

Teaching Excellence at UAA

Ad hoc Committee on the Evaluation of Teaching

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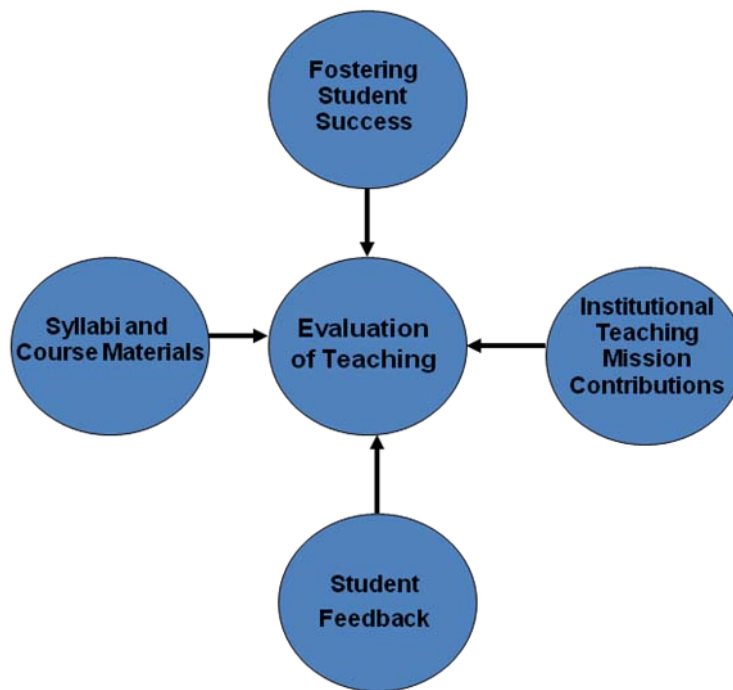
Introduction

In December 2007 UAA's Faculty Senate passed a resolution to change the way that we reflect upon and evaluate our teaching. The resolution introduced a new culture at UAA, where the many facets of our teaching lives can be acknowledged and rewarded. The following is a quotation from the memo brought to the Senate by the Ad Hoc IDEA Committee:

“Teaching is a multifaceted, complex human task. In higher education, the teaching and learning exchange occurs in multiple contexts (face to face, on-line, off campus) and through varied teacher student interactions (advising, mentoring, research collaborations, etc.). The impact of the teaching and learning exchange on teacher and student may not be fully realized until long after the student has left the campus.

The following recommendations are based not on attempts to produce ‘evidence of good teaching,’ but rather to demonstrate the efforts made to evolve and develop over one’s faculty career (assistant, associate, full professor) as a thoughtful, critically reflective, and effective teacher. Teaching can be a vulnerable and lonely task. The recommendations for documenting one’s evolution as a teacher are designed to encourage faculty to talk with one another about teaching. Our commitment is to the development of a campus culture that supports and recognizes faculty endeavors to improve the teaching learning exchange.”

Based on the work of the committee, the Senate adopted a four-part model upon which teaching would be evaluated:



The following document, "Teaching Excellence at UAA" is a continuation of the Senate's work. Among the members of the committee who wrote this are two members of the original Ad Hoc committee. We see this document as development of the original work, building on its ideas and taking on its attitudes of optimism and confidence. We believe that teaching is the fundamental purpose of our work at UAA, and we believe that the evaluation model we have built will help us as a community to not only evaluate our work but also to more firmly establish a culture of teaching.

Teaching Excellence at UAA

"We are currently preparing students for jobs that don't yet exist... using technologies that haven't been invented... in order to solve problems we don't even know are problems yet."

From "Shift Happens"

Teaching well is UAA's primary mission. Teaching encompasses a range of activities, from classroom instruction to including students in research, mentoring to curriculum development, from participating in faculty development to the scholarship of teaching and beyond. Faculty members are expected to be reflective practitioners who continuously examine their effectiveness as educators. In addition, their teaching should reveal and develop diverse perspectives, encourage and facilitate inquiry, creativity, and life-long learning, and work to integrate various principles central to the vision of UAA. Faculty members' contributions to teaching and learning shall be evaluated using the Teaching Performance Standards by Rank for scholarly achievement (listed below).

