

Mission Statement for Mentoring Program  
Department of Communication  
Fall 2002

In concert with University-wide efforts to develop mentoring plans within academic departments and programs that facilitate the formative evaluation of colleagues' teaching, particularly at the junior level, and which promote conversations about quality teaching and learning more generally, the Department of Communication affirms the following values and commitments:

We are committed to promoting excellent teaching that has as its foundation quality, engaged student learning. We acknowledge that there are a variety of ways to teach students, but what should matter most with any method or pedagogical orientation is that students' learning is effectively cultivated, that our work in the classroom affirms and enacts the University's mission to "inspire and educate our students to become autonomous thinkers, discerning moral agents, and active citizens in a democratic society" (Denison University Mission Statement, 2).

We affirm and are sensitive to the salience of context to our teaching. No classroom exists in a vacuum, and thus every teacher negotiates a host of contextual factors. In working to negotiate these, he or she makes choices that affect the teaching and learning that takes place over the duration of a particular course or courses. Evaluators are encouraged to treat seriously and approach with sensitivity the distinctive intellectual commitments of every teacher in our department and to understand how their methods, objectives, and learning goals are informed by the sundry contexts in which they work.

Our department is committed to collaboration, to talking with one another about strategies and ideas and ideals that might improve what we do in developing and implementing the goals, methods, and materials that will shape the intellectual experiences we will share with students. We judge teaching to be worthy of an on-going conversation, a dialogue rooted in support and affirmation as we work to help one another develop professionally as scholars in the classroom.

Finally, the department is committed to consistency. Specifically, we want junior faculty in the tenure stream sufficiently informed about and prepared for the expectations of the summative reviews that will affect their professional lives. We believe that we should work to insure that teachers are made familiar with advisory's expectations, and that the feedback, support, and collaboration in which we engage as a department accurately reflects the expectations and commitments of the Advisory Board.

## Mentoring/Formative Evaluation Process Department of Communication

In each semester, faculty members shall organize into pairs or small groups to engage in formative co-evaluation of at least one course (serving in the capacity of both evaluator and as the evaluated). In general, we value formative feedback from multiple voices within the department, but faculty members may choose to maintain those pairs/groups for a second semester. After pairings are established the pair should review the course syllabus and other already prepared course documents, discuss goals for the course, and identify potential areas of concern or specific teaching foci for the courses being reviewed.

Each pairing should observe their partner in the classroom at least once over the course of the semester, at a time and with a frequency deemed appropriate by the instructor. This process is designed with an emphasis on flexibility in order to respond to the varied needs different faculty members may have. The goal of this observation should be to identify strategies working well in the course, potential areas for development or improvement, and to provide the evaluator with more knowledge about the instructor and their class presence to discuss new strategies and techniques. In addition, faculty members might elect to compose an evaluation form they would like the evaluator to use, may elect to also elicit student feedback with "one minute" papers, may request more emphasis on syllabi building or assignment creation, and so on, along with the baseline suggested here. If appropriate, the observer may become a participant observer and join in class discussion. The pair should meet to discuss the observation shortly after the observation, and the evaluator should provide written comments to the faculty member at that time.

At the end of the course and after each member of the pair has reviewed students' evaluations, they should meet once again to "debrief" and discuss the course's successes and areas that they may want to alter or improve. It is also encouraged that the pair meet with the department chair to discuss the experience and related teaching goals, in addition to receiving feedback on expectations about teaching likely to emerge during summative review.

Any written communication evaluating the faculty member should be given to the faculty member by the conclusion of each course's evaluation process. Both written and oral communication should be regarded as confidential and the evaluator should not share his/her evaluations with anyone other

Department of Communication  
Revised Mentoring Plan  
September 2005

1) Mentoring Pairs will observe each other's classes at least twice in fall semester in the following format:

1A) Pre-Observation Meeting

The instructor and mentor review class syllabus and general course content, context, and goals. Then the instructor describes the which /he wishes feedback.

1B) Classroom Observation

The mentor observes the class and notes various aspects of teaching technique and class interaction including clarity, content level, pace, methods and activities, classroom climate and student engagement.

1C) Post-Observation Meeting

The pair meets as soon as possible to discuss the class both from the perspective of the instructor and observer, and for the observer to provide feedback about teaching strengths, areas for improvement, and possible new strategies and techniques.

2) Early in the spring semester the department will meet to discuss "pedagogical insights" gained by the pairs through the mentor process. Each pair will present a brief paragraph or so of insights to be gathered for publication on the shared drive.

3) Mentor pairs will observe each other's classes at least one additional time in the spring semester, observing the 3-step format.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION TEACHING OBSERVATION

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS FOR THE DAY:

OBSERVATION OF STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

Content, Substance & Sophistication:

Teaching Methods:

Handouts/Activities

Student Engagement/Response: