Evaluation of Faculty Members

John L. Colaizzi

College of Pharmacy Rutgers University, P.O. Box 789, Piscataway, NJ 08855-0789

Whether a college of pharmacy exists within a public or private university or even as a free-standing college, the availability of resources always imposes limitations on programmatic and faculty development. Academic institutions perpetually go through cycles which influence their available resources. Ups and downs in the available student applicant pool can affect tuition-driven resources. Shortfalls in state revenue, especially during times of fiscal recession, can quickly tighten university budgets and reverse hard-won advances made in better times. The availability of external funding in various areas to support research, faculty development, capital construction, student tuition or fellowships for graduate students can also change dramatically and suddenly. This is especially true of federally funded support.

For all of these reasons faculty and academic administrators legitimately worry about having sufficient resources to support institutional missions and individual goals. But year after year, the single area in which academic institutions expend the largest proportion of their precious and limited financial resources is for faculty. Since faculty constitute the major “currency of the realm” in the academic enterprise, they represent the resource which academic administrators must utilize most judiciously and efficaciously if they are to succeed in meeting their objectives, particularly at times when resources are especially limited.

In higher education, as in the health care industry, we are in an age of accountability. Academic administrators and faculty as well have grown accustomed to the unending stream of questionnaires, surveys, and accountability reports whereby they are to render an accounting of what they do with the resources which are provided to them. In the health care field it has become evident that we have entered the era of cost containment, an era that appears likely to endure well into the next century. For pharmaceutical education, therefore, one can reasonably assume that responsible, effective utilization of our principal and most valuable resource, our faculty, will remain an urgent imperative. A well developed system of evaluation of faculty is an essential component of our need to ensure that the faculty of our nation’s schools and colleges of pharmacy will succeed in their critically important roles.

Evaluation of faculty, along with its companion process of faculty development, are key concerns and responsibilities for academic administrators, and these processes represent the area in which academic administrators exercise their most significant and lasting influence on the institutions they serve and, collectively, on American pharmaceutical education. The objective of this chapter is to review the major techniques in the process of faculty evaluation.

FACULTY EVALUATION AND FACULTY DEVELOPMENT—COMPANION PROCESSES

In a 1981 publication, Guerrant and Swintosky discussed the relationship between faculty evaluation and faculty development(1). The importance of a successful strategy for faculty development in colleges of pharmacy was described by Manasse in 1986(2). Faculty development cannot occur in the absence of a fair, clear and well-defined process of faculty evaluation, a process which faculty know, understand and “buy into” at the time of their initial appointment. Faculty evaluation, when conducted properly, as part of a systematic and on-going program, facilitates faculty development by necessitating that faculty organize, document and assess their own professional accomplishments and progress, all of which goes hand-in-hand with faculty development.

In a 1987 paper on improving faculty effectiveness, Doluisio half-joked, “you can get much further with a kind word and a gun than with a kind word alone(3). The administrator’s “gun,” Doluisio noted, are the various rewards of success and achievement in academic careers, in particular:

1. merit salary increases;
2. the award of tenure;
3. academic promotions;
4. preferential or reduced teaching assignments
5. assignment to “preferred” committee work, or reduced committee and related service requirements;
6. provision of non-salary resources to support travel, research, special education projects, equipment, etc.;
7. space allocation for research labs, offices for faculty or graduate students/postdoctoral fellows;
8. sabbatical leaves, other prizes or awards; and
9. teaching assistant resources.

Academic administrators who work in universities with faculty unions have less flexibility in the allocation of these rewards, and so the faculty evaluation process may become more challenging and may be relatively less effective as a tool to promote faculty development in institutions where faculty are represented by collective bargaining units.

In a 1986 manual entitled “Recognizing Faculty Contribution,” Bortz describes a detailed system for planning, organizing, documenting and rewarding faculty activity(4). A careful reading of the process described by Bortz illustrates how closely the faculty evaluation-rewards-development activities are aligned, and how a skillfully conducted program of faculty evaluation aids faculty in achieving their professional and career goals. The relationship between stress and productivity accounts for the fact that appropriately applied faculty evaluation facilitates progress in faculty development. Doluisio noted a classic relationship between stress and productivity in which most faculty react...
optimized to a certain amount of stress in terms of productivity(3). If there is too little stress, there will not be sufficient productivity, and as stress increases, productivity will increase up to an optimum value. However, if stress continues beyond that optimum point, productivity will decline. It takes an effective academic administrator to know the correct amount of stress to apply, utilizing faculty evaluation processes, before the results become counterproductive. Therefore, considerable judgment, skill and experience are required to carry out faculty evaluation in its most effective and productive form.

Proper evaluation, and especially the short and long-term goal setting, and supportive, positive discussions which accompany the evaluation process, are critical to responsible management of faculty. Collegiate and departmental goals, including a plan for several years, which are reviewed and updated annually are critically important resources for individual faculty to use in drawing up an individual plan or personal set of goals for a given year. The individual annual plan needs to state activities and outcomes in the assigned areas of academic responsibility and must be aligned with the collegiate and departmental goals. The standards need to be high but reasonable, and sufficient support needs to be provided to make the standards achievable. Given such a plan, the evaluation process in the following and subsequent years will be greatly facilitated, since accomplishments can be directly compared to the plan. It is important to realize that there is an ongoing interrelationship between planning, accomplishment, and evaluation of faculty.

THE CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION
Teaching, research (or, more generally, scholarship) and service represent the accepted trilogy of criteria upon which faculty evaluation is based in nearly every institution. Depending on the particular institution and its mission statement, philosophy and goals, the particular discipline of the individual faculty member, the particular type of faculty member (e.g., part-time versus full-time, tenure track versus non-tenure track) or the particular purpose for which the evaluation is taking place (tenure consideration, advancement to full professor, simple reappointment), different degrees of emphasis may be placed on the relative importance of these three criteria of evaluation.

