Engaging in Transformative Practices: The Peer Review of Teaching Initiative

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Since 2003, the Center for Academic Excellence (CAE) at Fairfield University has provided extensive formative support to faculty, offering consultations, mid-semester assessment (also known as SGIDs – small group instructional diagnosis), faculty and professional learning communities and workshops on all aspects of teaching.

In an effort to make teaching visible and shift a culture focused on summative evaluations of teaching from student evaluations, teaching awards and hierarchical peer observations of teaching as the preferred evidence of teaching effectiveness, the CAE launched a multi-year Peer Review of Teaching (PRoT) initiative in collaboration with the Faculty Development & Evaluation Committee (FDEC). Supported by faculty governance and an external grant from the Davis Educational Foundation, this focused and sustained engagement with faculty as they developed Peer Review of Teaching (PRoT) systems offered great potential for cultural shift.

PRoT Initiative Goals

Connect Faculty
Promote Dialogue
Expand Notion of Peer Review
Make Teaching Visible

Timeline of PRoT Elements & Events

Prior to 2010
CAE offering

Open to All

Department Workshops
Customized for departments

Workshops

• “Peer Review of Teaching a Useful Process”
• “Peer Review of Teaching – Nuts & Bolts”
• Faculty Development Day: “Workshop to Develop a Structure for Peer Review”

Year 1
2010 – 2011

Grant-Funded

Team-Based PRoT Work
Engaged 4 teams

• Professional development for teams
• Sharing of team work during Fall & Spring Faculty Development Days “Re-Envisioning PRoT: Poster Presentation & Dialogue”
• Workshops open to all on “Teaching Circles: Models of Collaboration” and “Classroom Observation”

Year 2
2011 – 2012

Grant-Funded

Team-Based PRoT Work
Engaged 3 teams

• Professional development for teams
• Facilitated team gatherings
• Hosted conversation with campus leaders – school deans and provost

Year 3
2012 – 2013

Dissemination of team PRoT work through two newsletters

Opportunities & Challenges

Further Development and Sustainability of PRoT

• Faculty governance committee drafting new language for R&T guidelines –recognize PRoT
• Anecdotal information the R&T candidates include evidence of engagement in expanded PRoT
• New faculty mentoring now include interdisciplinary, reciprocal classroom visits and conversations
• 3 PRoT teams alumni sustaining their systems.
• Creation of an accessible source of exemplars of PRoT engagement, reflection/documentation

Selected References


