

Supporting Excellence in Teaching at East Tennessee State University

Report of the Teaching Work Group

February 14, 2017

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Preamble

East Tennessee State University's Mission and Purpose Statement affirms that we prepare students "to become productive, enlightened citizens who actively serve their communities and the world." It asserts that "Education is the university's highest priority" and commits us "to increasing the level of educational attainment in the state and region." Our Values Statement declares that we pursue this mission "through a student-centered community of learning reflecting high standards" Yet neither the mission nor values statement explicitly mentions teaching, the foremost means of advancing our educational charge. ***Supporting Excellence in Teaching at East Tennessee State University*** brings renewed attention to this vital activity.

Determining how ETSU can best support teaching and teachers has never been more important. Teaching is a demanding calling that requires insight not only into subject matter, but also human nature. In recent years seismic shifts in college student demographics, academic readiness, faculty workloads and staffing practices, public expectations, and technology have created even greater challenges for faculty as teachers. It is our sincere hope that this report will set into motion a comprehensive and continuous program to enhance the quality of teaching at ETSU for decades to come.

Teaching Work Group Membership, Charge and Project Calendar

In September 2015 Provost Bert Bach invited a group of faculty to review and evaluate ETSU's support for teaching and propose ways to enhance the university's commitment to teaching excellence. This study, he noted, would emulate recent efforts to enhance the quantity and quality of research, creative and scholarly work done at ETSU.¹

Membership

Members of what came to be called the "teaching work group" (TWG) represented diverse academic disciplines and every kind of education at ETSU—undergraduate, graduate and professional. They included faculty at all ranks, including lecturers:

Alison Barton	Department of Teaching and Learning
Rhonda Brodrick	Nursing Undergraduate Programs
Patrick Brown	Department of Health Sciences
Randy Byington	Department of Allied Health Sciences
Chris Dula	Department of Psychology
Cerrone Foster	Department of Biological Sciences
Jeff Gold	Department of Philosophy and Humanities
Travis Graves	Department of Art and Design
Amy Johnson	Quality Enhancement Plan
Tom Kwasigroch	Department of Biomedical Sciences
Jamie McGill	Department of Mathematics and Statistics
Lorianne Mitchell	Department of Management and Marketing
Brian Odle	Department of Pharmacy Practice
Josh Reid	Department of Literature and Language
Kelly Price-Rhea	Department of Management and Marketing
Craig Wassinger	Department of Physical Therapy

The provost attended all of the work group's biweekly meetings, and Bill Kirkwood, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, facilitated the meetings.

Charge and Project Calendar

In asking the teaching work group faculty to review and evaluate ETSU's support for teaching and propose ways to advance the university's commitment to teaching excellence, Dr. Bach did not provide a detailed charge. He asked the work group to outline its charge, and he emphasized that the TWG's conclusions and recommendations should reflect the committee members' views, not his or Dr. Kirkwood's. The TWG met biweekly in fall 2015 and spring 2016. It approached its work as follows:

¹ ETSU *Strategic Plan for Research 2015*.

October 2015	Write questions to guide investigation
November-December	Discuss questions; identify possible revisions of ETSU policies and practices related to teaching
January 2016	Assign subcommittees to write white papers on key concerns and opportunities
February	Write white papers on assigned topics (subcommittees)
March	Read, review and revise white papers (entire team)
April	Identify prospective recommendations
May	Agree on draft recommendations and sub-recommendations
June-July	Write penultimate report for distribution and public comment
September-October	Release draft report; conduct public comment process
November 2016- January 2017	Revise report in light of public comment process

Public Comment Process

From the outset the TWG planned to conduct a robust public comment process on its draft recommendations. The work group distributed its draft report to all faculty, staff and students early in September 2016 and led a public comment process ending in late October. TWG members attended meetings of university bodies including Academic Council, Deans Council, the Council of Chairs, the Student Government Association, the Graduate and Professional Student Association *and* the Faculty Senate. The work group conducted three town hall meetings and solicited comments via ETSU's public comment website. The public comment process yielded over 200 responses by groups and individuals. In reviewing these responses the TWG noted frequently-mentioned comments and considered the merits of ideas expressed by single individuals. This report reflects contributions by many groups and individuals at ETSU.

Recommendations

Excellent teaching enables a wide range of students to master course and program learning outcomes, encourages students to achieve and sometimes exceed their “personal best” as learners, and equips and inspires students to keep learning after they complete their formal education. Some instructional best practices are discipline-specific; others are universal. Supporting teaching excellence requires attention both to best practices and to the context and conditions in which teaching occurs. Hence, the following recommendations address the institutional context for teaching; instructional skills, methods and resources; compensation, workload, staffing and hiring practices; and the physical and virtual environments in which faculty teach.

The teaching work group recommends the university take 10 steps to support teaching excellence. These recommendations and some of the specific actions they comprise follow. Upon approval, those responsible for implementation will develop more detailed plans.

