

August 1, 2008

To: Department Chairs

From: Larry E. Vote, provost

Re: Evaluation of Teaching

According to the mission of the College and the College By-laws, effective teaching is the most important faculty responsibility. Thus, it is the most important dimension of annual faculty evaluations as well as tenure and promotion decisions. We have a rather well-defined process for evaluation of teaching. In this memo I review some important teaching evaluation issues to be considered by you and your colleagues.

Under the College By-laws passed by the faculty and the Board of Trustees in 2007, the administration of the College approved course evaluations for all courses larger than 1 person taught in a semester is mandatory. Instructor reports of the College's approved student evaluations for the **four** semesters preceding evaluation for a. pre-tenure contract, b. tenure, c. promotion to associate professor, d. promotion to full professor, and e. five-year post-tenure review must be included in the evaluation file. The faculty member may include the reports from all semesters preceding the evaluation. Individual student response forms must not be placed in the file. Additional evaluations generated by the instructor for personal assessment purposes must not be included. In addition, the new By-laws mandate narrative evaluations in all courses in the two of the three semesters preceding the tenure decision and for promotion to full professor.

These course evaluation provisions give faculty some latitude in establishing their record of teaching effectiveness, at least the record based on course evaluations. Some faculty have expressed concern about potential evaluation difficulties when a faculty member uses course evaluations only as required under the College By-laws. It is important to recall that the College By-laws require systematic evidence in teaching from both student and peer evaluations in order to be appointed to a tenured position or be promoted to associate or full professor. I offer the following observations for you and your faculty to consider in decisions regarding course evaluations.

1. Since faculty members are required to possess both breadth and depth in their disciplines, they will normally be asked to teach a range of courses throughout their careers. Therefore, faculty should be able to provide systematic evidence of teaching effectiveness in lower-level as well as more advanced courses.
2. By having evaluations administered in their classes every semester, faculty are better able to identify areas of concern, address them, and obtain evidence in course evaluations that the concerns are being successfully addressed.
3. According to the By-laws, all tenured members should acquire knowledge of the candidate's teaching, through discussions about teaching with the candidate, review and discussion of teaching materials, or classroom observations. The senior faculty in each department must determine how this knowledge is to be acquired. On the other hand, faculty are encouraged to take the initiative in ensuring that their colleagues have sufficiently comprehensive information to use in the evaluation of their teaching.
4. There is an extensive and especially valuable literature on good instructional practices, effective and innovative pedagogies and the reliable evaluation of teaching. Faculty are encouraged to rely on the findings in this literature for establishing teaching evaluation processes within their departments and for development of their individual records of

teaching effectiveness. Faculty are strongly encouraged to develop a teaching portfolio as a means for presenting systematic and comprehensive evidence of their teaching record, skills, and experience. Teaching portfolios may include such items as: syllabi, exams, assignments, self assessments, peer evaluations, the products of student work, student feed-back garnered through classroom activities, etc. The College provides an ongoing series of faculty development opportunities that assist faculty in developing a portfolio to represent their teaching record. The associate provost for academic affairs and/or the associate provost for academic services stand ready to discuss teaching portfolios with interested faculty and to assist faculty in the general development of a strong portfolio.

5. Individuals who join the St. Mary's faculty with a shortened probationary period or with tenure should establish the basis for student and colleague evaluations of their teaching in a timely manner.
6. Visiting faculty, term faculty not clearly scheduled for reappointment, and part-time faculty should expect to have their teaching evaluated regularly. The college approved course evaluation instrument will be administered routinely for their courses and department chairs are urged to review the results with visitors, term faculty and adjuncts on a regular basis.