This document is conceived in four parts:

- Teaching Excellence Model
- Principles of Teaching Excellence
- Aspects of Teaching
- Teaching Portfolio

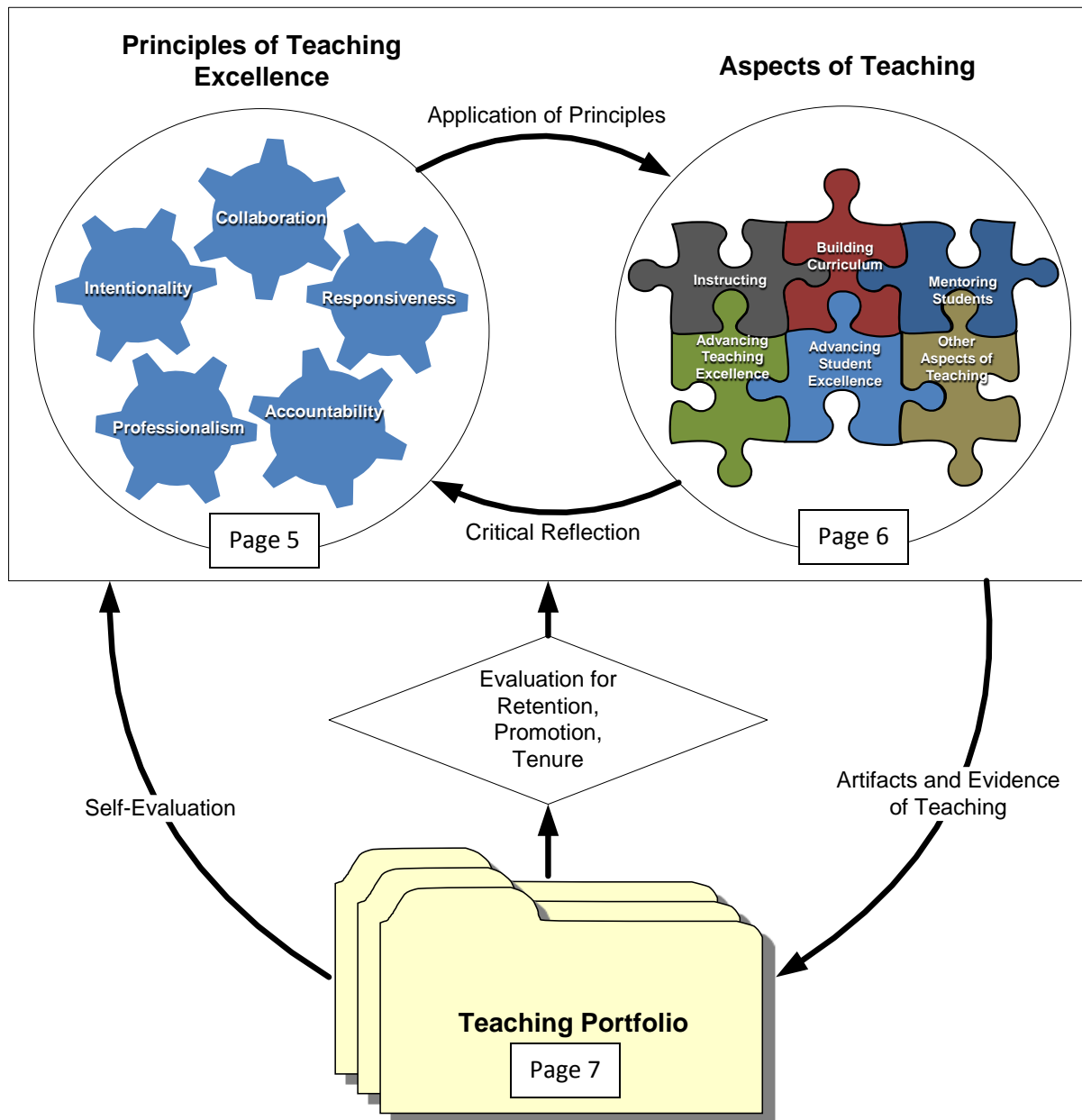
We have offered both written descriptions of each section and a visual model to help express the function and relationship of each part. For instance, the "Principles of Teaching Excellence" are depicted as gears, illustrating the importance of all of the principles and their integral relationship to one another. The "Aspects of Teaching" are shown as pieces of a puzzle. Each faculty member has a different workload, and this document intends to show that each part of our teaching, from mentoring students to writing letters of recommendation to meeting with students in a lab is a piece within a bigger picture. Finally, the "Teaching Portfolio" is a tool to help evaluators assess our progress, but, perhaps more importantly, it is a tool to help us reflect upon, develop and acknowledge our own teaching.

