

Valuing Teaching and the 5-Year Academic Plan

TAWG

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The Teaching Assessment Working Group, TAWG, was established by Vice President, Academic and Provost Peter Keller in August 2017 to encourage an active conversation amongst faculty at SFU about how we assess and value teaching. The group includes representation from all faculties, from SFUFA, SCUTL, and Faculty Relations, and includes both teaching and research faculty.

We have met with several groups to identify concerns and invite feedback, and we have also reviewed several recent reports related to these issues:

- Task Force on Teaching and Learning: Final Report (2010)
- Teaching and Course Evaluation Project: Final Report (2013)
- Developing a Teaching Assessment Framework for Simon Fraser University: Final Report of the Student Evaluation of Teaching and Course Working Group (Draft)

Based on this work, we have articulated a number of issues that should be considered. We are sending this early summary of our work to inform the university community as it prepares the 2018-2023 Academic Plan.

To preface this discussion, we'll start with SFU's Mission Statement:

To be the leading engaged university defined by its dynamic integration of **innovative education**, cutting-edge research, and far-reaching community engagement.

Our belief is that an **innovative education** requires a faculty that is engaged in their teaching and that support and encouragement are required to enable faculty to create and implement innovations. However, various concerns about the climate for teaching and teaching support have been raised in our consultations:

- Faculty are reluctant to try new things because it may negatively impact their teaching assessments and evaluations
- Faculty do not feel their teaching is valued
- Teaching excellence is not broadly recognized, rewarded, celebrated or communicated
- TPCs are not comfortable using methods of teaching assessment other than student surveys
- There is a lack of alignment between departmental TPC Criteria and TPC practice
- After at least ten years of discussion and reports, some progress has been made (e.g. creation of TLC, introduction of university-wide student evaluation system, establishment of a new Associate Vice President, Academic - Learning and Teaching, introduction of Faculty Teaching Fellows) but more could be done to make ongoing professional development in teaching a core value of the institution

Based on these concerns, we discussed what goals we would like to achieve in this 5-year planning cycle. We hope that faculty, academic units, and the university will keep these in mind during the development of their contributions to SFU's 2018-2023 Academic Plan. Goals for faculty, academic units and the university are described below.

1. Faculty members are reflective practitioners within a community of teaching
 - They are aware of teaching expectations for their rank and position
 - They are reflective and responsive teachers
 - They adapt their teaching to changing environments
 - They are comfortable taking risks and are rewarded for experimenting with their teaching practices
 - They feel they are part of a culture where teaching is valued
 - Outstanding teaching is celebrated
2. Academic units value and reward teaching as one of the primary academic responsibilities
 - Expectations for different ranks for teaching and research faculty are clear
 - Teaching is valued at hiring and promotion
 - TPCs have the tools and knowledge to value effective teaching
 - Multiple teaching assessment methods are integrated into the work of TPCs
 - TPC criteria reflect best practice and current teaching research, and are used to inform tenure and promotion decisions; criteria, practice and assessment are aligned
 - Academic units identify and promote their best teachers for faculty, university, national, and international teaching awards
3. The University provides support to faculty members and academic units for the design, development, delivery, and evaluation of quality teaching
 - SFU has articulated a vision statement and principles to provide direction and common purpose around teaching and learning
 - The capacity to understand teaching and evaluate it well is present in all steps in the process
 - There is a clear definition of expectations for both teaching effectiveness and teaching excellence, and the standards expected for different ranks for teaching and research faculty
 - A general framework for methods of teaching assessment has been adopted, which can be used to inform the work of academic units
 - There is a program of professional development and support that is clearly aligned with this evaluation framework
 - The University has established a support system to provide formative feedback and instructional development to all interested faculty
 - There is a program of support and/or training for all those involved in the review process
 - The expectations, evaluation framework, and support mechanisms are regularly reviewed

- Institutional policies regarding teaching and learning are regularly examined and revised
- Appropriate resources, including the TLC, are tasked with supporting the advancement of teaching and learning throughout the university

We hope you will consider these goals as you craft your submissions to SFU's 2018-2023 Academic Plan. During the next months TAWG will consider a road map of how these goals could be achieved. We will also be developing a set of strategies to value teaching practice and will be making recommendations to facilitate consistency, flexibility and robustness of reviews of teaching practice of use to all stakeholders.