

Deans, Chairs & Academic Leaders: Tips to Enhance a Department's Teaching Climate and Culture



FIVE TIPS:

1. BE A “CHAMPION” OF TEACHING

- ensure there are formative opportunities for instructors to receive feedback on teaching prior to more high stakes summative activities (e.g., peer observation of teaching for tenure/promotion).
- actively demonstrate support for faculty on teaching matters via department/divisional channels (e.g., more frequent inclusion of teaching topics/updates at faculty meetings; highlighting teaching innovations or successes in departmental or divisional newsletters or communications).
- encourage faculty to attend teaching & learning centre workshops, institutes, special events, and then share back to department colleagues.

2. TAKE STOCK: DOES MENTORING FOR TEACHING HAPPEN IN YOUR DEPARTMENT? IS IT EFFECTIVE?

- conduct a scan of existing formal and informal mentoring activities that foster support for teaching.
- monitor and evaluate how (or if) mentoring activities are being implemented and whether they are effective. Such information can identify existing gaps in current departmental practices.
- does formative peer observation of teaching occur in your department?
- identify areas of teaching expertise and experience in your department. Seek permission from these faculty members to circulate this list to colleagues (e.g., flipped classroom, assignment design, working with TAs).

3. BUILD TEACHING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

- invite faculty to present on a specific teaching-related topic at a faculty meeting, lunch hour brown bag series, and other departmental events.
- encourage and support faculty to build mentoring into their professional activities and document these in their teaching dossiers.

4. CREATE SUPPORTIVE SPACES

- promote a culture/climate in which faculty can discuss experimentation, concerns/challenges they encounter, and strategies to improve and enhance their teaching.
- encourage regular review of course evaluation data and other sources of feedback (e.g., mid-course feedback).

5. RECOGNIZE & REWARD MENTORING

- draw attention to and recognize teaching practices and activities that enhance your department's culture of teaching and learning.
- select teaching champions and incorporate opportunities for these leaders to in turn meet, mentor, guide, and essentially be available for new faculty or any instructor with teaching-related questions (e.g., team teaching, curriculum renewal).

Reference: Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation. (2016). Faculty Mentoring for Teaching Report. Toronto: Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation, University of Toronto. <http://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/fmt/fmt-report/>