For example, in some instances it is felt that achieving excellence in one of the criteria, and being above average or average in two of the others is acceptable. In other instances it is indicated that excellence in either teaching or scholarship/research is acceptable, with satisfactory or above average performance in the remaining categories. In some institutions, particularly those that are units of major research universities, excellence in scholarship and research is a sine qua non of positive faculty evaluation, particularly for the attainment of tenure, and in some cases even for initial reappointments. Also, the particular level of achievement that is necessary to obtain a ranking of excellence, or even above-average, varies from institution to institution, and even from department to department. Nevertheless, the three criteria of teaching, research and service seem to be relatively undisputed as the three major indices for faculty evaluation. In an article reviewing the measurement of faculty productivity for pharmacy colleges, Smith noted that there exists a vast literature concerning the measurement and criteria for evaluating faculty that has developed out-side of the specific area of pharmacy education(5). This literature is largely applicable to pharmacy education, even though any particular procedure or tool will not be perfect in all given situations. Given the general agreement on the three major criteria for use in faculty evaluation, it is appropriate to consider each of these individual criteria in greater detail.

EVALUATING TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS
Faculty members traditionally, and almost without exception, have a responsibility for the dissemination of knowledge. As teachers, faculty members are expected to provide effective instruction, whether the instruction takes place at the undergraduate, graduate, postdoctoral, extension, or continuing education levels. The most traditional kind of teaching is classroom teaching in the traditional lecture mode. In a professional field like pharmacy, however, there are many other kinds of teaching, not as traditional, that are central to the missions of our colleges. Considerable portions of the curriculum are devoted to practicum instruction involving externships and clinical clerkships. Our Pharmacy Practice faculty are usually either responsible for developing, administering and supervising externships, or for teaching clinical clerkships. Another form in which teaching occurs in pharmacy colleges is in the laboratory setting, and basic science faculty are commonly involved with this area of responsibility. Teaching also takes the form of supervision of research for honors and special project undergraduates, graduate students and postdoctoral students. Supervising the theses and doctoral dissertations of graduate students, while being involved in the research and scholarship function of faculty, is also a form of teaching. In fact, such supervisory activities constitute a form of mentoring, and constitute an essential and demanding type of teaching. Mentoring also commonly occurs during clerkship and externship instruction, and in the supervision of residents.

Successful teachers exhibit both a depth and breadth of knowledge in their specialty areas and can communicate this knowledge enthusiastically to others. Successful and effective teachers keep up with the most current developments in their field, and relate them to their teaching in a meaningful and balanced way. It is also important for successful teachers to be able to stimulate imaginative thinking among their students by establishing a creative environment in which the learning experience can take place. They continue to monitor their teaching, looking for ways to improve it both in terms of delivery and course content, and in a professional field like pharmacy they make an effort to relate the material to the overall directions and needs of the profession. This does not mean every aspect of what is taught must relate directly to professional practice, but at least occasionally, such applications should present themselves and be pointed out.

One way to approach the evaluation of teaching effectiveness is by testing students on how much knowledge they have achieved in a specific course. While this seems like an attractive way to carry out teacher evaluation, outcome evaluation approaches have not really been a common way of evaluating individual faculty. The testing of students as occurs in standardized exams such as pharmacy licensure exams depends heavily on too many uncontrollable factors, such as integrated knowledge obtained from a whole variety of courses and instructors, the innate intelligence of the
When carrying out student evaluations, one of the most important principles that must be employed is that the evaluations be conducted uniformly for all faculty. To the extent that these evaluations are inevitably going to be used in evaluating faculty in terms of teaching effectiveness, one requires a base line of comparison among faculty, since it is clear that the results of such evaluations cannot be interpreted in any absolute fashion. In so far as possible the same survey instrument should be used, and the survey should be conducted under the same circumstances for an entire cohort of faculty who are being evaluated. For example, if surveys are conducted at the end of a final examination, students may not be in the appropriate frame of mind to carry out the evaluation. Similarly, in a team-taught course, if all of the evaluations for every faculty participant are conducted at the same time, students may suffer from fatigue in filling out so many evaluation forms. In instances where students will be asked to evaluate a large number of faculty, it would probably be better to err on the side of having fewer questions on the forms, even though this might lead to a less comprehensive evaluation. Once an acceptable evaluation instrument is developed for student evaluation of teaching, that same form should be employed from year to year, because in this way a base line of student responses can be established to serve as a basis of comparative evaluation for faculty. At some universities a standard evaluation form exists and must be used, although even standardized forms may allow for the incorporation of some individualized questions. At most universities, a unit exists which can provide expertise in the design of instruments for student evaluation of teaching.

