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Front Line Faculty Development: Chairs Constructively Critiquing Colleagues in the Classroom

Linda Hilsen
LeAne Rutherford

University of Minnesota-Duluth

Ideally, every institution should have a centralized faculty/instructional development program. In addition to or in the absence of such a development program, individuals in an excellent position to promote faculty growth from the initial interview through retirement are department chairs. Given the current financial stringency coupled with the perennial quest for teaching excellence in higher education, many faculty development programs cannot respond in a timely fashion to all faculty demands for services. At most institutions, requests for intensive, individualized consultation and for group/department consultations far exceed the available consultant time. To solve the problem of consultant supply and faculty demand, training department chairs to shoulder a major responsibility for faculty growth is imperative, for it maximizes the utility of each department head's position. Furthermore, department chairs will no longer be perceived by faculty as just serving leadership and administrative functions, but also as being catalysts for learning and bona fide members of the teaching community.

All professors in higher education are experts in their fields, but few are trained teachers. And teaching can be taught. Given that department chairs have first and continued contact with faculty, chairs must be trained to promote improvement of instruction. This article will help department chairs to become even more effective front line faculty developers by:

- 1) exploring ways they can constructively critique colleagues' classroom communications, and
- 2) providing a tested, pragmatic process for training colleagues to become perceptive observers of each other's teaching.

This experiential process is readily transferable to any institution.

Training department chairs, administrators, and faculty members to be observers of teaching in no way detracts from the mission of a centrally located faculty development program. On the contrary, it enhances that mission.

Peer Observation and Peer Evaluation: Formative and Summative Evaluation

The first thing department chairs need to realize and communicate to faculty who become involved in peer observation training groups is that there is a significant difference between peer observation and peer evaluation. Using colleagues to critique peers' classroom performance for evaluative purposes is unfair without adequate training and systematic practice. In *College Teaching and Learning: Preparing for New Commitments* (1988), Peter Seldin clearly delineates the difference between evaluating and observing peers. Reading Seldin's article is a first assignment in the peer observation training process.

In addition to being aware of the dramatic difference between peer observation and peer evaluation, chairs must recognize and discuss with faculty the difference between formative and summative evaluation. In essence, formative evaluation leads to the development of self-awareness, growth, and change. An excellent formative instrument is Teaching Analysis by Students (TABS), which originated at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst's Clinic to Improve University Teaching (1974). In contrast, summative evaluations are used for the purposes of determining promotion, tenure, and merit increases. Such instruments "grade" the instructor. To reiterate, in the process of training faculty to become peer observers, the first step is to openly discuss the difference between peer observation and peer evaluation and between formative and summative evaluation.

Anxieties of Both Tenured and Untenured Faculty Working Together

Another crucial issue to be discussed in the initial phase of peer observation training is the risk faculty members take in revealing themselves in

the classroom to colleagues. Tenured and untenured faculty members pedagogically exposing themselves to each other is a major source of anxiety. One way to reduce this anxiety is to have those involved in peer observation training divide into two groups and jot down what their concerns would be in their assigned role. For example, those whose last names begin with A-M could be assigned the role of tenured faculty, and those whose last names begin with N-Z could assume the role of untenured faculty. This discovery writing exercise, which takes fewer than five minutes, yields a fertile base for discussion.

At the University of Minnesota-Duluth, we have found that those who play the part of untenured faculty say they feel threatened: They worry about whether they will ever receive tenure if they risk revealing themselves in front of those who will determine their fate in academe; they fear colleagues may not appreciate or approve of their individual style; they worry students might think something is amiss and that they are under investigation; and they fear their academic freedom might be infringed upon.

Concerns of those who play the part of tenured faculty might be scripted as follows: "Judge me? Absurd!" "How could a person from another area of study know my specialized content?" "Don't I have the right to run my classroom the way I want to? What has happened to academic freedom?" "Who is right and who is wrong?" Style is but personality." "Who else knows enough about my field to know whether I've kept my research current?" "Am I to be assessed as a stereotypic representative of the graying professoriate by one of these freshly minted PhDs?"

Questions raised by both tenured and untenured faculty include: "Where are the results going?" "How representative of my teaching can a class or two be?" "How will my pay be affected?" "How can you assure confidentiality?"

Trainers must bring all these legitimate reservations into the open. Unless these issues are aired, fears about peer observation are like the elephant in the middle of the living room: everyone knows it is there, but no one speaks about it. Establishing trust occurs much more readily in a group if the issue of tenured or untenured faculty critiquing each other is aired.

