

Statement on Effective Teaching at LMU

Committee on Excellence in Teaching

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College and university teaching has never been a more complex task than it is today. The changing landscape of 21st century higher education presents new and ever greater challenges for university faculty. In the hope of stimulating discussion about what „effective teaching“ means at LMU, the Committee on Excellence in Teaching drafted this document to identify core principles and practices associated with effective teaching.

The three pillars of the University's Mission: 1) the encouragement of learning, 2) the education of the whole person, and 3) the service of faith and promotion of justice, should guide a deeper inquiry into what contributes to „effective teaching“. The Mission is central to any discussion of „effective teaching“ since its pillars provide the foundation for our faculty to develop themselves and their students both inside and outside the classroom. Preparing students who are ready and able to change the world and move it towards justice is a shared goal, and one that we feel the ideas presented below will facilitate.

The First Pillar of the University's Mission: Encouragement of Learning

To encourage learning at LMU, effective teachers:

- 1) Cultivate their passion for their discipline and continue to be informed by the scholarship in it. They update their course content with current research and create new courses as needed to incorporate new areas in their fields. Their passion for the material and expertise in the discipline excites students and encourages learning. (References: Bain, 2004; CBSSE, 2000)
- 2) Utilize their knowledge of the discipline to identify appropriate learning outcomes, to design corresponding assignments and assessments, and to recognize the “conceptual barriers likely to hinder” student learning (CBSSE, p. 156)
- 3) Set high standards for student learning. They provide a rigorous curriculum and expect students to engage with the material and demonstrate mastery of stated learning outcomes.
- 4) Exhibit important dimensions of teaching that have been associated with learning achievement (Feldman, 2007). These include preparation and organization, clarity and understandability, support and feedback to help students succeed, stimulation of interest, encouragement and openness, availability and helpfulness.
- 5) Explore new pedagogies such as team-teaching, inter- and multi-disciplinary efforts, technology integration, service/community-based learning, directing undergraduate research, problem-based and project-based learning. They plan and teach with an emphasis on accessing student preconceptions about the content and incorporating metacognitive strategies aligned with each discipline (Donovan et al, p. 13).

- 6) Assess the effectiveness of their teaching by examining student learning outcomes. They are “reflective practitioners” and continuously try to improve their teaching based on their assessments of student learning (Schon, 1995).
- 7) Examine research in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) to inform their own practice.

The Second Pillar of the University's Mission: Education of the Whole Person

Educating the whole person significantly expands the context and meaning of successful learning. By “whole person”, we mean all the various aspects of human existence that all require nurture, development, and growth. Thus, learning is not only the cognitive process of acquiring important knowledge, skills and facility in intellectual concepts, but is also learning to appreciate wisdom – which applies to the human realm of social interaction, leisure pursuits, physical activity, and aesthetic pleasures. All these aspects of human existence can enhance and be enhanced in the educational process. In fact, scholars of teaching and learning are coming to realize that neglect of the social, pleasurable, physical, or aesthetic aspects of human activity (the so-called affective dimensions of learning) can actually negatively affect academic accomplishment (Haines, 2007). Teaching is most effective when *whole persons* are addressed and engaged.

The Third Pillar of the University's Mission: Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice

Teaching and learning that result in developing a compassion for those who suffer, or encourage a passion for expanding the opportunities for human development more widely and equitably, or seek to understand the historical roots of inequality and injustice so that human study and labor can be more informed and effective are possible descriptions of serving faith and promoting justice in the context of teaching and learning. This is to be valued and supported at LMU. Opportunities to integrate mission and teaching may arise in a variety of different forms depending on the discipline, the curriculum and the pedagogy. As might be expected, certain courses connect fairly directly to LMU's mission by the very nature of their subject matter, for example, LMU's American Cultures courses or courses examining the politics of Latin America. Courses in disciplines not normally thought of as being engaged with social justice issues may be able to link to mission by developing instructional materials or exercises that are. The mathematics department provides an example of this in its development of a series of problem sets based on examples and data drawn from the freshman book *Nickel and Dimed* (Ehrenreich, 2001) that were keyed to the mathematical topics in the MATH 102 core class. Certain pedagogical approaches, such as community-based learning for example, readily align with mission. The idea of teaching for significant learning (Fink, 2006) should be cultivated, developed, and nurtured among all who seek to promote learning that reflects mission as a hallmark of an LMU education.

The notion of the Mission as a guide toward “effective teaching” should not be misconstrued as a test or a tool to assess faculty. Instead it is best seen as encouragement and formative. Moving

forward together as a faculty, as we strive to integrate classroom and community not only through questions of a particular discipline, but on the more pervasive human and spiritual levels, mission should be seen as a catalyst in the service to our students, who in turn transform it into the service of others. This is the ultimate reflection of effective teaching at LMU.

Alignment of University Resources and Processes in Support of Effective Teaching at LMU

University resources and processes should be aligned with the desired dimensions of teaching in order to successfully promote effective teaching at LMU. Several issues need to be addressed to achieve this alignment. The rest of this statement outlines these issues and possible strategies that can be considered.

How can effective teaching be documented at LMU?

The following is a list of possible tools along with the dimensions of effective teaching each tool documents (ETC=Effective Teaching Characteristic identified in bullets described for the First Pillar of the University's Mission):

- a) Assessment of student learning outcomes (ETC # 1, 2, 3, 6)
- b) Course evaluation forms (ETC # 1, 4, 6)
- c) Peer observation (ETC # 2, 4)
- d) Professional development activities that provide opportunities for learning and reflection on one's teaching and pedagogies (ETC #1, 5, 7)
- e) Syllabi review of discipline content and pedagogies (ETC # 1, 2, 4, 5)
- f) Teaching and/or Course Portfolios (ETC # 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)
- g) Other activities such as SoTL research (ETC # 5, 6, 7), discipline-based research and consulting (ETC # 1, 5)

What support do faculty need to be effective teachers?

- a) Activities that ignite their passion and develop their expertise for the discipline
 - i. Research
 - ii. Professional development
 - iii. Consulting/community service
- b) Incentives that increase morale for teaching
 - i. Upper administration support and a clear statement of vision for teaching
 - ii. Recognition of excellence in teaching (FSRs, Rank and Tenure, Fritz Burns Award)
 - iii. Broader measures of effective teaching beyond Course Evaluation Forms (see

bullets a-g outlined in the section for documenting effective teaching)

- iv. Sufficient resources
- c) Resources needed
 - i. Course remissions to develop new classes, team-teach or lead more inquiry-based pedagogies, such as undergraduate research or community-based projects. These pedagogies should never require faculty to carry a teaching overload.
 - ii. Training for technology and new pedagogies
 - iii. Administrative support and budget to offer different types of experiences in the classroom (i.e. field trips, service learning connections, software, equipment)
 - iv. Center for Teaching Excellence programs and resources, including SoTL and CTE Travel Grants
 - v. Administrative support for assessment efforts (e.g. teaching assistants for grading and data collection)

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