Recommendation 1: Revise ETSU’s mission statement to affirm the value and centrality of teaching

ETSU’s mission statement affirms that “Education is the university’s highest priority.” However, the word “teaching” does not appear in the mission statement, whereas “research” and “service” are mentioned several times. To correct this omission the university should revise its mission statement as follows (see bold text):

East Tennessee State University prepares students to become productive, enlightened citizens who actively serve their communities and the world. Education is the university’s highest priority, and the institution is committed to increasing the level of educational attainment in the state and region. The university conducts a wide array of educational and research programs and clinical services and is the only Academic Health Sciences Center in the Tennessee Board of Regents System. Through **teaching**, research, creative activity and public service ETSU advances the cultural, intellectual and economic development of the region and the world.

- **ETSU values and promotes excellence in teaching as the cornerstone of its educational mission.**
- ETSU endorses the value of liberal education and provides enriching experiences in honors education, student research and creative activity, study abroad, service learning, and community-based education.
- ETSU honors and preserves the rich heritage of Southern Appalachia through distinctive education, research and service programs and is actively engaged in regional stewardship.
- ETSU affirms the contributions of diverse people, cultures and thought to intellectual, social and economic development.
- ETSU offers students a total university experience that includes cultural and artistic programs, diverse student activities, a variety of residential opportunities, and outstanding recreational and intercollegiate athletic programs.

- ETSU awards degrees in over one hundred baccalaureate, masters and doctoral programs, including distinctive interdisciplinary programs and distance education offerings that serve students from the region and beyond. (approved by the Tennessee Board of Regents 5/28/2014)

Recommendation 2: Establish a center dedicated to improving and supporting teaching

College faculty have knowledge and experience in their areas of specialty and a desire to educate future generations. Because, however, many graduate programs provide little, if any, course work related to the art of teaching, both novice and experienced faculty may struggle to teach in ways that best promote student learning and success. A 2016 EAB report observes that “the most important responsibility of individual faculty members is to enhance the student learning experience. Pedagogical innovations shown to improve student success are abundant on many campuses, but instructors often lack the training . . . needed to replicate those innovations in their particular context.”² Hence many colleges and universities have developed centers to educate and support faculty as they work to become more effective teachers. EAB notes that pedagogical innovation is often hindered by under-resourced or understaffed centers for teaching and learning, but ETSU does not suffer from this problem: We do not have such a center. In this respect we differ from the 19 peer institutions ETSU uses for operational benchmarking, all of which have dedicated centers to support teaching improvement and innovation (Appendix A).

Teaching centers tangibly affirm the primacy of teaching in universities’ missions and make real their commitment to evidence-based, best-practice teaching practices. These centers promote all of the instructional development opportunities and resources available to faculty and serve as “one-stop shops” for teaching resources. Perhaps most important, they can create communities of practice among faculty in related disciplines or across diverse disciplines. A center of teaching excellence at ETSU would serve all of these purposes.

As part of its investigation, the TWG compiled a list of instructional development activities and resources now available at ETSU. We concluded that the university offers a variety of professional development opportunities to faculty, including graduate courses on teaching, workshops and guest speakers, and faculty learning communities. However, many faculty do not take advantage of these opportunities. The TWG attributes this level of involvement to three factors. The first is lack of awareness of instructional development opportunities. Even some TWG members said they were not aware of all of the instructional development opportunities now offered at ETSU. Second, comparatively low participation in instructional development may reflect a belief that ETSU values research, scholarship and community outreach more highly than teaching. Third, even faculty who want to invest more time and energy in their teaching, including instructional development, may not be able to do so in light of their other obligations as faculty. Indeed, they may believe it is not in their best interest to do so in light of expectations for tenure and promotion. We take up this topic under Recommendation 3.

² EAB. (2016). *Defining the faculty role in student success: Building ownership for student progression among individual faculty and distributed academic units*, p.6. Retrieved from: https://www.eab.com/-/media/EAB/Research-and-Insights/AAF/Studies/2016/Defining-the-Faculty-Role-in-Student-Success/32419_EAB_AAF_Defining-the-Faculty-Role-in-Student-Success.pdf

A center for teaching excellence at ETSU will address both of these concerns, while also producing and identifying new resources for teachers.

Mission

A center for teaching excellence at ETSU should pursue the following mission:

- serving as a clearinghouse for information on opportunities for instructional development sponsored by ETSU or available elsewhere;
- sponsoring interdisciplinary faculty learning communities whose members support and encourage each other's work as teachers;
- providing seminars and consultation on best instructional practices within and across disciplines;
- providing funding to bring speakers and workshop leaders specializing in teaching to ETSU and to allow individual faculty to attend off-campus teaching and learning conferences;
- publicizing a teaching idea of the week or teaching research article of the month;
- supporting the scholarship of teaching and learning at ETSU and helping faculty design such research;
- guiding faculty on how to include their research in class curricula when relevant;
- creating a group of faculty liaisons who meet regularly with colleagues in academic departments and colleges, inform them of instructional development opportunities, and invite them to share their teaching methods with colleagues across the university;
- implementing other recommendations in this report:
 - 10.4: conducting an orientation to teaching for new ETSU faculty
 - 6.2: overseeing a distinguished teaching professor program
 - 9: overseeing solicitation of student feedback on teaching and facilitating review of student assessment of instruction (SAI)
 - 9.2: providing guidance to faculty on how to read, interpret and use SAI results and other sources of feedback on teaching
 - 8.1, 8.2: creating a university pool of peer reviewers of teaching and training faculty in academic departments on best practices in peer review of teaching

The TWG also recommends that the center have a steering committee comprising members of the faculty liaison group, a member of the Faculty Senate executive council, and others.