Student evaluations must be carried out in an anonymous fashion, and ideally they should be conducted in the absence of the faculty member who is being evaluated. Much valuable information can be gained if the students are provided at least some opportunity to comment in an open-ended fashion on the survey instrument. Naturally, such comments need to be interpreted very cautiously by those who have some experience in interpreting student evaluations, since some comments will inevitably be irresponsible, inappropriate or extreme. One can generally get the gist of distinguishing between highly effective and highly ineffective teachers without much trouble, but interpretations “in between” sometimes require more discernment. In terms of faculty development, certainly faculty should be advised to carefully consider the comments of the students in such evaluations, with an eye toward making appropriate improvements in their teaching. Student evaluations of teaching effectiveness should always be viewed as a means of enhancing a faculty member’s value, and the students’ assessments should provide information that the faculty member may use in a constructive way in his or her future teaching activities. Nevertheless, particularly new and relatively inexperienced professors must be cautioned not to be overly sensitive in interpreting the highly critical comments of some students, since they could be devastating if interpreted too literally. In addition to open-ended questions, questions that can be graded quantitatively or machine graded may be helpful particularly for evaluations in large classes and team-taught courses. Such objective questions are also valuable in establishing baselines for comparison. A blend of both types of student evaluation questions can be helpful. A question that is desirable for inclusion is one that may use in a constructive way in his or her future teaching activities. Nevertheless, particularly new and relatively inexperienced professors must be cautioned not to be overly sensitive in interpreting the highly critical comments of some students, since they could be devastating if interpreted too literally. In addition to open-ended questions, questions that can be graded quantitatively or machine graded may be helpful particularly for evaluations in large classes and team-taught courses. Such objective questions are also valuable in establishing baselines for comparison. A blend of both types of student evaluation questions can be helpful. A question that is desirable for inclusion is one that asks students to evaluate the faculty member and/or the course in terms of overall effectiveness or value.

In addition to interpreting the open-ended comments of students and quantitatively graded questions in arriving at a judgment, peer evaluation of teaching must also be incorporated into the process. This is best accomplished by having seasoned faculty evaluate the teaching of their peers by sitting in on lecture presentations, preferably over a period of time. Evaluating just one class can give erroneous conclusions. In developing peer evaluation, it is appropriate for the evaluating faculty member to review examinations and handouts in arriving at their judgments, as well as in observing the form of presentation in the classroom setting. It may be necessary to employ more than one peer evaluator to test
the validity of the peer evaluation process. The results of such peer evaluations should be presented in a non-pejorative way.

Evaluation of instruction at the graduate level or of honors courses or research seminars is more difficult, and processes for such evaluations have not been as well reported, although interpreting outcomes for these activities may not really require such extensive, formal evaluations. In evaluating the teaching of specific faculty members, particularly for promotion purposes, an important factor to consider is innovation in teaching, including introduction of new techniques, new courses or parts of courses, and revision of courses. Such innovation constitutes an important aspect of excellent teaching. Similarly, evidence of motivating students to pursue advanced education or a career focus in a faculty member’s area of expertise should be considered as an important part of the evaluation. Inclusion of these measures is especially important for those professors who are highly respected, but who may not necessarily be exciting lecturers.

EVALUATING RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY EFFORTS

Research is a systematic process of inquiry that leads to new knowledge. Research may be either basic research, which strives to uncover fundamental new knowledge in a field, or applied research which tends to seek applications of discoveries in basic research to various fields of human endeavor. Scholarship is closely related to research and is regarded as the tangible outcome of research efforts that would commonly be made visible through publications or presentations. For all practical purposes in faculty evaluation, it is probably not advisable to try to distinguish between the activities of research and of scholarship since they are so closely related that there is no clear agreement on definitions distinguishing the two terms.

It is a perennial controversy as to whether too much emphasis has been placed on research at the expense of teaching in our universities in recent decades. Publications by Salisbury in 1967 and Gibson in 1977 illustrate similar, long-standing concerns in pharmacy education(14, 15). The strong emphasis that has been given to research and scholarly activity in recent decades, however, is fairly uniform among most, if not all, of our colleges, although admittedly, some colleges place much more emphasis on research than others. While the debate continues over the relative weight that should be accorded to teaching and research in terms of faculty evaluation for promotion, the feeling persists among most faculty that, in reality, research, publication and the record of achieving grants are the most important factors(16). Lowenthal has appropriately pointed out that when holding faculty accountable for research and scholarship, it is important to be sure that they have not been excessively burdened with teaching assignments, to allow sufficient time for research(17). It has been estimated that to be an effective researcher, faculty should have at least 40 to 50 percent of their total time available for dedication to research and scholarship.

Those who defend the heavy emphasis that is placed on scholarship and research do so from the point-of-view that faculty ion higher education have a responsibility not just for the dissemination of knowledge, but also for the creation of new knowledge. They indicate that the wells of knowledge from which we draw for teaching and for the support of human progress in all areas of endeavor, including the health professions, would quickly run dry if faculty did not devote considerable effort to the creation of new knowledge. It is also felt by some, though not all, that those faculty who are most actively involved in scholarship will be precisely those faculty who will be, over the long run, the most effective teachers, since they will be able to remain up-to-date in their fields and will continue to convey a sense of enthusiasm, confidence and excitement in their teaching. Certainly teaching at the graduate level almost demands that the teachers be actively involved in scholarly and research activity. Many feel that the active pursuit of new knowledge through applied and basic research endeavors should be the fundamental endeavor of all members of the faculty.

It seems that there is greater agreement on how to evaluate research and scholarship than there is in the case of evaluating good teaching. Parsons and Strom pointed out their concerns that one must be sure to evaluate the quality of research and not just count numbers of publications(18). Through appropriate peer evaluation processes, it seems that one can ascertain whether contributions in scholarship are original and bear significant impact on the development of the field. This can be accomplished through appropriate in-house and external peer review of faculty. Since research and scholarly achievement is most typically documented through refereed publications such as journal articles, books of high quality, and other publications, one can assess the quality of the work through the nature of the journals in which the work is published and through the rigor of the peer review process associated with particular journals. Research publications in rigorously peer reviewed journals constitute the most prized and undisputed evidence of success as a scholar.