UAA's Institutional Learning Outcomes specify that by the time students graduate they will be able to:

- Communicate effectively
- Employ critical thinking skills
- Demonstrate skills for independent learning and inquiry, including information literacy
- Demonstrate a knowledge base in the required general education areas
- Demonstrate specific knowledge and skills in a major discipline or degree

Teaching Excellence Model

This model depicts the interrelationship of the components necessary for the development of teaching excellence. These components are the driving principles, activities, reflections upon, expressions of, improvements to and validations of that excellence. The “Principles of Teaching Excellence” (Intentionality, Collaboration, Responsiveness, Accountability, and Professionalism) are the gears that drive effective teaching. However, teaching itself is more comprehensive than just instruction. The “Aspects of Teaching” also include activities such as building curriculum, mentoring, and advancing student and teaching excellence. The “Teaching Portfolio” is the opportunity for faculty to showcase those teaching activities and provide evidence supporting the intellectual work of their teaching. Evaluation of the teaching portfolio, by both the faculty member and reviewers, should serve as a catalyst to further develop teaching excellence rather than merely judge it. The intent should always be directed toward improvement of teaching effectiveness by the individual, program and institution.



Principles of Teaching Excellence



Intentionality

Intentionality is the process of thoughtful design of learning experiences along with critical reflection in the development, updating and improvement of your courses and program curriculum.

Collaboration

Collaboration can be described as working together, particularly through joint intellectual teaching endeavors. It may encompass working with faculty colleagues in your department, college, the university, and other institutions, as well as with students and community members to share values, ideas, best practices and encouragement for the improvement of teaching.

Responsiveness

Responsiveness is the awareness of changes within your discipline and of instructional challenges, and working toward improvement by modifying course content and program curriculum as necessary. Additionally, it is the monitoring of the learning environment to ensure that all students can fully access learning materials and actively engage in an exploration of course content through reflection on your teaching materials and techniques.