Implementation

The teaching work group recommends expanding the mission and changing the name of the Office of the Quality Enhancement Plan so it also serves as ETSU's center for teaching excellence. Several considerations prompt this recommendation:

1. The QEP office currently serves several purposes of the proposed center. It sponsors faculty learning communities in which individuals in diverse disciplines meet to discuss challenges they face as teachers and ideas for improving teaching and learning. It hosts instructional development workshops and guest speakers. Its online resource center (<http://www.scoop.it/t/intopform-resource-center>) provides information, ideas and instructional materials from a variety of internet sources. The office also provides guidance and technical assistance for assessing teaching innovations.
2. The QEP office has demonstrated success in helping faculty learn and implement new teaching strategies. Each year faculty participating in ETSU's Quality Enhancement Plan complete surveys regarding their experiences. The collated results of surveys conducted in AY 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 include the following:
 - 100% of faculty agreed that they learned teaching methods or ideas by participating in the QEP.
 - 95% of faculty reported that they had adopted at least one idea or teaching method learned in the QEP.
 - 100% of faculty said they learned more about assessment of student learning outcomes by participating in the QEP.
3. The QEP office is centrally located in Sherrod Library; its facilities include offices and a conference room.
4. The office already has several staff needed for a center of teaching excellence, including a full-time director, an instructional designer, an on-site assessment specialist from the office of Institutional Research, and an executive aide. Hence it would not be necessary to create new administrative or staff positions to create a center for teaching excellence.
5. Additional staffing needed to carry out the QEP office's expanded mission would be provided by one or more faculty teaching fellows, who would work for two-year terms (renewable). The fellows would receive annual stipends of \$5000.

Recommendation 3: Adopt staffing, workload and pay practices that support excellence in teaching

ETSU's staffing, workload and pay practices, as well as our tenure and promotion and faculty evaluation processes, influence how faculty are able to meet their many responsibilities. The following actions will enable faculty to devote more time and attention to teaching excellence. These actions will also aid decision-making in departments and colleges about how best to carry out their instructional missions.

3.1 Staff introductory undergraduate courses with passionate, expert teachers.

New undergraduate students first discover what an ETSU education is like through introductory courses, including those in the general education core. They learn how to be students based on what these courses require of them. Introductory courses influence students' choice of a major and whether they remain in the major they declared when they applied to ETSU. Chambliss and Takacs call instructors of introductory courses "gateways to their disciplines."³ Hence the student experience in such courses is vitally important. "When students dislike a freshman-year course they frequently will never again take a course in that subject."⁴ Moreover, students' experience in introductory courses influences whether they remain at ETSU at all. "When good teachers are encountered early," Chambliss and Takacs argue, "they legitimize academic involvement, while poor teachers destroy the reputation of departments and even entire institutions."⁵

At ETSU and elsewhere, however, "not having to teach introductory courses" can be seen as a reward for professional success. The teaching work group urges academic departments and colleges to rethink this notion. Staffing introductory undergraduate courses should reflect their vital importance. This challenge cannot be met simply by assigning only tenure or tenure-track faculty to teach these courses. It calls on departments to clarify what kind of teaching students in introductory courses most need and which individuals are best able to provide it.

3.2 Adopt pay practices that recognize and affirm all aspects of the faculty role—teaching, research and creative activity, and service.

ETSU offers attractive compensation packages to faculty with potential to generate high levels of extramural funding for research or service. We recommend offering additional compensation to faculty who are highly accomplished teachers, especially those who teach large numbers of students in courses vital to their success in college.

3.3 Increase pay for lecturers and adjuncts.

The teaching work group urges the university to increase pay for lecturers and adjuncts, who play a major role in ETSU's instructional mission and are among our most dedicated teachers. Higher pay is essential to recruit highly qualified applicants and to allow lecturers and adjuncts to maintain workloads that enable teaching excellence. Currently many ETSU lecturers and adjuncts teach five or more courses per term (some of them at other schools in the area) simply to earn a living wage. Such workloads make it difficult to devote the time and attention needed for teaching excellence. Increasing pay for lecturers and adjuncts is an investment in the quality of teaching at ETSU.

3.4 Create dual paths to tenure and promotion in academic departments and colleges, allowing faculty to emphasize teaching excellence or research and creative activity in light of their interests and the unit's needs.

Achieving excellence in teaching is demanding, time-intensive work. Some ETSU faculty would welcome the opportunity to concentrate on teaching if their departments explicitly recognized teaching excellence as a path to tenure and promotion, including to the rank of professor. Affording them this opportunity would parallel what is now possible for ETSU's outstanding researchers, some of whom teach little or not at all and concentrate on their research. They do so without fear of jeopardizing their tenure and promotion, but faculty who consider devoting most of their time and energy to teaching fear they do so at some peril.

³ Chambliss, D. F., & Takacs, C. G. (2014). *How College Works*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

⁴ Chambliss & Takacs, p. 53.

⁵ Chambliss & Takacs, p. 155.

