

**Summaries of Selected Sessions from the  
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## 8.6 Teaching and Learning SIG (Special Session)

### **Step Inside My Classroom: Documenting Teaching and Learning for the P&T Process and Beyond**

#### Chair:

*Stacey Barlow Hills, Utah State University*

#### Panelists:

*Brian Lofman, John F. Kennedy University*

*Matt Aistrich, Pennsylvania State University*

*Stacey Barlow Hills, Utah State University*

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How should professors be evaluated for teaching in the promotion and tenure process? This session sought to advise professors on how to document the teaching process for evaluation and the evaluation process itself. How do you fit in today to ensure a job tomorrow? The most important word pertaining to this issue is choice. It is crucial to know who you are and the potential university and choose a program that fits you, especially since requirements have changed regarding accreditation. Once the right choice has been made, teach well, engage in good research, and participate in service activities. Demonstrate your academic competence while maintaining good relationships with others.

As a professor, you have to be accountable and universities are expecting you to add value to their program through teaching. Thus, when documenting your teaching portfolio, show the value you have added and how you are helping to accomplish the institution's goals. There are five key things that should be considered. The first is establishing learning objectives for your students to show that you are concerned with what they are learning. At the end of the semester, measuring key learning objectives can be a way to evaluate what they have learned. An alternative method is to give pre- and post-tests at the beginning and end of the semester to show how much the professor has taught, adding value. Second, show how your syllabus has changed and that you aren't doing the same thing over and over again. Third, make the best student project part of your portfolio. This shows what kind of standards you have and what knowledge students have gained. In certain classes participating in contests may be appropriate to show added value. Fourth, show how well students are performing in your class and where they are now and how you helped them get there. Fifth, show that you are reading the literature and engaging in conversations about teaching. Stay up on what people are doing. Document any teaching programs attended. Participating in such programs shows continuous improvement and commitment. The final and most important thing for documentation is your philosophical statement. Who are you as a teacher and what do you stand for? If you are attempting to improve your teaching, one suggestion is to observe the classroom of expert teachers. This can also be something to put in your portfolio to show that you are trying.

Besides documenting your teaching, understanding the evaluation process is also essential. The most important assessment, especially in teaching institutions, is the student evaluation. The most important part of the student evaluation is the written comments, even after tenure. However, there is movement to get away from these because relying on student evaluations may be too risky. In regards to student evaluations it is worth remembering that good teachers get good evaluations and that grades do not influence student evaluations, so giving out good grades does not guarantee good evaluations. In addition, if students know you are easy, then you might get non-motivated students and administrators may find out. Department heads do not want to see complaints about you so avoid complaints. To improve evaluations it may be necessary to go beyond the call of duty, such as taking field trips. This is a good way for students to learn through innovative teaching methods. Also, use technology to your advantage to add value to your students and promote it to your superiors.

For the evaluation process, it is recommended that you find something out about the process. For example, who will be on the committee? What are the rules for the committee? How does the committee work? How involved are the professors in the process? Do they look at the portfolio or just one overall number? For promotion in some schools, one overall rating for teaching might be evaluated and compared among professors. Some schools have requirements for observation of teaching practices.

Not only might you learn something from being evaluated, but you may also learn something by doing an evaluation.