

# **A Report from the ad hoc Committee on Peer Review of Teaching to the University Senate**

**(Draft for) May 7, 2001**

**Modified after input from faculty at two 'Open Forums'  
and at the University Senate meeting of April 9, 2001**

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The members of the ad hoc Committee on Peer Review of Teaching (Jeff Brand, Tom Christensen, James Council, Margaret Fitzgerald, Bob Harrold, Elvin Isgrig, Sarah Jacobson, Rhonda Magel, G. Padmanabhan, Thomas Riley, William Slanger, and Curt Ziniel) have, through review of the latest research and recommendations from experts on peer review of teaching and how people learn, developed materials to support peer review of teaching at North Dakota State University. Expanded review of teaching was approved by the University Senate in 1999 and the Teaching and Professional Service committee reported in 2000 that the policy had not been widely implemented.

Throughout the process, the ad hoc Committee's progress and results have been shared with the Teaching and Professional Service Committee, for which one of the responsibilities is to promote the use of valid and reliable procedures to evaluate teaching.

Peer review of teaching, if done systematically, could provide better feedback to the instructor and will provide data on other dimensions of teaching that Student Rating Of Instruction (SROI) is not capable of capturing. A flexible and voluntary process of peer review of teaching during an evaluation period is one way faculty will be able to meet the expectations of Policy 332, Section 1, as modified by the members of the University Senate on March 19, 2001. Faculty access to methods of rigorous peer review could be particularly important for recognition and reward of faculty for their scholarship of teaching.

## **Based on the ad hoc Committee's findings:**

1. It is recommended that peer review of teaching elements developed by the ad hoc Committee in collaboration with the University Senate Committee on Teaching and Professional Service be adopted by the members of the University Senate as a faculty-owned, flexible, formative or summative tool for participants to use as a supplement to the information obtained by SROI, support student learning, and encourage the recognition of scholarship of teaching at North Dakota State University.

2. The involvement of administration in the process should be limited to:
  - a) Providing rewards and incentives for those faculty participating in the process, and
  - b) Considering Peer Review of Teaching as substantive evidence of quality teaching, efforts to improve teaching, or both.
3. It is recommended that implementation of Peer Review of Teaching begin as a **voluntary activity during the 2001 - 2002 academic year** after a workshop to be conducted as a part of Faculty Development Days in August, 2001.
4. It is recommended that ten members of the NDSU faculty be identified as "Peer Reviewers" for peer review activities developed by the ad hoc Committee on Peer Review of Teaching. These activities could be used by faculty to add to, supplement, or replace peer review activities currently established within departments.

It is proposed that peer reviewers receive yearly training in peer review, and receive release-time to provide leadership to the peer review process. Members of this group could be available to lead a two-member team in reviewing elements of a course identified by the faculty member.

It is proposed that the second member of the Peer Review team should be from the same department or discipline as the faculty member whose teaching was to be evaluated. In the case of Peer Review of Syllabi, the second peer could be a faculty member from another institution.

Training sessions for faculty wishing to learn more about participating in the Peer Review process could be offered as a part of faculty development activities.

5. Elements for Peer Review of Teaching developed at this point include:
  - a) Peer Observation of Classroom Instruction
  - b) Peer Interviewing of Students, and
  - c) Peer Review of Syllabi

Each element of peer review could incorporate various levels of formality. Informal peer-to-peer procedures represent one level of activity and more formal procedures involving trained Peer Reviewers could be associated with higher levels of achievement. Procedures recommended by the ad hoc Committee call for the peer reviewers to meet with the course instructor(s) for a discussion of the classroom operations to be reviewed.

Peer Review of Classroom Instruction includes a range of scenarios, one of which could involve the two peer reviewers meeting with the instructor before initiating the observation process to mutually identify any special features of classroom instruction to be observed in the review. The Peer Review team should typically make two classroom observations and provide written and oral feedback to the faculty member within two weeks of the second classroom observation.

Peer Interviewing of Students could be accomplished within the classroom and in the absence of the instructor. For classes with large enrollments or faculty wishing to retain as much class-time as possible, a representative sample of the students in the class could be interviewed outside of the normal class meeting times, including after completion of the course. After discussion with the instructor to identify any areas of focus, student comments should be compiled, summarized, and written and oral comments provided to the instructor within two weeks of the date when students were interviewed.

Peer Review of Syllabi might typically involve an initial meeting of the Peer Review team with the faculty member to identify the learning objectives for the course, the level of preparation of the students, and other factors pertinent to the development of an objective and constructive review. University requirements, the basic elements of a good syllabus, and content may be reviewed. Oral and written evaluations of the syllabus should be provided to the faculty member within two weeks of the discussion to identify the context of the course.

The recommendation of these materials does not imply that any given faculty person must use all of them for every peer review or a course.

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The ad hoc Committee believes that these recommendations serve the best interests of NDSU faculty and students. These recommendations help celebrate the scholarship of teaching as we strive to enhance the learning of our students. Further, the ad hoc Committee believes that these recommendations are consistent with all of President Chapman's five "Major Themes" and directly support two of them: "Students are Paramount" and "It's About People".