Teaching-centered tenure and promotion pathways will allow faculty, with the approval of their department chairs, to invest themselves fully in efforts to improve student learning. The teaching work group applauds the dual paths to tenure and promotion adopted by some of ETSU's academic departments, and we recommend other departments or colleges adopt similar policies. Doing so will be an important step in recognizing and supporting the role of teaching in the university's mission. The TWG hopes adoption of such policies will signal a change in how faculty view their colleagues' work—that they believe excellent teaching to be as noteworthy and valuable as outstanding research or creative activity.

To support implementation of this recommendation, we suggest the university consider adopting a new faculty activity reporting system, such as Digital Measures, Sedona, IOTA or Data180.

3.5 Create aspirational staffing profiles in academic departments that address teaching needs and commitment to teaching excellence.

The teaching work group encourages academic departments, deans *and* administrators to adopt staffing profiles that reflect the importance of ETSU's teaching mission. We urge consideration of best teaching practices when making decisions about how to fill, advertise and hire for new and vacant positions.

3.6 Use course coordinators or other means to oversee and support part-time instructional staffing of courses.

Academic departments can assure consistency across multiple-section courses, especially those taught by adjuncts, by having course coordinators manage those courses. In addition to overseeing course scheduling and recruitment of instructors, course coordinators can support instructors by handling course management details that otherwise would fall to faculty. Course coordinators can also conduct beginning-of-term workshops for instructors of multiple-section courses and hold regular meetings of instructors during the term. These activities not only assure consistency across sections; they create teaching communities whose members support and learn from each other.

Recommendation 4: Provide infrastructure to support best-practice teaching methods in all courses

The physical or virtual environment for teaching and learning can invite or deter best instructional practices. The following actions can reduce obstacles and enable teaching excellence.

4.1 Upon instructor request, assign graduate assistants to courses that have large enrollments or are teaching- and grading-intensive.

Graduate assistants extend the reach of the instructor in a large enrollment class. They can serve as facilitators, create a more favorable student-teacher ratio in the classroom *and* permit instructors to employ small-group or active learning pedagogies that would not be feasible otherwise.⁶

4.2 Redesign instructional spaces, both classrooms and virtual learning environments, to support active learning and collaborative learning.

⁶ Beichner, R. J., Saul, J. M., Abbott, D. S., Morse, J. J., Deardorff, D., Allain, R. J., & Risley, J. S. (2007). The student-centered activities for large enrollment undergraduate programs (SCALE-UP) project. *Research-based Reform of University Physics*, 1(1), 2-39.

Encouraging students' active and collaborative learning is best practice in teaching.⁷ ETSU should gradually but actively redesign its classrooms and online environments to promote such learning.⁸ Moveable furniture, technologies that allow students and instructors to share their work quickly and easily, and acoustically-absorbent materials illustrate ways to improve physical and virtual environments for teaching and learning.

4.3 Pool financial resources, staff and equipment among disciplines and colleges that use similar teaching modalities; create shared teaching resources.

Sharing the cost of purchasing, operating and maintaining specialized instructional equipment across departments and colleges will allow more students to benefit from these resources. Similarly, personnel with specialized expertise might have relationships with several units. Creating peak learning experiences for students should be a collaborative, not competitive, endeavor at ETSU.

Recommendation 5: Clearly communicate expectations for teaching to faculty at the time of hire and in conjunction with annual evaluations and tenure and promotion

Deans and department chairs routinely discuss expected course loads with applicants for faculty positions. The teaching work group urges them to express, as well, their belief that teaching excellence is central to ETSU's educational mission. The TWG also recommends discussing expectations for the quality of teaching with new hires and including important expectations for teaching in faculty contracts.

5.1 Outline specific expectations for teaching, including participation in instructional development, in the contracts for new faculty.

Articulating key expectations for teaching and instructional development in job announcements and faculty contracts will serve both newly hired faculty and the institution well. It will also affirm the centrality of teaching at ETSU. Department chairs should be responsible for including these expectations in job ads and contracts upon hire. Deans should ensure that such expectations appear in ads and contracts submitted for final approval.

5.2 Inform new faculty about criteria used to review teaching; provide feedback using these criteria to all faculty as part of the FAP/FAR/FAE process and during mentoring for tenure and promotion.

We recommend deans and academic department chairs meet with new faculty to clarify the college's and department's philosophy of teaching excellence and the criteria used to review teaching. To promote improvement in teaching, academic departments should use these criteria to provide feedback to all faculty during annual faculty evaluations and mentoring for tenure and promotion.

⁷ Prince, M. (2004). Does active learning work? A review of the research. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 93(3), 223-231.

⁸ <http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/NLI0447.pdf>

Recommendation 6: Increase opportunities to recognize excellence in teaching

ETSU can foster a culture of teaching excellence through increased recognition of teaching accomplishments. Such recognition will raise the profile of teaching and show that the university values teaching as the centerpiece of its educational mission.

6.1 Increase recognition of teaching in academic departments.

The ETSU Foundation annually sponsors the Distinguished Faculty Award in Teaching, among the highest honors the university bestows on faculty. Our colleges also give teaching awards. More widespread recognition of teaching accomplishments can contribute to a culture of teaching excellence at ETSU. Such recognition might occur more frequently than the major awards and could highlight specific teaching accomplishments, such as improving student performance in a course, receiving an instructional development grant, adopting a teaching best practice, developing an instructional technology application or providing instructional development at ETSU or elsewhere.

