

Kicking off our Teaching Effectiveness/Evaluation initiative

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Dear SLU Faculty,

We are excited to announce the official kickoff of a joint Faculty Senate/Provost's Office initiative on teaching effectiveness/evaluation. This work has been years in the making, and it is a direct result of persistent and growing requests from the SLU faculty. We've heard increasingly from faculty about the need for a more consistent and equitable approach to teaching evaluation, and we are thrilled that SLU is ready for meaningful change in this area.

Below, we share some general information about this effort, which will unfold over the next several years. In January, you can expect more details, including ways you can get involved.

What is this initiative?

It's a multi-year, multi-phased initiative to bring greater consistency and equity to the evaluation of teaching at SLU. It will focus on aligning our teaching evaluation practices with the literature on effective, responsible evaluation. It also will support us in better recognizing and rewarding teaching.

Why are we doing it? Why now?

There are many reasons to do this work, but an important one is: Because you've asked us to. The Faculty Senate has recommended significant change in the annual evaluation of faculty performance, and in particular, in the area of teaching evaluation. The Provost-Faculty Senate Gender Equity Committee also has identified the need for meaningful change in this area. Throughout the process of developing our [new Academic Strategic Plan](#), faculty repeatedly identified teaching – its evaluation and valuing – as a significant focus area. And the faculty who have been engaged in our [NSF ADVANCE project](#) have echoed the calls for serious and substantive change in the evaluation of teaching. While the evaluation of teaching happens within academic units, it has become clear that we need more consistent, evidence-informed evaluation practices across the University.

Comprehensive, multi-faceted evaluation of teaching is essential to equitable faculty evaluation – and to truly valuing teaching. While the University has been in a period of tremendous growth in research/scholarship, we also continue to be a place that deeply values teaching, and our evaluation and reward practices have not always reflected this value.

In 2018, SLU adopted a [University Policy on End-of-Term Student Evaluation of Courses](#), which makes clear that evaluation of teaching should be “comprehensive” and should not rely solely on student feedback. But the adoption of more robust, multi-faceted evaluation practices has been uneven. At an institutional level, we have not devoted the attention to this effort that we should. Thankfully, both faculty and academic leaders have been asking for meaningful change in this area for quite some time. In the last couple years, the Faculty Senate recommended changes to annual faculty performance evaluation, and faculty and academic leaders across the University said this work should be a key goal in our [Academic Strategic Plan \(ASP\)](#). It is, in fact, the very first item in our

new ASP; that is not an accident.

How – and when – will this work be accomplished?

As we said above, this work will take place in multiple phases over the next several years. And your input and feedback will be critical every step of the way. In its broadest form, the project will help us to define, document, enhance, evaluate, and recognize effective teaching in meaningful ways that align with our institutional identity. As the initiative unfolds over the next few years, there will be different working groups and project teams, focused on different aspects of the work, with many opportunities for faculty to shape this work. Regular - and meaningful - faculty engagement is essential for this initiative to be successful. As is an explicit focus on and commitment to equity.

Who will lead this work?

We've asked Drs. Lisieux Huelman and Debie Lohe to co-lead the first phase of this project. Lisieux is Associate Professor in English as Second Language and Co-Chair of the Faculty Senate's Academic Affairs Committee. Debie serves as Associate Provost and Chief Online Learning Officer for the University. While they will lead the first phase project team, it's important to say that all of you – all of us – will lead and own this work, together. Debie and Lisieux are committed to a transparent, participatory approach to this project.

How can you get involved?

In January, you'll hear from Drs. Huelman and Lohe on specific ways you can get involved and support this effort. They are working with the Senate's Academic Affairs Committee and with leaders of the Provost-Faculty Senate Gender Equity Committee to create a plan for moving the work forward, and they've got some great ideas about how to approach this first phase.

In closing, we want to acknowledge that this is the work of culture change. It will take time and require sustained, meaningful engagement of faculty and academic leaders. But it also will be transformational for our institution, if we can get it right.

We are grateful to the faculty for pushing for these changes. And we're grateful for the ways in which you will shape this work as it moves forward.

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