Since publications are the tangible results of research efforts, faculty have an obligation to publish both because this places the results of useful research in the public domain and because it provides an opportunity to have one’s work reviewed critically by peers. Publications such as books, chapters, book reviews, monographs, newsletters, brochures, pamphlets and publications in lightly reviewed journals, are all important, but do not carry the prestige in the evaluation processes that peer reviewed original manuscripts carry. Publications alone are an evidence of success in research and scholarship, since if the work is not good, presumably it would not be published. However, during the faculty evaluation process, a critical review of publications on the part of peers both within the individual institution and by external respected peers in the field can be a valuable addition to the assessment of the faculty member.

Scholarship and research accomplishments are also demonstrated through the presentation of papers at organized scholarly meetings, usually at the national or international levels. Although presentations of this type do not carry the same weight as published refereed articles, they are usually refereed to some extent prior to being accepted for presentation, and they are also frequently published in abstract form. They are an essential form of scholarship nonetheless, and presentations of research at meetings preliminary to publication as research articles, provide a valuable means for the scholar to interact with and become recognized by his or her peers and to bring important recognition to the institution.
While the use of publications as a form for evaluating success in research and scholarship is critically significant, it is important to note that there is a difficulty presented in evaluating the relative contributions of co-authors of publications in multiple-author publications. As research, particularly in the scientific areas, has become more complex, the tendency to utilize multiple-authored publications has increased. Generally, the first author is the principal author. However, when a major professor publishes with a graduate student, even if the graduate student’s name appears first on the paper, or when a postdoctoral fellow appears first, the faculty mentor could still be regarded as the principal author. For clinical faculty, who in some instances need to publish research with a physician as the first author because of the policies of a journal, an institution, or of a company which is sponsoring an investigational new drug research program, it would be important to note during the faculty evaluation process that the pharmacy faculty member is the major pharmacy author in the publication. The issue of independence is a critical issue which must be addressed in collaborative publications which are so common and so necessary at the present time.

In evaluating faculty performance in research, there should be a clear pattern of research leading to presentations which then lead to publications. Faculty who have many presentations, but few publications, may be having trouble writing, or the research they are presenting at meetings is not being brought to publishable conclusions. If the presentations are on a very broad range of topics, the faculty member may have an insufficiently focused research program. Since refereed publications are the long-term outcome of faculty research efforts, it is extremely important that research reach this point.

A difficulty in progressing in research in academia as contrasted with industry relates to the fact that it is necessary to obtain external support for research. Obtaining external support for a faculty member’s research, or to support fellowships for graduate students or postdoctoral fellows, is also another important indicator of progress and success in scholarship and research. Industrially funded research has become increasingly important to faculty, particularly since it has become more competitive to obtain national funding from agencies like the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Nevertheless, funding through national agencies such as the NIH or research foundations is regarded as somewhat better and more prestigious than industrial contract research support. Part of the reason for this is that such grant applications are more competitively evaluated through the peer review process. Another reason is that such research tends to leave more discretion to the faculty member, thus allowing more freedom to conduct basic research on one’s own ideas rather than carrying out the wishes of the company as may often occur with industrially supported contract research. In addition, there tend to be fewer restrictions on publications and in the use of the money. In evaluating external research and grants, it is important to note whether the faculty member being evaluated was the principal investigator on the project. Being able to sustain external funding over an extended period of time is certainly an important measure of success in scholarship and research. However, in many cases, the converse is not necessarily true. The failure to sustain federal or similar funding does not necessarily suggest a failure or lack of performance in scholarship and research, but may reflect changing priorities of the funding agency.

All of these measurements such as publications, presentation, research grants, and numbers of graduate students or postdoctoral fellows trained, are important indicators of success in research and scholarship. In the final analysis, however, the impressions of one’s peers both external and internal to the institution, constitute the best measure of the quality of the individuals work. An important question that will always be asked in evaluating the success of a faculty member in the area of research will be to what extent the faculty member had significant impact on his or her field.

Other measures of success in scholarship and research for faculty include invitations to serve as reviewers for articles in journals, invitations to serve as an evaluator on panels which evaluate grant applications, the acquisition of significant patents, and invitations to lecture in prestigious national or international symposia. Awards, such as admission to fellowship status, or prestigious appointments to educational review boards, academies, or even serving as the editor of journals, also represent high accomplishment in this area of evaluation.

It is important to note that in order for faculty to be successful in research and scholarship, it is necessary to recruit faculty who have the appropriate interests, capabilities and background for success in this area in the first place. In general faculty members who have had postdoctorate research experience in the form of fellowships for one or several years following the receipt of their terminal doctoral degree will be more successful in research. This applies to both PhD and PharmD faculty members. The degree of success in this highly competitive area is frequently related to having acquired postdoctoral research experience. In addition, faculty need to have sufficient start-up funds and resources to help initiate their research, because faculty need to be productive in research early on in their careers(19). While faculty should be encouraged to obtain their own research funding fairly early, they will need startup funds and local support in the form of laboratory research space, access to clinical research opportunities, teaching assignments that will allow sufficient time for research, sufficiently light committee and other administrative assignments, as well as encouragement from peers on the faculty and administrators within the college and university. Being successful in research requires a large commitment on the part of both the faculty member and the university.

EVALUATING SERVICE

It would be difficult for our colleges of pharmacy to continue to function if faculty did not participate in “service” activities. There is general agreement that service should be included as one of the three important criteria of faculty evaluation. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that, in general, it is not accorded equal status in importance in the minds of most evaluators as the categories of teaching and research. This is particularly true when considering tenure track faculty for promotion and tenure. At many universities, contributions to service will certainly be viewed positively in consideration for progress toward tenure, but will in no way excuse inadequate accomplishments in research or teaching. For this reason, untenured faculty who are in the tenure stream should generally be spared from heavy commitments in the service realm. Heavier involvement in activities
regarded as service are more appropriate for more senior faculty who have already achieved tenure.

