classroom observations & the evaluation of teaching

Center for Teaching, Research & Learning
In spite of the well-documented short-comings and biases of Student Evaluations of Teaching (SET), the SET remains as the mainstay of how faculty are reviewed for merit, reappointment, tenure, and promotion.

As a counterweight to SETs, there is growing interest in employing classroom observation as a component of a broader approach to evaluating teaching.
agenda

Do observations play a role in how we evaluate teaching?

Types of classroom observation

Approaches observe teaching

What are best practices in classroom observation?

Discussion Questions (to start)

- What do participants feel should be the role of classroom observations?
- What are you concerns about classroom observations?
- What resources do faculty need to engage in meaningful observation?
types of classroom observations

observer — observed
formal — informal
summative — formative
in-person — video
classroom observations

why?
- improve teaching practices
- strengthen collegiality

why not?
- another box-checking exercise
- validity of tool – i.e., “observer effect”
feedback methods

Refer to Figures 2A and 2B

value of peer observations

Refer to Figures 2C

suggestions for best practices

define goal(s) and expectations
use a (standard) rubric for evaluation
have means to provide honest, constructive criticism
assess (evidence) and re-evaluate practice
ongoing process
should observations play a role in how we evaluate teaching?

In what ways do we currently evaluate teaching?

What types of observations are happening?

What are other institutions doing?

➔ Yale Center for Teaching & Learning: Using Teaching Inventories and Classroom Observation Protocols
➔ University of Southern California: Peer Review and Evaluation
➔ University of Oregon: Senate Resolution on Continuous Improvement and Evaluation of Teaching System
Refer to Table 1 in

tools for peer and self evaluation

What’s included on observation forms?

● Process
  ○ Pre-observation meeting
  ○ Timing
  ○ Post-observation

● Content
  ○ Form
  ○ Methods
  ○ Goals

● Who?
Teacher education

- Video reflection in special education
- National Board self observation

Engagement (what does it look like?)

Analyzing teaching practices

What do participants feel should be the role of classroom observations?
What are you concerns about classroom observations?
What resources do faculty need to engage in meaningful observation?