Accountability

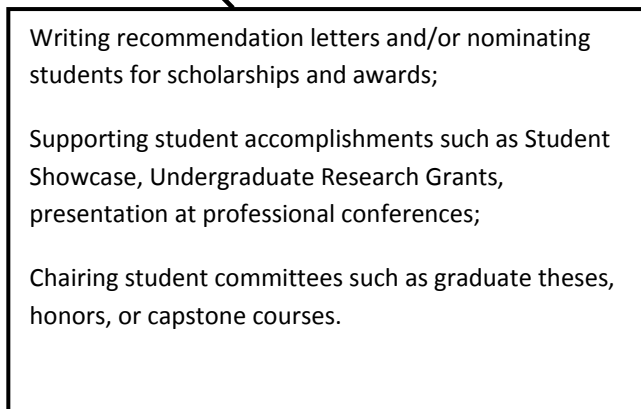
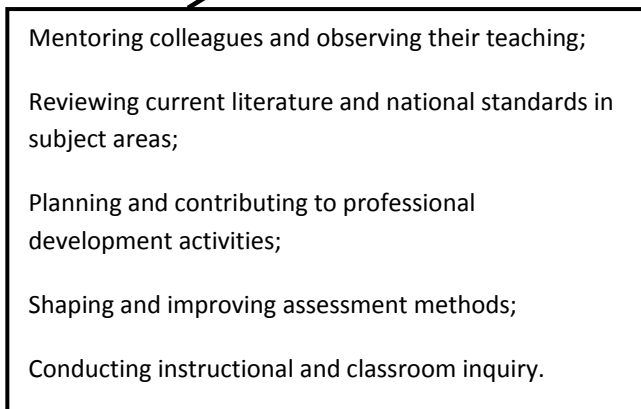
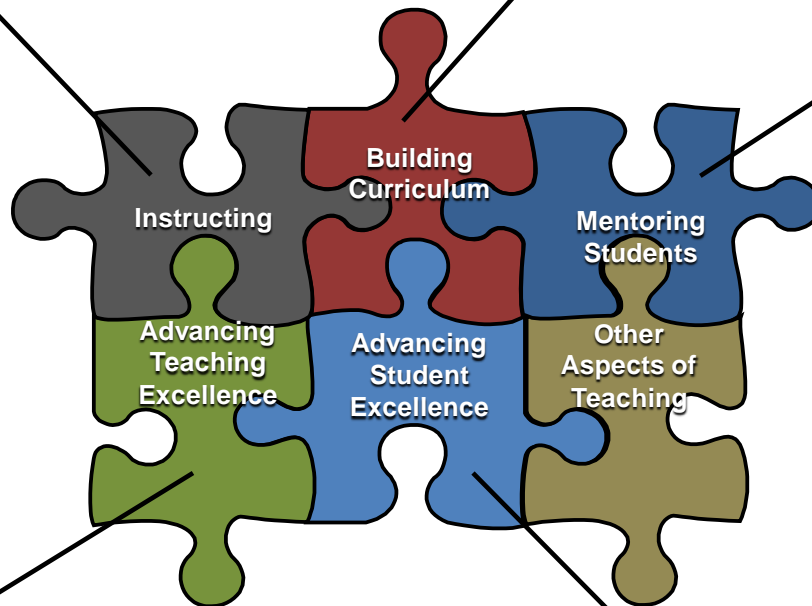
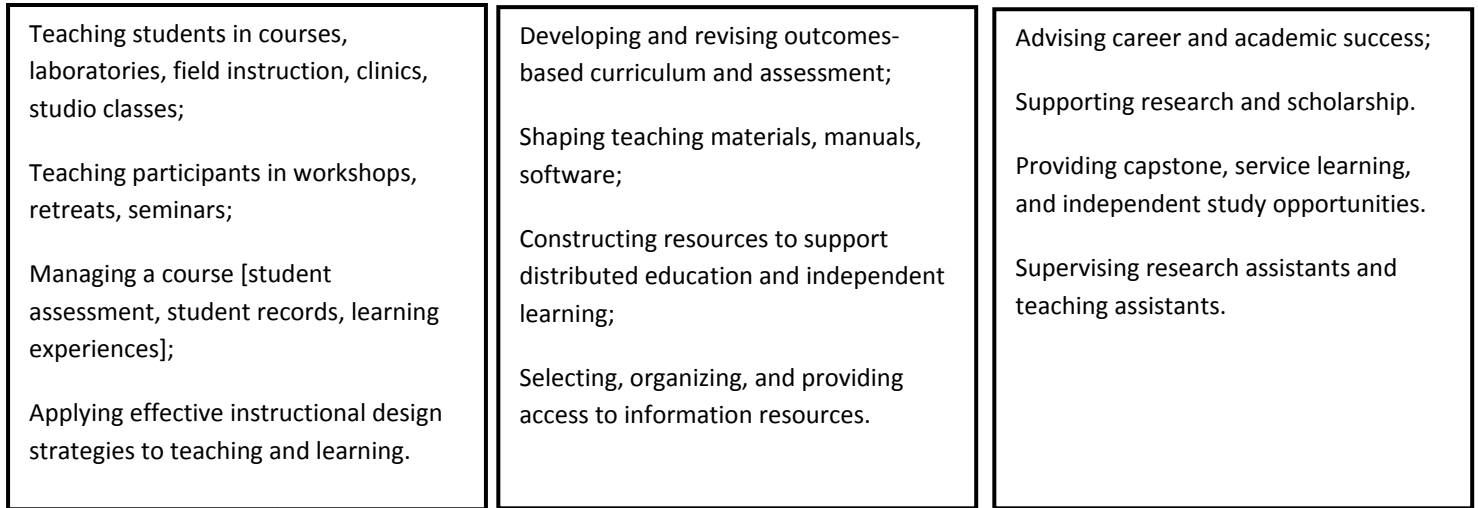
Accountability requires that faculty members not only meet contractual requirements associated with their teaching but also demonstrate a commitment to address, credit (both positive and negative) and document the learning that occurs in the classroom.

Professionalism

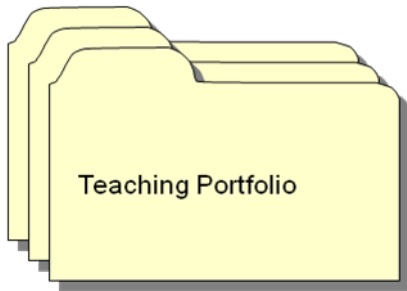
Professionalism is a multifaceted principle that encompasses teaching in a way that demonstrates a commitment to improvement of self, discipline, program and institution with the goal of developing students to become lifelong, self-directed learners. This commitment involves modeling the expectations of the discipline for performance, service, research and engagement. Additionally, it involves creating a classroom atmosphere in which students can participate freely, learn from one another, and develop inquiry and mastery of the subject while valuing the diverse perspectives within the campus, local and global communities.