Service includes the contributions a faculty member makes to the governance of the department, the college, and the university. Service also includes contributions to professional organizations and societies, governmental agencies, citizen groups, the industrial community of a region, and to society-at-large. Time spent serving as an officer in scholarly or professional associations would also be important in this regard and may also connote peer recognition in teaching and scholarship.

Some prominent examples of service activities include student recruitment efforts, participation in the student admissions process, academic or career counseling, job placement and alumni association activities. Many faculty activities apart from teaching and research activities can be regarded as service.

Service to state agencies such as departments of health, State Boards of Pharmacy, or service to professional practitioner organizations at the State levels also count as faculty service. Faculty who spend time in administrative efforts and who serve as assistant or associate deans, directors of programs, or advisors to student organizations, are also performing service functions.

Serving as an external consultant can frequently be regarded as service. If faculty are paid separately for this, some of their peers may regard it less favorably when they evaluate them in terms of their contributions to the overall institutional goals and mission. Continuing education is sometimes regarded as teaching and sometimes regarded as service. When it is carried out for extra pay, it may be less favorably regarded during the peer evaluation process. Continuing education efforts may take the form of continuing education publications. Involvement of faculty in continuing education and the evaluation of faculty for these efforts has been reviewed by Blockstein(20).

A special category that is generally regarded as a part of service that applies to pharmacy practice faculty is professional practice activity. Those faculty who perform patient care activities in hospitals, ambulatory care settings, community pharmacies, HMOs, nursing homes or other patient care settings as a part of their faculty responsibilities, even when carried out to serve as the underlying basis for an experiential teaching program or to provide opportunities and contacts for research, might be evaluated under the service rubric. This activity may or may not generate a portion of the faculty member’s salary, or in some cases may even provide money that is paid directly to reimburse the faculty member as extra compensation or as a regular part of his or her income, or as money that reverts to the college or department. Nevertheless, professional practice activity is not generally regarded as the primary consideration for tenure evaluation, although it may be a major responsibility particularly for non-tenure track faculty. Some of the distinctions that differentiate between pharmacy practice faculty and basic science faculty in this regard have been pointed out by Lipmank(21) and Engle(22).

In evaluating faculty who have professional practice responsibilities, it should be regarded as particularly significant if such a faculty member can document innovative practice activities and especially those which have resulted in changes in the standards of practice in a given clinical setting. One should not overlook the fact that innovation is the hallmark of scholarly activity, and that innovative approaches to practice are an appropriate area of research for pharmacy practice faculty members. In fact, proper evaluation of practice innovations may well result in refereed publications. Therefore, faculty who carry professional practice responsibilities should not necessarily consider research as an additional load, but rather as a responsibility that is integral to pharmacy practice in an academic setting, and evaluation criteria must appropriately reflect credit for such activities.

THE ROLE OF ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS IN FACULTY EVALUATION

Bortz indicates that the department plays the principal role in the faculty evaluation process(4). Although the academic department exercises a fundamental control function over the faculty evaluation process, it must work within the boundaries of the overall general philosophies and directives set by the central university administration and by the dean. The department has considerable latitude in interpreting and implementing these policies and in establishing certain specific policies and procedures of its own, provided such policies do not conflict with university or college policy. Senior faculty within the department bear a particularly important responsibility for the development and the evaluation of junior faculty within the department. The role of the department chair is particularly crucial, although all tenured members of the department should share in the evaluation of junior faculty within the department.

For most faculty, the department chair is regarded as the immediate supervisor. However, it is important for the chair to realize that his or her decisions and philosophies must be compatible with the mission, statements, goals and objectives of the university and the college, because decisions relating to faculty evaluation made by the chair must ultimately be supported by the dean and the university administration if they are to be meaningful. If the chair is in conflict with the dean and/or the university administration in terms of philosophies, mission, goals and objectives, any advice or evaluation provided will not be productive because it will not be sustained. For example, if the university and the dean have the sense that major emphasis must be placed on superior accomplishment in the area of research and scholarship, even to the point of achieving distinction in one’s discipline, but the chair has the philosophy that the primary emphasis should be given to accomplishment in teaching rather than in research, the chair’s evaluations of the faculty member may be unrealistic, and when the time comes to support the recommendation of the chair concerning reappointment, merit increases, allocation of resources, promotion or tenure, the recommendations of the department and of the chair will not be supported, and the faculty member will suffer. Similarly, the chair needs to be in harmony with the faculty within the department, particularly the senior and tenured members of the department, so that the department can present a united front when making recommendations concerning personnel actions to the dean and the university administration.

The department exercises a primary responsibility in terms of faculty evaluation for the members of its department. This is consistent with the concept of a collegial approach to governance in academia. Leadership in faculty evaluation within the department is coordinated through the chair, with responsibility shared by the faculty, particularly the tenured senior members of the department. In order to consistently carry out this important responsibility, it is essential that the department have a clear and detailed mission statement to-
gether with goals and objectives. This statement of mission and goals must be evident in the actions and decisions made regarding faculty recruitment, promotion and tenuring. The overall statement of the department must present a detailed and clear plan identifying the purpose, goals, missions, and needs of the department both for the present and in the future in areas related to teaching, research and scholarly activities, service activities and, if applicable, professional practice activities.

In evaluating faculty, it is a responsibility of the chair, together with the senior members of the department, to remain in open communication with those faculty who are being evaluated, and to provide feed-back and support, so that the ongoing evaluation process can have positive effects. In carrying out the mission of faculty evaluation, the department chair must be in reasonable harmony with the views of the faculty of the department. Therefore, in developing policies and rendering decisions, appropriate consultation must occur between the chair and the members of the department.

