scholarly activity” in university affairs. To this end, interviews with eleven associate or assistant deans at ten Land Grant Universities, Colleges of Agriculture revealed a broad array of strategies used to improve teaching as a scholarly endeavor. This paper reviews the current teaching evaluation methods in place or being considered at these schools; existing or new standards and criteria being used to define the scholarship of teaching and learning through concepts like SoTL and emerging theories in educational psychology; and teaching enhancement strategies in use or proposed by college administrators to improve individual faculty teaching performance. The paper concludes with suggestions for units of design within academia that would facilitate this rebalancing effort and thereby, improve the outcomes of performance reviews for faculty of design.

Keywords

Teaching, scholarship, higher education, faculty performance evaluations, design arts