The Teaching and Advising Portfolio: A Guide for NACTA Members

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NACTA has an excellent reputation for promoting outstanding teaching and advising. NACTA members are committed to, and are regularly involved in activities designed to improve their teaching and advising. At the institutions where they work measurements of quality and efforts to promote improvement have been generally limited to student evaluations and other departmental input. While evaluations are reliable documentation for evaluating teaching and advising, there are additional methods for assessing the scholarly activities of teaching and advising that also help teachers improve their activities.

During the NACTA 2000 meeting in June 1994, a recommendation was made to provide information to NACTA members about teaching and advising portfolios. Although much information is in the literature about portfolios, it was agreed that more specific recommendations could be made to members through the NACTA Journal and during the annual conference. The Teaching Effectiveness Committee of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at North Carolina State University was working on creating a guide for portfolios at that time. This document represents much of that work.

The teaching and advising portfolio is a document that each faculty member creates to describe his or her teaching and advising for a specific period of time. The portfolio provides evidence about the nature, scope and quality of a teacher's and/or adviser's scholarly activities. The very creation of the portfolio permits each faculty member to spend time reflecting on their activities, a process alone that leads to improvement. The portfolio allows one to document the complexities of their own teaching and advising activities. It allows them to identify accomplishments, strengths and areas for improvement. The portfolio also allows for reporting of peer evaluation information within a professional document. Although the portfolio has the potential to be an excellent evaluation medium the greatest benefit may be that it can promote improved teaching and advising by individuals who elect to participate. The objective of this presentation is to provide NACTA members with a guideline for preparing teaching and advising portfolios. The portfolio can be altered as each individual deems necessary, however, there should be some compatibility among all portfolios.

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SECTION I—SELF REPORT

A. Reflective Statement: a personal essay that discusses your own philosophy of teaching and advising. Suggested length of 6-8 pages.
B. List of courses taught, sections, number of students per section, number of laboratory sections, etc, (past 3 years).
C. Course syllabi, outlines and examinations; you may include representative examinations from one or more courses.
D. List of materials prepared for students: handouts, course packs/manuals, worksheets, electronic materials, etc. Representative materials may be included.
E. Advising data: number of advisees at baccalaureate and associate degree levels; graduate students advised as committee chair or committee member. Also, list other contacts with students in an advisory capacity: club adviser, team coach, etc. Also, indicate any significant information about how you participated as an adviser, (availability, special meetings etc.)
F. Description of steps taken to evaluate and improve teaching and advising; examples include membership and involvement in associations related to improving teaching, in class surveys, participation in workshops and seminars etc.
G. List of innovations in teaching, laboratory instruction, or advising.
H. List any other scholarly activity related to teaching and advising: guest lectures given, papers given at a national meeting of a teaching association, publications related to teaching and advising, etc.
I. List activities related to course and curriculum management within department, college and university: open house, special tours, public school visits, recruiting, committee work, etc.

SECTION II—INFORMATION FROM OTHERS

A. "Current" Students
   1. Course evaluations:
      a. Course evaluation information (1 to 3 year summary). Evaluation instrument should be consistent

within departmental unit. Include a copy of the instrument.
   b. Averages from evaluations.
   c. Written comments from evaluations (could be excerpts if lengthy).
2. Adviser evaluation data summary (1-3 year summary) including comments.
3. Awards and honors from students; include formal awards, unsolicited letters of support, etc.
4. Publications (journal articles and abstracts) and research awards of undergraduate and graduate student advisees.
5. Other pertinent information; special speaking invitations to clubs, and/or other student organizations, etc.

B. Colleagues
1. Peer evaluation information, including an explanation of the departmental evaluation system for faculty with teaching and advising responsibilities. Peer evaluation information may include: summarized information from direct classroom observation, evaluation of materials used in teaching, time spent discussing technique, innovations employed as a result of peer evaluations, etc.
2. Evaluation of contributions to course and curriculum review, maintenance and development. Include other pertinent activities such as evaluation input from colleagues regarding above activities.
3. Honors and awards related to teaching and advising given by peers.

C. Alumni and Other Outside Feedback
1. Comments from alumni (letters, surveys, exit interviews).
2. Comments from parents (letters, etc.).
3. Comments from employers (letters, etc.).

The teaching and advising portfolio could include many other items. The above outline serves only as a guide for faculty members who would choose to employ the portfolio. The portfolio will also serve to provide organized information about one's teaching and advising for individuals given the responsibility to prepare teaching award packets for nominated teachers. For example, limited additional work would be required to complete the NACTA award nomination packet if the nominee maintained a current teaching and advising portfolio.

The creation of this documentation would serve to provide valuable information to department heads and administrators about individual's scholarly activities related to teaching and advising for reward, promotion and tenure. The greatest advantage, however, is that the *process* of portfolio creation can not help but facilitate improvement in each faculty's teaching and advising endeavors.

References

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