As a general principle, peer evaluation of faculty should be carried out by those faculty who are above the rank of the person being evaluated. If a person is being considered for promotion to associate professor, then associate professors and full professors should be involved in the consultation in terms of the faculty evaluation process. If an assistant professor is being considered for reappointment, only associate and full professors should be involved in the evaluation process. In terms of initial appointments, however, faculty at all levels can be involved in the consultation process. On an informal basis, all faculty in the department can be involved in all of the evaluation processes, but when formal actions moving toward decisions are taken, it is best to involve only individuals at or above the level of the person being evaluated.

The chair needs to be the vehicle through which the evaluation process occurs. Certainly much of the evaluation can be done on an informal discussion basis, but when formal evaluation are occurring, such as in the annual review, or in formal actions relating to re-appointments or promotions, written documentation is required. For example, following the annual review that the chair conducts with each faculty member, there should be some written record to indicate the major outcomes of the meeting, the goals set for the coming year, formal agreements that were made relative to problems that might have been brought up, and comments on the updated curriculum vitae of the individual. Departmental responsibility for faculty evaluation relies primarily on the internal perception and advice of the members of the department who are involved in the evaluation. A great strength of such a process is that the faculty within the department are most closely associated with the work of the faculty member being evaluated, and should therefore be the most knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the professor. While this represents a strength of the departmental evaluation process, there is also the danger that the department’s decision and actions could be biased because of close personal friendships and the associated lack of objectivity, cliquishness, in-breeding, personality conflicts, jealousy, competition for scarce resources, feelings of being threatened, etc. Therefore, the objectivity of the department should be tested, particularly in terms of major departmental decisions such as recommendations for tenure, by consulting with respected peers external to the university. This can be accomplished informally through conversations with professors in the same field in other universities who are respected by the department, or through formal requests for substantive letters from respected professors at other universities who are in a position to evaluate critically and objectively. Respected professors in other departments in the college or university who are in areas somewhat related to the department also might be in a position to provide external advice.

In the strongest academic departments, faculty evaluation is a well developed process carried out in a responsible and collegial way and with an eye toward assisting faculty to develop into productive members of the department. Standards should be high, but reasonable, and sufficient support should be provided to enable qualified faculty to achieve the highest goals of the department. In weaker or newly developing departments, the process might not work as well, and more monitoring or intervention by the dean might be needed.

**ROLE OF THE DEAN AND UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION**

The role of the dean in faculty evaluation is to ensure that the department carries out its responsibilities in this area consistent with the polices of the college and of the university with fairness and with sufficient rigor. Consistency must be evident in terms of overall institutional philosophy, mission, goals, objectives and standards. It is evident that if the university as a whole is elevating its standards for appointment, promotion and tenure, but the department is resisting such changes, faculty who are being proposed for personnel actions such as promotions, tenure or salary increases, will not be supported at higher levels. If such differences in philosophy exists, the dean must resolve them through a process of consultation with the department or ultimately through the process of change in department leadership. A department chair cannot be effective if his or her policies frequently overturned or not supported by the dean and the upper university administration. Similarly, the dean will not be effective (and will not persist in the deanship) if his or her policies are not consistent with the policies of the university administration.

The dean has the responsibility to see that the department carries out its responsibilities to periodically and regularly evaluate members of the department and to report and act upon these evaluations as required. The dean also must be certain that adequate supervision, advice and training are afforded to members of the department, as appropriate to their rank and status, who might profit thereby. The dean must then review the actions and recommendations of the department to be certain that they are sound and consistent with accepted policies. Informed judgments concerning a faculty member’s accomplishments can be made only by qualified colleagues. Such informed judgments by persons competent to evaluate duties, responsibilities, services and accomplishments of faculty will protect the interest of the professors who are being evaluated, as well as the department, the college, the university and its students better than any objective rating system that could be devised. In instances where the dean does not agree with the judgments of the department, this sense of disagreement should be communicated to the members of the department early on. If such concern is provided early enough, it is possible that corrective action can be taken.

In instances where the deans views are not in harmony with the views and actions of the department, the dean should communicate this not only to the department chair.
but if necessary, also to the individual professor who is being evaluated. In a perfectly functioning department, where the decisions and judgments seem to be consistent with the deans and with university policy, it may not be necessary for the dean to have any direct input into the process other than ultimately endorsing the recommendations made as a result of departmental evaluations, and passing them on to the higher university officials for implementation. However, in most instances, it is necessary for the dean to be involved in the process more actively and directly, providing additional information and an independent evaluation.

The dean obviously needs to be involved in the process of recruitment and appointments, as well as in subsequent faculty evaluation activities. The dean needs to clearly communicate the goals of the university to the department and to the faculty and likewise needs to communicate the sentiments of the faculty and the departments to university superiors. The dean needs to be instrumental in providing the kinds of support necessary so that faculty can realistically accomplish the goals and objectives that have been set for them.

If the dean is uncomfortable with the recommendations of the department or needs further documentation, it is advisable for the dean to seek independent external consultation in the form of outside letters supporting personnel decisions, especially those involving tenure. Similarly, the dean also might wish to have input into the selection of the list of outside referees whom the department may recommend to support the promotion or tenuring of a faculty member. Finally, the dean should be available to discuss policies relating to faculty evaluation openly with the chair, and with individual faculty members.