Random Versus Focused Observation and Descriptive Versus Judgmental Observation

The third step in training faculty in peer observation is to help them discover experientially the difference between random and focused observation, and descriptive and judgmental observation. Employing a 3-5 minute

video clip of ineffective teaching, such as the vignette "Presentation Styles" from the University of Delaware's *Inside Teaching: Exploring Teaching Styles* (1990), department chairs acting as facilitators can ask colleagues to view and then constructively critique teaching performance. Posing the following questions is helpful: What could an observer tell the instructor to enable her to see herself as students do? What would help promote behavioral change? After viewing the clip, untrained observers in groups we have taken through this process have quickly responded: "Dull," "Boring," "Unprepared," "Unexciting," "No direction," "No interaction," "Insulting to students," "Fidgety," and "Obviously, the person is depressed."

Once these comments are jotted on a flip chart or overhead for the group, the facilitator should ask observers to categorize comments as judgmental or descriptive. Quite likely the group will be embarrassed by how judgmental its comments are. We have found the more, "But, what I mean is ..." statements that are made, the clearer it is that the list of comments generated by the group could not change behavior in the classroom.

Judgmental comments do not lead to self-awareness but rather to defensiveness. Observers need guided practice in changing judgmental comments into descriptive statements. Just as a tennis player who is told she has a poor serve would not know what to do to change that unfortunate state of affairs, an instructor who was told she is boring would not be helped to modify her delivery unless specific behaviors are described. To illustrate, the tennis player needs to know that she should move her hand 1/2 inch clockwise on the grip just as the instructor could profit by knowing that she should vary her volume, pitch, intonation, pacing, and not repeat herself unnecessarily.

In the second viewing of the same video clip, the facilitator requests observers to take descriptive notes on a *focused* aspect of the instructor's delivery. At a 1991 Bush Foundation Regional Faculty Development Conference, observers (department chairs, administrators, and faculty development consultants) were asked to look only at nonverbal behavior in the second viewing of "Presentation Styles." They described what they saw as, "She droops over the podium." "She doesn't smile." "She gestures limply." "She stares off into space." We pointed out that this descriptive, focused information would enable the instructor to see herself as the students see her and, consequently, to stand tall, to smile occasionally, to gesture more emphatically, and to make eye contact. Specific changes in behavior are achieved by generating focused, descriptive statements, not random, judgmental accusations.

Underlying Value Systems That Propel Instruction

The next stage in this process is to discover the underlying value systems that propel instruction. Employing Hilsen's "Teaching Values Clarification Exercise" (see Appendix A) aids faculty in getting a clearer picture of what they prize in their own teaching. Many of them have never before committed their instructional values to paper. But of equal importance is that faculty members who may have had offices next to each other for many years and who may have never talked about their teaching philosophies with one another can discover the similarities and differences in their educational value systems within a systematic framework. This truly takes teaching out of the closet. The "Teaching Values Clarification Exercise" may look as if it can be completed by a department in one hour's time, but it releases so much pent up dedication, caring, and concern that if a facilitator has the luxury of time, discussion (depending on department size) could easily ensue for as much as four hours while instructors compare and contrast their philosophies. Revealing underlying value systems of instruction helps to establish even greater trust among department members which, in turn, facilitates the peer observation process.

Factors That Contribute to Effective and Not-so-effective Teaching

Once instructors acknowledge their own teaching philosophies, they need to share a common pedagogical vocabulary to discuss factors that contribute to effective teaching and less-effective teaching. An evocative experience to elicit this educational exchange is "The Visualization Exercise: Classroom Climate" (see Appendix B). Participants examine their own feelings by traveling back in time to conjure up classroom memories that enable them to begin to define the difference between effective and not-so-effective teaching. Through visualization and discovery writing, faculty members we have worked with have described characteristics of a positive classroom climate such as the teacher (personal, available, humorous, non-threatening); the students (stimulated, but not overwhelmed; willing to share ideas, affiliated); the facility (appropriate in size, designed for interaction, agreeably lighted, arranged to produce a feeling of having personal space). Detracting from the learning experience, the teacher has been described as rigid, demeaning, factual pontificator, pet-praiser; the students as constantly

being evaluated, dehumanized, prevented from finding their own voices; and the facility as huge, hot and stuffy, set up for a lecture, and glaringly lit.

Common Teaching Vocabulary

Helling's Danforth Faculty Fellowship Project Report, "Looking for Good Teaching: A Guide to Peer Observation" (1976), is an excellent vehicle to guide discussion about sound andragogy (Knowles, 1984) and to use as a checklist for actual classroom visitations. Helling explores teaching through presentation, involvement, and questioning. After working through the visualization exercise and the checklist, colleagues share a mutual vocabulary and can communicate about teaching.

