

**Report on the Study of the Teaching Portfolio Retreat  
prepared by the Research and Grants Committee of the Center for  
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The Research and Grants Committee of the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) conducted a study of the Teaching Portfolio Retreat in order to ascertain how previous participants benefited from the Retreat. An outline of the methodology and findings from the study are presented in this report.

**Methodology**

**Sample:** A list of 48 past participants who went on the retreat from 1999 to 2001 was obtained from the CTE. From that list, a random sample of 26 subjects (55% of the 48 participants) was selected. Out of the 26 participants, the instrument was piloted on one of the subjects. Since few revisions were made to the questionnaire, the piloted responses were included in the results.

Out of the 26 subjects, 12 were from Arts and Sciences, one from the College of Public Service, one from Social Service, two from Parks College, and two from the Business school. Eight of the subjects were from the Health Sciences Campus: two from Public Health; three from Allied Health; two from Nursing; and one from the Medical School. Gender was equally represented with 54% of the subjects being male. The majority of the subjects were ranked at the Assistant level (62%) with the remaining currently ranked at an Associate level.

**Instrument:** A semi-structured instrument was developed for the purposes of the survey. The questions were developed based on aspects highlighted in the literature as important components of a teaching portfolio. Additional questions were added as a

result of feedback from the Research and Grants Committee as well as the Steering Committee of the CTE. The instrument was piloted with one subject and revisions were made based on the result of that interview.

Procedure: Telephone interviews were conducted with the subjects. The interviews lasted approximately 15 minutes. The Research and Grants Committee is comprised of five committee members, so each member interviewed five subjects. When possible, the subjects were interviewed by telephone. In certain situations, the interview was appended to an email and the subject responded to the survey electronically.

## **Results**

Out of the 26 subjects selected to participate, 24 responded to the survey, yielding a 92% response rate. The results are presented in ten categories.

While percentages are provided, in rare cases, they sum to 100%. This is due to the fact that the data are qualitative in nature and not everyone answered every question.

Expectations. When the subjects were asked about their expectations of the retreat, 60% responded that they were expecting to get assistance in developing a portfolio for tenure. Approximately 10% mentioned that they wanted to learn more about teaching or to become a better teacher. All but one of the participants agreed that their expectations were met.

Usefulness of the portfolio. Almost 70% of the subjects mentioned that they have used the portfolio for the tenure process or midterm review. The subjects felt that the portfolio was useful in putting together their dossier as the portfolio organized the materials for them. One subject even used the portfolio to be nominated for a teaching

award while another uses it for the annual activity report. Over 50% subjects (54%) stated that they have used the portfolio in order to improve their teaching, redesigning courses, and keep track of teaching activities. Only 8% subjects mentioned that the portfolio has not been used since the retreat.

Continue work on portfolio. Over 30% of the subjects stated that they continue to work on their portfolio and 30% reported they have not worked on the portfolio.

Working on the portfolio includes activities such as putting things in a file or adding new ideas to the portfolio or information on new courses and awards.

Obstacles for working. Time was the overwhelming reason given for not working on the portfolio (~ 70%). Reasons given include administrative duties, teaching load, and other projects taking precedence.

Future directions for the portfolio. Some concern was raised about the value given to the portfolio by the administration. That is, no credit is given for having completed the portfolio. It is not viewed as scholarly work. Almost 10% of the participants noted that the portfolio is used to help improve teaching. However, approximately 30% noted that they would use the portfolio for promotion and/or tenure

Recommend retreat. All of the participants stated that they would recommend the retreat to others. Reasons given include: getting away enables you time to work on the portfolio; have to do one anyway so you can learn from the experts; excellent opportunity to summarize teaching activities; very helpful for personal development; brings ideas of teaching together and helps to organize teaching philosophy.

Pay for the retreat. When participants were asked if they would be willing to pay for the retreat, 33% said they would pay while an additional 17% stated that it depends on

how much it costs. Only 25% stated that they would not pay. A few others stated that it should be part of faculty development with perhaps the department paying. If the faculty were to have to pay for it, several noted that it would be important to indicate the benefits of the retreat. Without knowing its worth, some reluctance to pay may occur.

Other retreats. Subjects were asked if there were any other types of retreats that would be useful to them. Approximately 30% stated that they would like a similar retreat for research, in order to complete the dossier. A few other participants mentioned other ideas like 'Christian vs. Catholic educator', or videotaping and review, or even curriculum design.

Portfolio enhanced tenure. Over half of the participants (54%) have not gone up for tenure since completing the retreat. Over 70% stated that the portfolio is (or will be) a big part of the dossier. They mentioned that the portfolio gave them more confidence when going up for tenure or mid-year review, the dossier was easier to complete after attending the retreat, and that it gave them direction. Communicating teaching activities was mentioned by approximately 30% of the participants.

Other comments. Other comments shared by the participants include

- 8% noted that the retreat helped in evaluating teaching
- 17% felt that it was important to know others are committed to teaching and to have discourse with others
- 8% of the participants mentioned that instructors were very good
- 46% - the work that CTE does is appreciated, valuable experience
- 8% liked that it was off campus

## **Summary**

Overall, participants were very satisfied with the retreat. An overwhelming number of positive comments were made about the benefits of the retreat and of having a portfolio (specifically in regards tenure/promotion). Participants do feel a need to spend more time working on the portfolio, but have not been able to due to time constraints. Perhaps if more recognition by administration is given to those who maintain a portfolio, participants would feel more motivated to make the time to keep the portfolio updated. One suggestion made by several participants is to have a similar retreat that focuses on research.