A particularly important function of the dean is to communicate to the faculty of the college through the departments, changes that might be occurring in university policy regarding standards and requirements for faculty. Not uncommonly, universities make a conscious decision to shift their emphasis from one area to another or to raise standards. For example, it may be that a university will decide to place more emphasis on research accomplishment in the process of faculty appointments and tenuring, or simply to elevate its expectations. Similarly, universities may decide to begin to limit the percentage of tenure appointments. Such policies usually will have disconcerting effects on faculty if they are not presented frankly, clearly, and with a convincing explanation as to why such changes are going to be made. It is particularly important that faculty be kept aware of such changing policies in a timely manner to avoid scenarios whereby faculty who were hired under one set of expectations and guidelines, will then be evaluated under another. If they are not informed of the changes, they could be greatly disappointed and harmed in the process. The dean has the responsibility to be certain that when changes of this nature are being considered or implemented, all those involved are informed as early as possible so that they can make whatever adjustments might be necessary to cope with the changes.

ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL FACULTY MEMBERS

Faculty evaluation is frequently viewed as the responsibility of the department chair, the senior faculty, the dean or the university administration, with the professor who is to be evaluated being an uninvolved bystander. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those faculty who have the best chances for success are those who take an active, interested, constructive and participatory role in the faculty evaluation process, and who understand and appreciate the fact that the process of faculty development and faculty evaluation should be mutually supportive activities.

The first responsibility that the individual professor has in terms of the faculty evaluation process is to be informed of the practices and policies of the department, college and university with respect to faculty evaluation and subsequent personnel actions. Such information can usually be obtained through the literature provided during the process of faculty recruitment, and from the appointment letter, if it is a thoroughly detailed compilation of expectations, and responsibilities, including the time-frame in which the various stages of the evaluation process are scheduled to be accomplished, as well as the kinds of support that can be anticipated. Further information can be obtained from university publications including a faculty handbook, if one is available, together with any supplemental printed guidelines that the department or the college can provide. Talking with other faculty who have more experience within the department is also a good source of information, provided one is careful to account for erroneous or biased advice that may be occasionally encountered. If this does not provide the information needed, direct communication with the chairperson or with the dean or with the university personnel office can be helpful. After being fully informed about the process, it is necessary for the faculty member to keep careful records and to provide all of the written documentation that is needed on a timely and periodic basis to enable the evaluation process to run its course.

Another responsibility that individual faculty have is to be certain that they feel a reasonable sense of harmony and compatibility with the philosophical statement of goals and mission of the department, college and university. This does not mean that faculty may not have or should not be willing to state specific areas of disagreement forthrightly to the department chairman and the dean, particularly when opportunities for discussion of goals, objectives and policies are appropriate, such as during faculty retreats. Nevertheless, there must be some reasonable consistency between the overall philosophies of the university, department and the individual faculty member. Otherwise, it is predictable that faculty evaluations may be less likely to have positive outcomes. For example, if the university, college and department mission statements all indicate that independent research and acquisition of funding to support research constitute high priorities and definite requirements for promotion and tenure, it would be foolish for a faculty member who does not wish to be heavily involved in research, and who wants to concentrate exclusively on teaching and service, to remain at such an institution thinking that he or she can single-handedly change the direction and policies that have been formulated by the university and the college. When there is a clear incompatibility between the expectations of the university and the goals of the individual faculty member, it is advisable for the individual faculty member to seek an alternative institutional affiliation. If the faculty member does not realize this personally, then it is the responsibility of the department chair or the dean to make such recommendations clearly.

Individual faculty members should communicate periodi-
cally and openly with those who are responsible for evaluating them to let them know about their progress, their needs, and to address any appropriate concerns and to pose significant questions. Feedback should always be welcome. It is important to recognize that those faculty who accept constructive criticism well and react to it in a positive, responsive manner, are likely to be the recipients of the most sincere, candid and useful kind of advice and evaluative commentary along the way. Major accomplishments should be brought to the attention of individuals such as the department chair and/or the dean. For example, if a grant application is submitted or certain Sy if a grant award is made, or if a significant publication or award is achieved, copies of the award notices or publications or grant applications should be forwarded to those academic officers responsible for evaluation.

The curriculum vitae (CV) is the primary document by which the faculty member provides a complete record of his or her academic activity. By maintaining a complete, well constructed CV, and updating it periodically, the professor can inform those responsible for faculty evaluation of progress and major developments. The CV serves as a primary resource for faculty evaluation and promotion. The CV normally includes sections with educational history and professional experience. The professional experience section should begin with the faculty member’s present affiliation rather than beginning with the first affiliation. Similarly, in the ensuing sections that detail teaching related activities, research and scholarly activities, service and professional practice activities, the citations should be listed beginning with the most recent and going backward in time. When listing publications, it is critical to identify all of the authors in the order shown in the publications. Similarly for grants, co-investigators should be clearly indicated and the principal investigator should be specifically noted. All aspects of the CV should provide as much information as is possible to inform those reading it of the actual contributions on the part of the faculty member. Further, the faculty member should resist the temptation of preparing overly inflated CVs.

ACCOUNTING FOR DIFFERENCES

Just as differences in philosophies from one institution to another must be kept clearly in mind as influencing the faculty evaluation process, so also those responsible for faculty evaluation must be attentive to differences in the faculty who are being evaluated. It is critical that differences such as teaching responsibilities be kept clearly in mind when evaluating faculty. Faculty who have inordinately different teaching loads should also be expected to have correspondingly different amounts of time to devote to research activity. These differences should all be carefully noted in the initial letter of appointment, as well as in the periodic reviews that set realistic goals and objectives for the coming year and comment on past performance.