Observation Through Videotape and Microteaching Process

The next high hurdle is establishing enough trust to enable colleagues to present teaching demonstrations for one another—that is, to microteach. Although there are many ways to do microteaching, for our purposes we define microteaching as presenting 10-20 minutes of content-specific material to observers, a microcosmic version of a real class session. We prefer using a 10-20 minute teaching segment over a shorter one because faculty have less difficulty narrowing material and a better opportunity to demonstrate their teaching styles. As the teacher presents, others take notes on the content and the process used. The colleagues are playing dual roles of students and observers simultaneously. As the students, they respond appropriately, and as observers, they take notes on the teaching process. A feedback session follows. As Menges points out in "Colleagues as Catalysts for Change in Teaching" (1989), faculty can effectively assist each other in improvement of teaching. We have found that practice in giving feedback is an essential aspect of this training.

The thought of microteaching may create anxiety even in the most polished professionals—let alone teaching novices. To ease them into the microteaching process, faculty members can hone their observation skills by viewing video clips of teachers, preferably ones they do not know. Eliminating the interpersonal emotional baggage in the initial phases of observation training makes the process more palatable to even the most reluctant participants.

For example, in a recent workshop on this topic, participants were asked to view a video clip of a class being taught in a question-and-answer format.

As they viewed the clip, they were asked to take notes, focusing on the classroom climate. Their comments were to include descriptive, concrete, and objective evidence mirroring what the students were seeing. Participants were given a minute after the video's completion to process what they saw and organize their comments to give feedback to the teacher being observed on tape. They were then divided into pairs—one performing as the observer and the other role playing the teacher—and asked to talk for five minutes.

After they had experienced giving and receiving feedback, they discussed how those playing the teachers felt receiving feedback and how those acting as observers felt giving feedback. Both groups confessed to some psychological discomfort in this delicate transaction. Even when role playing, the personal/emotional issues surfaced and made individuals realize what an “eggshell” business this process is. A typical statement from the feedback giver was, “Although I knew I was not talking to the person who really did the teaching, I still found it difficult to put criticisms into words.” Feedback recipients found that even though they were not the actual teacher in question, they became defensive. These reactions only confirm how crucial it is to establish trust.

After participants have gone through a series of role playing with video vignettes, giving and receiving constructive criticism becomes easier. Indeed, guided practice—after instruction—makes perfect. Not just anyone, no matter the rank or the longevity in teaching, can give effective feedback. Training is needed by most to enable them to give effective feedback, feedback that can elicit change.

The transition into microteaching evolves naturally once participants have been guided through a series of confidence- and skill-building exercises. No longer do they have the safety valve of talking about teachers who are not in the room. Now they are going to talk to each other about each other. Each department member will teach a short lesson to colleagues which they will critique from the viewpoint of both students and faculty. The steps of the microteaching process we employ are outlined below.

Microteaching Process

1. Physical set-up: e.g., write topic on board, arrange chairs, fix overhead, open windows, turn on lights.
2. Each presenter explains:
 - What part of course this is (which “piece of the pie”).
 - The purpose, the goals, and expectations of the lesson.
 - Who the audience is.

3. The presenter teaches while all others take notes on the presentation and teaching strategies being used. Viewers playing the dual roles of students and observers:
 - Jot down any unanswered questions or points that need clarifying.
 - Point out strengths and weaknesses.
 - Comment on such things as delivery, organization, and class participation, possibly using Helling's checklist.
4. Oral critique:
 - a. Facilitator asks observers:
 - Did the presenter explain how this segment fits into the construction of the course?
 - Did the teacher accomplish his/her purpose, goals, expectations?
 - Was the lesson appropriate for the intended audience?
 - b. Everyone comments on:
 - Delivery: e.g., eye contact, voice level, mannerisms.
 - Organization (Intro, Body, Conclusion).
 - Quality of interaction with audience.
 - Questioning skill.
 - Timing/pacing.
 - Use of concrete examples with which students can identify.
 - Potential for more interactive techniques (questioning, group activity, design of a manipulative activity).
 - Whether students were encouraged to think critically.
5. The microteacher comments on how s/he felt:
 - a. Doing the presentation:
 - Anxiety level.
 - Whether or not s/he felt communication, understanding was occurring.
 - Whether or not s/he could "read" the students' verbal and nonverbal reactions.
 - b. Receiving comments/constructive criticisms from colleagues.
6. Additional comments from all.
7. Summary by facilitator.