6.2 Create a special designation faculty can earn for excellence in teaching.

Many universities designate qualifying faculty as distinguished teaching professors. Unlike teaching awards given to one individual annually, several faculty may be named distinguished teaching professors each year. The purpose is to recognize these individuals and enlist their help in promoting teaching across the university. We recommend creating such a program at ETSU. One approach to doing so would be to create a certificate program in which faculty can earn credit toward a special designation through various activities, including participation in instructional development.

Recommendation 7: Develop an instructional assessment process that reviews multiple aspects of teaching and kinds of information

Teaching is a complex, multifaceted activity. SAIs and peer review, while appropriate, are not sufficient ways to portray and review it. The teaching work group recommends the university employ a more fully rounded process that examines all aspects of teaching and many kinds of evidence. Several elements of this process already exist and need only be applied consistently across the university. Modest revisions of the current process can further improve it.

7.1 Follow Faculty Handbook policies that recommend inclusion and review of many kinds of evidence of teaching effectiveness in tenure and promotion applications.

ETSU's tenure and promotion policies require applicants to submit SAI data and peer reviews of teaching. The policies also invite inclusion of evidence of the following elements of teaching excellence:

- command of the subject matter;
- ability to organize and present subject matter in a logical and meaningful way;
- ability to motivate and stimulate creativity, intellectual curiosity, and interest in writing and inquiry in undergraduates and/or graduate students;
- a statement of teaching philosophy;
- course materials;
- other forms of student feedback on teaching;
- evidence of supervision of student projects;
- other forms of student mentorships;
- student products;
- teaching recognition;
- scholarship of teaching and learning;
- evidence of professional development in teaching; and

- evidence of disciplinary or interdisciplinary program or curricular development.

ETSU policies recognize teaching is a complex activity best depicted and evaluated using many kinds of evidence. However, tenure and promotion reviews sometimes focus chiefly on the required evidence—SAIs and peer reviews. We urge tenure and promotion candidates, academic departments and colleges to examine a wide variety of evidence.

7.2 Encourage inclusion of the teaching philosophy in tenure and promotion applications.

Although optional in tenure and promotion applications, the statement of teaching philosophy provides a considered and systematic discussion of a faculty member's own teaching mission. The TWG encourages faculty to include a statement of teaching philosophy in their applications for tenure and promotion, and we urge those reviewing applications to value this statement as the rationale for a faculty member's teaching practices and techniques.

7.3 Provide guidance to faculty on how to demonstrate teaching excellence and effectiveness as the basis for tenure or promotion.

This guidance should come through discipline-specific channels—for instance, the department chair and faculty mentors—as well as from a university-wide source, such as the proposed center for teaching excellence (Recommendation 2).

7.4 Encourage faculty to include all relevant evidence of teaching excellence and effectiveness in faculty activity plans, reports and evaluations (FAPs, FARs, FAEs).

Although the FAP/FAR/FAE process permits inclusion of many kinds of evidence related to teaching, in practice faculty may discuss only a few aspects of their teaching. The work group recommends colleges and departments urge faculty to provide evidence of many aspects of teaching effectiveness in their annual plans and reports. We further recommend that administrators and evaluation committees consider all such evidence when making personnel decisions.

7.5 Encourage faculty, as part of their faculty activity reports (FARs), to reflect on SAI data and other evidence of teaching effectiveness and to describe how they acted or plan to act on that information.

The chief purpose of teaching assessments, including SAIs, is to guide improvement. Hence we urge faculty to discuss how they interpret the evidence of teaching effectiveness provided in FARs and to describe how they acted or plan to act on the evidence. If students' criticisms or suggestions regarding a faculty member's teaching seem valid, department chairs should encourage him or her to create and carry out a plan to respond. These plans and subsequent action should be the primary focus of faculty evaluations. If a response to student feedback bears fruit, those evaluating the faculty member should weigh evidence of improvement especially heavily.

Recommendation 8: Create university-wide resources to support peer review of teaching

Peer observation is an important source of feedback on teaching which can complement student assessments of instruction.⁹ Like student assessment of instruction, it is mandated by ETSU's tenure and promotion policies. The teaching work group recommends taking the following steps to improve the reliability and usefulness of peer review of teaching:

8.1 Provide training for peer reviewers of teaching.

To improve the usefulness of peer reviews of teaching, the teaching work group recommends that departments, colleges or the proposed center for teaching excellence (Recommendation 2) train faculty who will be conducting such reviews. Research indicates that many instructors consider peer review a difficult but necessary element of improvement. A richer process should include educating peer reviewers in "three main areas: (1) judging teaching plans, teaching philosophies, or other teaching materials; (2) giving and receiving observation feedback and writing observation narratives; and (3) interpreting student ratings."¹⁰

8.2 Create a university pool of trained peer reviewers to provide expert observations and formative feedback on instruction.

Finding appropriate and available peers to review teaching can be difficult. A central pool of trained reviewers can help staff peer reviews and enable faculty to request peer reviews by individuals outside their departments and at varying professorial ranks. Creating a central pool can also enhance the value of peer-reviews. Reviewers in the central pool will receive training in broadly applicable instructional practices, equipping them to provide feedback from a non-disciplinary perspective. Their reviews can supplement those by department faculty who are familiar with the special demands of their disciplines. Membership on the central pool should count as a valuable form of service to the university.