Aspects of Teaching

Teaching is much more than instruction in the classroom or lab. The work of teaching embraces curriculum writing, developing course materials, cultivating community internships, writing letters of recommendation, mentoring, planning and conducting workshops for colleagues, and so on. Every teacher combines these aspects in different ways at different times. Depending on workload, rank and discipline, the pieces of this puzzle should result in a “bigger picture,” one which is driven by the “Principles of Teaching Excellence.”



Teaching Portfolio



Faculty review files will contain a teaching portfolio. A teaching portfolio showcases faculty members’ teaching activities and provides evidence supporting the intellectual work of their teaching. In the portfolio the intellectual work of teaching will be demonstrated in the context of the “Principles of Teaching Excellence” (Intentionality, Collaboration, Responsiveness, Accountability and Professionalism). “Aspects of Teaching” which apply these teaching principles follow, supported by evidence of those activities. While it is not expected that all faculty will engage in all of the activities listed, those “Aspects

of Teaching” engaged in by the faculty member should encompass the “Principles of Teaching Excellence.” The teaching portfolio then makes this work visible by creating a coherent narrative for assessing, reflecting upon and documenting the work of teaching. For each element, faculty should discuss the teaching activities they have engaged in that demonstrate that particular element, and in doing so, support their assertion with specific *artifacts* (syllabi, curriculum documents, exams, student work, peer observation, etc.) included in the portfolio. The list shown in the table is not inclusive, but rather suggestive, and many other artifacts exist that may be appropriate for inclusion in the portfolio.

Sample Artifacts for the Teaching Portfolio	
Teaching Materials	Syllabi, Assignments, Exams, Course Plans, Pedagogy Description, Record of Classroom Activities, Virtual & Online Activities, Alternative Approaches to Lecture
Student Work	Papers, Art, Performance, Research, Record of Achievement, Poster Presentations
Peer Observation	Peer Mentoring, Peer Coaching, Peer Evaluation of Teaching, Peer Collaboration
Curriculum	Curriculum Actions Proposed/Passed, Course and Program Descriptions & Development
Professional Assessment	Assessment of Student Progress Over Time, Self-Assessment
Student Response	Empirical Surveys, Qualitative Surveys, Letters, Peer Assessments
Classroom Inquiry	The goal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is to make learning visible. An inquiry based approach can be used to demonstrate the connection between teaching methods used and the learning that occurs in the classroom. Changes in instructional methods and content and the impact on student learning should be demonstrated.

It is important to note that no attempt is being made to suggest which artifacts support an activity, as a single artifact could easily support more than one. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of