Some of the differences among faculty that must be kept in mind in the process of evaluation include the following:

- teaching load including level and mode of instruction (graduate, undergraduate, lecture, laboratory, clinical), class size, etc.;
- calendar year appointment versus academic year appointment;
- tenure track appointment versus non-tenure track appointment;
- specialty area by discipline;
- rank and years in rank;
- administrative assignments, service activities or involvement in professional practice;
- history of resource allocation.

These differences need to be taken into account when establishing goals and when evaluating faculty in terms of accountability. Faculty who have been provided fewer resources in terms of laboratory space cannot be expected to have the same level of productivity in areas of scholarship and research as faculty who have been given the advantage of significant start-up funds for equipment and space for laboratories. Similarly, faculty who have had lengthy postdoctoral experiences can be expected to be more highly productive researchers. Faculty who are expected to be active primarily in research, with minimum teaching responsibilities, cannot be evaluated in terms of having conducted courses and having had significant involvement in student affairs and teaching.

There are some differences that are inherent in the various disciplinary areas that comprise colleges of pharmacy. The clinical faculty have been a particular example of this. Differences between the expectations and characteristics of pharmacy practice faculty and basic science faculty have been narrowing in recent years. Nevertheless, there are still significant differences. Pharmacy practice faculty tend to carry heavier teaching loads, be more involved in professional activities including professional practice and have more demands placed on them for certain areas of service involvement including continuing education. Some of the specific aspects of evaluation of clinical pharmacy faculty have been discussed by Martin, et al. (23).

Another important difference that must be taken into account when evaluating faculty was pointed out by Doluisio and relates to the length of time the professor has been on the faculty (3). During the first few years, a new faculty member often exhibits less than the desired level of development while establishing objectives and becoming more experienced in time management. During this period of time, faculty are seeking extramural funding and trying to get their research program and teaching activities started. During this period of time, faculty deserve extra support in the way of not being overburdened with excessive teaching or administrative assignments or service responsibilities. In addition, there is an obligation to support such beginning faculty with space and start-up monies to the extent that the institution can do this.

Following this initial stage, faculty will frequently enter into the most rapid period of development in their careers. If they are successful in getting their research and scholarship and teaching started, attracting extramural funding and having sufficient space and other resources available, they tend to become very productive, attracting graduate students and becoming more settled in their teaching responsibilities. Accommodations are also made between their needs and objectives and those of the institution. In the final stage of faculty development, after faculty have become well established and move toward the latter portions of their career, faculty development may begin to occur at a slower pace. Some faculty could go into burnout at this stage, yet others may begin to be able to utilize this stage of their career to take on more responsibilities in teaching, in areas of service or administrative responsibilities. While these periods will vary considerably in the timing of these periods from one faculty member to another, those who evaluate faculty need to keep these differ-
ences in mind in order to come up with realistic and reasonable evaluation parameters that will contribute to the overall needs of the institution.

Another important set of differences that must be taken into consideration when evaluating faculty are the special needs of the growing cohort of women faculty in pharmacy education(24). Over 20 percent of faculty in American colleges of pharmacy are women, and the percentage will increase dramatically in the years ahead. Women faculty (and men faculty too) are often involved in dual career marriages, and sometimes both spouses may be on faculty in the same college. In such cases, keeping professional identities separate would be an essential need during the faculty evaluation process. Women faculty will have special concerns and needs with regard to day care, child-bearing and child-rearing leaves and maternity leaves. Flexibility needs to be introduced into the time schedule for faculty evaluation to accommodate such needs. The possible lack of sufficient female role models and mentors must also be given consideration when evaluating women faculty.

STAGES OF EVALUATION

Ideally, faculty should be evaluated at least once a year. This should take the form of the faculty member providing an updated version of the CV to the person doing the evaluation, usually the department chair or possibly the dean. In addition, it might be desirable for the faculty member to provide a statement highlighting what his or her principal accomplishments are during the past year and how they might have related to the goals and objectives that have been set for the year. If the faculty has some specific concerns that need to be addressed during the coming year, these should be covered. During the evaluation, thorough discussion should occur concerning the progress the faculty member is making and what the needs are over the coming year. The evaluator should provide a written record of the meeting with a copy to the faculty member and to the dean for the personnel file of the faculty member. The faculty member should have an opportunity to respond both during the meeting and to the written evaluation thereafter.

An annual evaluation may not be frequent enough for faculty in the initial stages of their development, particularly pre-tenure. For such faculty, either semi-annual meetings can be held or informal meetings in between the formal annual meetings.

In addition to these periodic meetings, evaluation should occur at the time of reappointment and at the time of promotion. The evaluation for promotion from assistant professor to associate professor, usually involving tenure, represents the most critical evaluation that ever occurs. Such an evaluation will involve the preparation of an important promotion dossier which will be highlighted by the curriculum vita, but also will include confidential letters of evaluation from external evaluators, results of teaching evaluations, comments from the faculty in the department and any other evaluating committee of the college, including evaluating comments from the dean. Most universities have formalized and well developed procedures for the compilation of the promotion dossier or packet, and all who are involved in the evaluation process should be well informed of the procedures from the very beginning.

CONCLUSION

Faculty evaluation is a critically important and essential process that must be conducted in an informed, equitable and well-planned manner. It is a companion process to faculty development. It is a process that works best when its purposes, requirements, time schedules and procedures are thoroughly communicated to all of the involved parties. It must be regarded as a team effort in which the cooperation of those being evaluated and those who are conducting the evaluations is evident. It must be an on-going process that is well understood and well defined at the outset of the faculty member’s initial appointment. When faculty evaluation functions well, institutional quality will be enhanced. Without a well functioning program of faculty evaluation, both faculty morale and faculty quality will be eroded.


References