8.3 Invite ETSU faculty outside the department of the individual seeking peer review and who hold professorial higher rank than that individual to conduct some of the reviews.

Conducting peer reviews of teaching entirely within an academic unit can prompt colleagues to engage in *quid pro quo* positive reviews. Furthermore, when lower-ranked faculty review the teaching of higher-ranked faculty, they may avoid less than positive reviews because the higher-ranked faculty will later vote on their applications for tenure and promotion. Asking extra-departmental observers of higher rank to conduct some of a department's peer reviews of teaching can reduce these risks and enhance objectivity. The university pool of trained peer reviewers (8.2) would supply individuals to conduct such reviews.

8.4 Create rubrics that provide criteria, defined by the department or college, for peer review of teaching.

We recommend that each academic department or college create a peer-review rubric that includes both universal and discipline-specific criteria for reviewing teaching. An adapted version should be created for courses taught entirely or in part online. Creating such a rubric will prompt a purposeful conversation among faculty about teaching excellence and aid communication with new faculty about expectations for

⁹ Ackerman, D., Gross, B. L., & Vigneron, F. (2009). Peer observation reports and student evaluations of teaching; Who are the experts? *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 55, 18-39.

¹⁰ Mager, D. R., Kazer, M. W., Conelius, J., Shea, J., Lippman, D. T., Torosyan, R., & Nantz, K. (2014). Development, implementation and evaluation of a Peer Review of Teaching (PRoT) initiative in nursing education. *International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship (IJNES)*, 11(1), 113-120. doi:10.1515/ijnes-2013-0019

teaching (Recommendation 5). Standardized rubrics will also assist department and college tenure and promotion committees in their evaluation of evidence of excellence in teaching.

Recommendation 9: Improve student assessment of instruction so it provides more timely, reliable and actionable feedback

Receiving timely, reliable and actionable feedback is essential for improving any activity, especially one as challenging as teaching. Student assessment of instruction (SAI) is the only formal, university-wide process through which students share their perceptions of instructors' teaching and their own learning. No source of information on teaching effectiveness has been more intensely debated or studied than student assessment of instruction.¹¹ Over the last 30 years thousands of studies have shown SAI to be generally valid and reliable.¹² The same research emphasizes that SAIs should be used in conjunction with several other measures of teaching.¹³ Hence the teaching work group does not support use of SAI data as the sole or even primary means by which chairs, deans and others evaluate teaching. In light of the importance of student feedback, however, we propose the following actions to improve SAIs at ETSU:

9.1 As necessary, allow students to complete online SAIs in-class to increase response rates.

One benefit of online administration of SAIs is eliminating the need to take class time to give them. If, however, response rates are lower than desired and faculty have tried other ways to increase them—most importantly, by urging their students to complete SAIs—another option is having students complete online SAIs in class, using internet-enabled mobile devices.

9.2 Include a comment section for each Likert-scale item on the current SAI questionnaire.

Faculty often say they learn as much or more from students' comments as from numerical SAI data. ETSU's platform for online SAIs readily accommodates open-ended items. We suggest adding comment sections to Likert-scale items to increase the amount of useful data instructors get from SAIs.

9.2 Provide guidance to faculty and administrators on how to read, interpret and appropriately use SAI results.

The value of SAIs hinges on the faculty member's ability to interpret and act on the data. The proposed center for teaching excellence (Recommendation 2) should offer workshops and other resources to help faculty and administrators read, interpret and respond to SAI data. In addition, the center could advise faculty and academic departments on ways to increase response rates.

¹¹ Benton, S. L. & Cashin, W. E. (2012) Student Ratings of Teaching: A Summary of Research and Literature. IDEA paper #50.

¹² Benton & Cashin (2012); Centra, J. A. (2003) Will teachers receive higher student evaluations by giving higher grades and less work? *Research in Higher Education*. 44: 495-517; Benton, S. L. & Ryalls, K. R. (2016) Challenging Misconceptions About Students Ratings of Instruction. IDEA paper #58.

¹³ Benton & Ryalls (2016); Marsh, H. W. & Dunkin, M. J (1997) Students' Evaluations of University Teaching: a Multidimensional Perspective. in *Effective teaching in higher education: research and practice*. Perry & Smart [eds.] New York: Agathon Press; Berk, R. A. (2005) Survey of 12 Strategies to Measure Teaching Effectiveness. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. 17:48-62

- 9.3 Explore alternatives to ETSU’s current student assessment of instruction process with respect to survey items and the method and time of administration, including the IDEA Center’s student assessment of instruction system.

Members of the TWG concur that both the substance and protocol of student assessment of instruction at ETSU can be improved, and we recommend exploring other options. One alternative is the IDEA Center’s student assessment of instruction system (<http://www.ideaedu.org>). Created in 1975 and proven to be valid and reliable, it offers “diagnostic,” “learning essentials” and “teaching essentials” tools and end-of-term and “anytime” administration. The diagnostic tool provides information about student progress on course objectives, instructor teaching methods and overall impressions of the instructor and course. The learning essentials tool measures average student progress on relevant learning objectives and impressions of the instructor and course. The teaching essentials tool provides formative feedback about teaching methods highly correlated with instructor and course excellence. The “anytime” option provides feedback whenever desired, including in each class or weekly. We recommend studying and piloting the IDEA system. Should ETSU choose not to replace its current SAI process, it should evaluate the current SAI questions using criteria proposed by Berk.¹⁴

Recommendation 10: Actively encourage faculty to participate in instructional development

The members of the teaching work group believe we and all faculty can improve as teachers. Instructional development not only improves teaching, but supports and celebrates it. Yet although ETSU offers many instructional development events and resources, they are often underutilized. We propose the following actions to increase use of these opportunities.