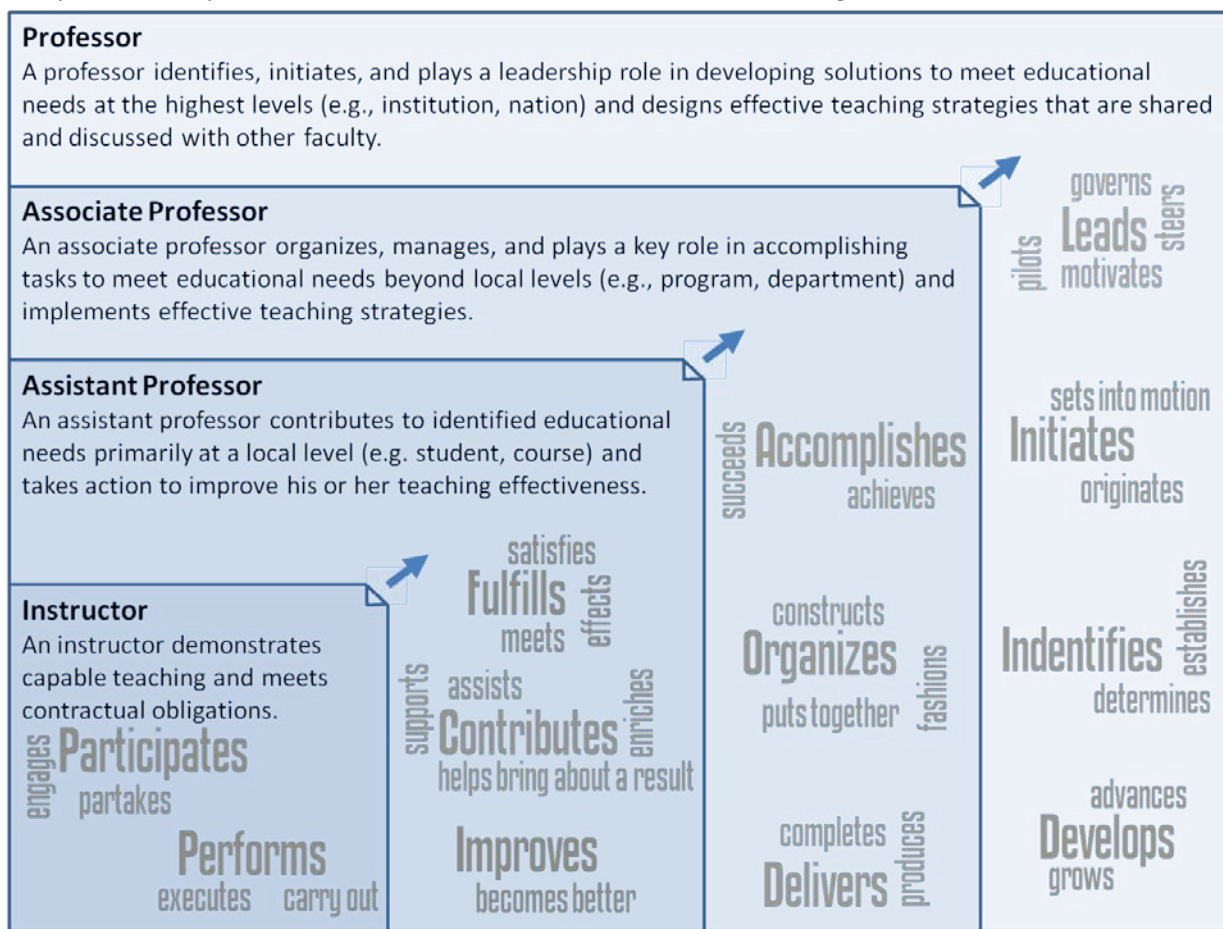
Teaching recommends that each faculty member use “reflection as a filter” to choose what to include in the portfolio. That is, only include artifacts upon which you can offer detailed reflection that can be clearly linked to your teaching.

Finally, each teaching portfolio is unique to the faculty member’s workload, rank and discipline. Consequently, it is up to the individual faculty member to explain his or her portfolio in terms of design, content, and specific evidence that demonstrates teaching effectiveness. This can be accomplished through a myriad of approaches, keeping in mind that attention to the continuity illustrating the artifacts must support the “Aspects of Teaching” which apply the “Principles of Teaching Excellence.”

Teaching Performance Standards by Rank

The teaching activities of faculty members being considered for tenure and/or promotion include a diverse range of workload assignments and responsibilities designed to meet the specific needs of the particular discipline, college and/or campus. It is incumbent on faculty members to present, through the “Teaching Portfolio,” evidence indicating the attainment of performance before promotion to a higher rank. Accompanying narrative with discussion of scope, accountabilities, impact, and application of the “Principles of Teaching Excellence” at the appropriate level is necessary to aid reviewers in evaluating the degree of performance for each activity submitted for review.

Candidates must demonstrate through the file that their teaching meets the specified criteria for retention of, periodic review of, or promotion to the appropriate rank as stated in this document, the Faculty Handbook, and college/program guidelines. The following definitions and example actions are not intended to be comprehensive but are provided to guide the candidate and reviewer by indicating the degree of teaching performance expected for a particular activity and rank. Additionally, as faculty members advance through the ranks, it should be emphasized that teaching activities are performed and evaluated with a primary focus on qualitative rather than quantitative criteria. The teaching activities are expected to increase in impact and scope from Instructor to Professor as illustrated in the figure below.



The following table is intended as a general guide for candidates presenting their teaching activities and reviewers evaluating those activities.

