Note-taking Guide

How Can Talking through Course Evaluations Improve My Teaching?

Presented by:

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Professor Emerita, Penn State Berks
Editor, *The Teaching Professor*

A distinguished scholar and author, Dr. Maryellen Weimer is a professor emerita of teaching and learning at Penn State Berks and has edited The *Teaching Professor* newsletter since 1987. She has consulted with more than 600 colleges and universities on instructional issues and regularly keynotes national meetings and regional conferences. Dr. Weimer has won Penn State's Milton S. Eisenhower award for distinguished teaching. Her book, *Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice*, 2nd ed. remains one of the most influential books for educators.

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Three Conversations

When there's been a decline

When there are some negative comments

When there's a questionable assumption about why the rating are so good

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Conversation 1: There's been a decline in ratings

Do you know why?

Is the decline significant?

How long has it been since you've made any changes?

If you can't explain the decline, what could you do to try and discover what's caused it?

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Conversation 2: When there are some negative comments

Can you think of anything that happened in class that might have caused them?

Is the number of negative comments significant, given how many there are, how many evaluations there are, and how many students were in the course?

Do any of the positive comments contradict or counterbalance the negative ones?

Are you taking the negative comments seriously? What might you do to indicate that you are?

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Conversation 3: When there's a questionable assumption about why the ratings are so good

What evidence do you have documenting what students must do to earn an A?

Do you grade with an absolute standard? If so does you syllabus delineate what standards must be met to earn an A?

Do you have any data or evidence that shows how that the rigor and standards in your course compares with that of other courses in the program?

What evidence does you academic leader have that you are giving students grades they have not earned?

Do students give higher ratings to easy graders and in easy courses?

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Conversation 4: What would you like to tell me about teaching in this program?

Should you say what you really think?
Should you say what's safe?

Conversations with Students

- The reasons why it's a conversation you should consider having
- To learn more about their learning experiences in the course
- To show that you about their experiences in the course
- To model a constructive response to feedback
- Set some rules
- The golden rule of feedback: give me feedback in the form you'd like me to give feedback to you
- Start the discussion with some questions: "I've looked at your feedback and it's raised a couple of questions I'd like to have you answer."
- Present contradictory results: some people love the quizzes; some people hate the quizzes. What should the teacher do?
- If the results are motivating consideration of some changes; solicit feedback on what you're thinking about changing.

Thank you!

Tell us what you think:

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