- 10.1 Clearly communicate to faculty that academic departments and colleges value their participation in instructional development.

The TWG urges department chairs and deans to use all available means to encourage faculty to participate in instructional development events and use instructional resources. The work group does not know how much encouragement chairs and deans now offer, but there may be room for improvement. Urging participation during department and college meetings, providing coverage for classes faculty will miss due to instructional development events, and publicly recognizing how participation led to improvements in teaching can all show that chairs and deans value instructional development.

- 10.2 Encourage faculty applying for tenure or promotion to document participation in instructional development and application of ideas and skills gained.

ETSU’s Faculty Handbook states that tenure candidates “may choose to include” various kinds of evidence related to teaching in their applications, including “evidence of professional development in teaching.” The promotion policy makes no mention of instructional development. The teaching work group urges tenure and promotion applicants to document participation in instructional development and subsequent application of ideas and skills gained. Those reviewing tenure and promotion applications should give significant consideration to well-documented instructional development. These activities are essential for teaching excellence and central to the university’s educational mission.

¹⁴ Berk, R. A. (2006) *Thirteen strategies to measure college teaching: A consumer’s guide to rating scale construction, assessment, and decision making for faculty, administrators, and clinicians*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

10.3 Encourage documentation of participation in instructional development and application of ideas and skills gained in Faculty Activity Reports.

For reasons similar to those cited in 10.2 we urge faculty to document instructional development in the annual FAP/FAR/FAE process and those evaluating faculty to give appropriate weight to such activity.

10.4 Sponsor a two- to three-day orientation on teaching for all new faculty, including part-time, non-tenure track, tenure-track and tenured individuals.

ETSU should require new faculty to attend an orientation to teaching, whose topics might include an overview of the students we serve, academic and non-academic support services for ETSU students, ways to engage students in learning, and course management. The teaching work group suggests modeling the orientation on the Quality Enhancement Plan summer institute, now in its fourth year. The institute features presentations by ETSU faculty on challenges and best practices in teaching and enables participants to meet colleagues across the university and share ideas. Creating a required orientation to teaching will send a clear message to our newest faculty about the importance of ETSU's teaching mission.

10.5 Compensate adjuncts for participating in instructional development.

In recognition of part-time faculty members' contributions to ETSU's teaching mission, the university should compensate these faculty for participating in required instructional development, such as the orientation on teaching for new faculty.

Appendix A: ETSU Peer Institutions with Teaching Centers

Source of peer institutions: [ETSU office of institutional research](#)

Institution	Name of Center	Description
Ball State University	Office of Educational Excellence	The Office of Educational Excellence (OEE) promotes the advancement of teaching through informed reflection and practice. OEE supports the various elements of teaching—curriculum development, course design, pedagogy, assessment, and research—through a range of professional development services and resources.
Central Michigan University	Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning	The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, a unit of Academic Development, provides faculty and anyone connected with student learning as much timely information and support as possible in order to continuously improve teaching and learning at CMU. This website offers you a vast research-based tool for immediate ideas and resources.
East Carolina University	Office for Faculty Excellence	The mission of the ECU Office for Faculty Excellence, a unit within the Division of Academic Affairs, is to provide faculty (including tenured, tenure-track, adjunct, and emerging faculty) with resources and services that foster and support their success at the university in teaching, research, and service and to work with other units and offices to accomplish that mission. The OFE is committed to teaching and learning principles and initiatives designed to promote scholarly teaching, recognize and reward outstanding teaching, provide assessment of and growth in teaching and learning, nurture research, and invite peer collaborations and review.
Florida Atlantic University	Center for Teaching and Learning	The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at Florida Atlantic University is dedicated to ensuring the academic success of every student and to providing faculty the necessary tools and resources to excel in teaching. Our ultimate goal is the creation of a culture of engagement, where students become fully engaged in the learning process, both with their instructors and with their peers; and where faculty from diverse disciplines can engage one another in the pedagogy of teaching, with the ultimate goal of enhancing student learning.
Georgia Southern University	Center for Teaching and Learning	The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) supports faculty and graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) in realizing their potential as educators and scholars committed to teaching excellence. Furthering the Georgia Southern University mission to “create learning experiences informed by scholarly practice, research, and creative activities,” CTL promotes innovative, research-based approaches to teaching and learning. Our programs foster a culture of teaching by bringing together a community of educators to learn from and with each other.
Indiana State University	Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence	Sponsors professional development events, a master teacher program, a course transformation academy; provides teaching resources and at-a-glance information on calendar events for faculty.
Marshall University	Center for Teaching and Learning	The mission of the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is to empower faculty in their teaching and research by cultivating a campus culture that values pedagogical, disciplinary, and program-based inquiry in support of student learning. More specifically, CTL provides opportunities for faculty to engage with, and develop, the instruments of teaching and learning (e.g., curricula and pedagogy) and the processes of teaching and learning (e.g., data-driven teaching strategies, reflective and metacognitive practices). In addition to professional development opportunities, the center administers the annual faculty awards, conducts classroom observations, directs a New Faculty Orientation program, hosts an annual teaching conference, and