Examples of Teaching Activities by Rank

Assistant Professor	Associate Professor	Professor
<p><i>Responds and contributes to identified educational needs primarily at a local level and takes action to improve his or her teaching effectiveness by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lecturing and conducting classroom activities that facilitate student learning; - Contributing to course and curriculum development; - Refining teaching practices in response to student and peer evaluations; - Refining and improving teaching practices based on self-reflection and assessment; - Participating in teaching and learning professional development workshops; - Serving as an effective academic advisor to students. 	<p><i>Organizes, manages, and plays a key role in accomplishing tasks to meet educational needs beyond local levels and implements effective teaching strategies by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrating excellence in facilitating student learning; - Successfully adapting new or innovative teaching practices while developing or revising outcomes-based courses; - Organizing course content and curriculum based on course and program assessment; - Delivering substantial contributions to teaching and learning development workshops; - Mentoring undergraduate or graduate students in internship, professional development, research or scholarly activities that enhance student learning; - Providing peer review of teaching, mentoring, and curricular activities; - Collaborating with faculty from other disciplines on teaching and learning activities. 	<p><i>Identifies, initiates and plays a leadership role in developing solutions to meet educational needs at the highest levels and designs effective teaching strategies that are shared and discussed with other faculty by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initiating new or revised curriculum; - Developing innovative ways of teaching subject matter to a variety of student populations; - Mentoring other faculty in teaching and learning activities; - Planning, organizing, and leading teaching and learning or curriculum development workshops; - Effective and compassionate mentoring of diverse students toward academic, professional, and personal goals; - Developing exemplary internship or professional development programs that are emulated by others; - Establishing frameworks for peer and student review of teaching, mentoring, and curricular activities; - Collaborating with faculty from other disciplines and institutions on the development of teaching and learning materials; - Presenting at national teaching and learning conferences.

Addendum - Writing a Self Review of Teaching

“If you cannot – in the long run – tell everyone what you have been doing, your doing has been worthless.”

Erwin Schrödinger

The “Self Review” is your argument to reviewers about your performance during the review period under consideration. As such, consider yourself your own advocate. The “Self Review of Teaching” should make explicit reference to the application of the “Principles of Teaching Excellence” (Intentionality, Collaboration, Responsiveness, Accountability, and Professionalism). Demonstrating that you have applied these principles in your “Aspects of Teaching” is helpful both because you and the reviewers will be using shared language and because they apply across all disciplines.

As you address these principles, consider that your teaching role is very broad, including instruction, support for student development, development of learning experiences and resources, mentoring and guiding students, and professional advancement of your own and others’ teaching. See the “Aspect of Teaching” section for a more detailed discussion. In addition, see the “Teaching Portfolio” section that lists examples of artifacts that you might use to illustrate your success. Provide artifacts supporting all items which the reviewer is to consider in the file. If an activity is presented as an indication of performance for the review, it must have accompanying documentation. Without documentation the reviewer cannot adequately evaluate the activity.

The goal of the “Self Review” is to provide a perspective from which other reviewers can understand and appreciate the work you have done during the period under review. For example, instead of stating that you used course management software such as Blackboard, you might describe what materials and activities were conducted online and what effect this had on course delivery and student learning.

The “Self Review” provides the framework from which others may understand and evaluate your work. This framework should help readers understand why you chose particular work, what results you achieved, and how you and others have valued your work. Think of the review as your opportunity to introduce yourself and your achievements to colleagues and administrators who may not know you or your specific discipline well, but who understand the “Principles of Teaching Excellence,” are eminently teachable and are interested in you.

The file itself runs the risk of being difficult to negotiate for readers and evaluators because each of us has idiosyncratic approaches to organizing material. This can often leave reviewers confused (don’t confuse the reviewer, ever!). The “Self Review” should remedy this problem in two ways. First, your argument about your performance should serve as an organizing principle for the documents. Second, you should cite relevant artifacts in the file within your “Self Review.” Good organization and required content allow reviewers to recognize a candidate’s accomplishments. The candidate may be performing at the level appropriate for the review but if the file is poorly organized and difficult to follow the reviewer will not be able to evaluate that performance.

Most importantly, *lead the reviewer to your desired conclusion*. The file should be a coherent narrative of how the candidate meets the requirements of the review. It should be easy to read and present a picture to the reviewer of the candidate's performance. The "Self Review" serves as this pivotal narrative portion and should refer to all appropriate artifacts in the file to support your goal for the review.