

Peer Consultation: *Working Together* *on* *Teaching*

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Student Affairs: Partners with Students in Success
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Peer Faculty Consultation Program

Goal

The goal is to have faculty members help faculty members gain focused feedback on instructional performance while learning ways to improve their own classroom efforts. It involves faculty and students in improving classroom instruction.

Rationale

A faculty member desires feedback on his/her instructional performance. Students want to provide it, but independently lack the insight and skill to do it effectively. Evaluation may cloud the issue as both students and faculty have vested interests in preserving complimentary relationships. Outside consultants are expensive. Faculty, however, can effectively serve as consultants to each other. Through a focused feedback procedure (Appendix A) carefully orchestrated by a faculty colleague, feedback is collected from the heretofore untapped collective wisdom of students in a class. The technique builds on students' eagerness to be helpful and capitalizes on an individual faculty member's desire to have feedback in a less threatening way that can be used to improve instructional efforts.

Procedures

The faculty member indicates a willingness to participate, arranges for a briefing on the technique, consults with others who have used it, commits to his/her own feedback session, arranges the necessary supports for collecting data and leaves ready to work with a colleague in a focused feedback session on their own. Both commit to returning at a later date for a feedback session designed to enlighten one another as to the successes and pitfalls of this procedure.

Outcomes

Students learn to give collective feedback; faculty gain insight on teaching and learn to be consultants to one another in the process.

Appendix A

General

The peer faculty consultation program, described in more detail by Tiberius and Janzen*, is a procedure that consists of a pair of teachers working with one another and with groups of their students to assess their teaching and to develop strategies for improvement. It is aimed at improving teaching by providing focused feedback. As stated by Tiberius and Janzen, the method is aimed at "fine tuning" experienced teachers rather than "rough tuning" the novice.

Steps in Peer Faculty Consultation

1. Provide a clear description and intent of the feedback. Discuss the spirit of this feedback, and the importance--an emphasis on teaching and learning how to improve our teaching.
2. In soliciting feedback from students, ask for what has been particularly helpful to their learning as well as what has been a hindrance to their learning in this class. Before beginning to brainstorm these questions, ask students to jot down their ideas on a piece of paper.
3. Ask students to brainstorm ideas that fit into both the helpful and hindrance categories.
4. After the brainstorming, ask for examples of any items that need clarification.
5. Provide students with 10 dots, 5 of each color, and ask them to place their votes on those items that they feel are most important. Students can assign or apportion one dot per item, or as many dots per item as they wish.
6. Ask students for their help, specifically what can the instructor do to improve some of the things that were a hindrance to their learning in this course. At the end of this activity, ask students to identify the one improvement that they would like to most see in the instructor for the next time the course is taught.
7. It would be a good idea to ask for a sample of students to react to the written summary of this project to clarify any information or misinterpretations on the part of the peer consultant.

These are suggested steps but adopt them to fit your particular needs and your