		maintains a library of resource books related to a variety of teaching and learning topics. Housed within CTL are the Writing Across the Curriculum and Service Learning programs. The work of the Center is organized around a framework of engaged scholarship. With this model, we focus on what faculty do. In other words, we develop and host professional development opportunities that support teaching, research and creative activity, community engagement and the relationships among those three that make faculty more engaging and effective teachers, researchers, and citizens.
Oakland University	Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning	The mission of CETL is to support, promote and enhance student, faculty and university success in our diverse academic community. CETL enhances student success and learning by supporting the overall success of the faculty and the university community through pedagogical, professional and leadership development opportunities.
Old Dominion University	Center for Learning and Teaching	The mission of the Center for Learning and Teaching is twofold: to support, promote, and enhance teaching, learning, and research; and to foster innovation. . . . [E]stablished in 1994 as part of the University's Strategic Plan, [the center] serves the University by assisting faculty members to use and integrate technology into the teaching/learning process. CLT offers a wide variety of services related to faculty support. Among those services are instructional design, course design and development, individual course management, one-on-one consultation, course Web site development, workshops, proctored testing, the graphic design of posters and instructional aids, and the demonstration and evaluation of tools and technologies. CLT also coordinates the Faculty Innovator Grants and each year's Summer Institute.
Sam Houston State University	Professional and Academic Center for Excellence	The Professional and Academic Center for Excellence (PACE) is dedicated to providing professional development for administration, faculty, staff, and students. Using programs and services founded on evidence-based teaching and leadership strategies, our ultimate goal is effective student learning and development.
Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville	Center for Teaching Excellence	The Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) serves as the one central unit for expert assistance in sound pedagogy, instructional technology, and overall enhancement for on-campus and distance education courses. The CTE provides support for faculty, teaching assistants, and staff through a variety of services and solutions designed to meet SIU's changing needs in teaching and learning.
Texas Woman's University	Center for Faculty Excellence	The Center for Faculty Excellence at TWU serves faculty of all ranks on all three campuses. The center is a "hub" or "commons" for professional development activities and it provides resources, support, and inspiration for the development and advancement of faculty in all career phases as teachers, scholars, mentors and leaders.
University of Arkansas at Little Rock	Academy for Teaching and Learning Excellence	The mission of the UALR Academy for Teaching and Learning Excellence is to foster excellence in teaching and learning through sharing ideas, collaborating, and building a strong community of engaged teachers and learners.
University of Missouri-Kansas City	Teaching and Learning Center	The Teaching and Learning Center at Mizzou is a network of professional development units. The center is structured to better serve the needs of everyone with teaching positions members throughout their careers by integrating existing services and creating new alliances and synergies to maximize use of MU's expertise and financial resources. The center strives to improve MU's ability to communicate its teaching development activities to internal and external publics in a coordinated, clear, strategic manner.

		The ultimate goals of Teaching and Learning Center are to enhance student engagement and student learning.
University of North Carolina-Charlotte	Center for Teaching and Learning	<p>The Center for Teaching and Learning enhances the University’s mission of teaching and learning excellence, provides enterprise level instructional technologies, and champions the advancement of scholarly teaching. Major priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing professional development opportunities to ensure constructive and active learning environments. • Leveraging the experience and wisdom of faculty leaders to promote teaching excellence. • Encouraging innovative research and scholarly publication on teaching and learning. • Identifying, developing, and sustaining enterprise level instructional technology systems. • Collaborating with campus constituents to assess programs, tools, and services that support their teaching and learning needs. • Contributing to the development of policies, initiatives, and campus-wide culture that supports excellence in teaching.
University of North Carolina-Greensboro	University Teaching and Learning Commons	The mission of the University Teaching and Learning Commons (UTLC) is to enhance UNCG’s academic culture by providing our diverse faculty community with innovative research-based programs and services that promote effective teaching and cultivate student academic success.
University of Northern Colorado	Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning	The Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning is celebrating its tenth year of existence and proudly announces that it has set new attendance records for professional development. After a review of the program since its inception in 2006, the CETL has shown a steady increase in participation rates (17,424 total registrants, 2006 – 2015).Its repertoire of Faculty Forums, Staff Forums, the Well-Rounded Scholar Series, Supervisor Training, Skillsoft, emerging technology, and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning has improved each year and we are expecting to eclipse 2500 participants in 2015-2016.Click on the links below to view detailed data regarding our growth, evolution, and the community that we serve:
University of South Alabama	Innovation in Learning Center	As the teaching and learning center for University of South Alabama, the Innovation in Learning Center promotes a culture of collaborative support for effective teaching and enhanced student learning in traditional, web-enhanced, blended, and fully-online instructional environments.
Wright State University-Main Campus	Center for Teaching and Learning	The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is committed to providing the technologies, techniques, and training needed to optimize student learning. Through faculty partnerships and collaboration with other units on campus, CTL promotes excellence in teaching, learning, and service throughout the Wright State community.