It is important that each teacher follow the same basic outline. When the microteaching process is initially introduced to faculty, time must be allowed

for questioning. All must have an equal understanding of and equal time for completing the process. The following is a list of some disaster-avoidance advice that should help initiates to steer clear of quicksand situations:

- *Set rigid time limits.*

As Maddy states in “Micro Teaching in a Peer Observation Group: A Tenured Perspective” (1990), “Content oriented, we all wanted to ‘teach’ our peers for more than fifteen to twenty minutes.” The facilitator must be a conscientious timekeeper.

- *Emphasize process (the method, not the subject).*
- *Limit discussion of content.*

This is not to say that all discussion of content should be eliminated. Content discussions can be a true community builder. Individuals begin to realize they have areas of interest and expertise of which they were not aware. A dash of content discussion goes a long way as a catalyst to conversations outside of the microteaching setting. Just as the “Teaching Values Clarification Exercise” contributes to team building, so, too, does a soupçon of content conversation in the midst of microteaching feedback. Arguing the pros and cons of this theorem over that hypothesis is not the objective here. The object is to talk to each other about teaching strategies, delivery techniques, classroom style—the teaching process.

- *Cover both the positive and the negative.*

Participants have to be coaxed into dealing with the difficult. Yes, accentuate the positive, but do not neglect the negative.

- *Expect going through even one round of microteaching in an average-sized department to be a lengthy process.*

Optimally, two rounds are recommended. The presentation of one lesson and the feedback session easily consume an hour of difficult-to-schedule time. Departments undertaking this task must address the scheduling issue BEFORE the process ever begins. A department chair who has the foresight to schedule a common free time for department members will find the process quite convenient to facilitate.

- *Allow members to determine the order of presentation—e.g., who will go first, second.*
- *Designate who is responsible for what arrangements.*

The facilitator must assume responsibility for such matters as meeting place, time scheduling, reordering for illness, and notifying participants of the next session. Participants must provide their own teaching equipment and materials and pick a site appropriate to their teaching style. However, it is their job to notify the facilitator of that choice so their colleagues will be in the right place at the right time.

Facilitators should know that sometimes members drop out or temporarily opt out at this stage. For some, the imagined risk of teaching in front of their colleagues is so great they cannot psychologically afford the experience at this time. If they watch others microteach, they may regain their courage. Not surprisingly, we have observed that “full membership” is only conferred on those who participate in each step of the process. Others who choose not to microteach may continue to attend, but they are no longer viewed as legitimate members of the club.

When members do fully participate, magical things happen. Maddy (1990) writes, “. . . already I find it much more satisfying than anything else I have tried during my career to upgrade my skills.” Others who have been involved in this process have told us: They feel as if they have been initiated; they respond as contributing members of a department; they realize that others have similar areas of interest; they see connections for possible research projects; they value their individual differences and teaching styles; they now have sounding boards for collaboratively cogenerating alternative approaches for presenting material; they are surrounded by sets of willing ears. New faculty have risked, survived, and blossomed; seasoned faculty have risked, maintained, and been revitalized. Not only has instructional development occurred, but so, too, have professional and personal growth.

Classroom Observation Triads

By the time faculty have completed two rounds of microteaching, they are eager to have colleagues constructively critique their classroom performance. They do not want to deal with pretend students any more. They want their now-trusted peers to tell them what they cannot see for themselves—to capture the image projected to students and mirror it without the distortion they initially feared. Beginning with Sweeney and Grasha’s “Improving Teaching through Faculty Triads” model (1979), Hilsen and Rutherford developed a matrix, “Observation Triads: Behavior Chart,” which follows.

Observation Triads: Behavior Chart

ROLES IN THE PROCESS	INTERVIEW	CLASSROOM OBSERVATION	FEEDBACK SESSION
FACILITATOR	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review steps of process. 2. Establish rapport in triad: how does each participant feel about the process and role s/he is playing. 3. Make certain all observer duties are performed. 4. Prompt observer to cover "unasked" questions. 5. Determine ground rules for documentation of process, if any. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Play identical role as observer in as unobtrusive manner as possible. (Steps 1-7 below.) 2. Be certain to take copious notes. 3. Do not participate in the class. 4. After class, schedule feedback session as soon as possible in a "neutral" location, not the facilitator's office. 5. Be positive, non-threatening, and interested! 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take adequate processing time to prepare for presentation of feedback. 2. Prioritize areas to be discussed given tolerance levels of teacher and observer. 3. Prepare a written checklist to cross off areas discussed. 4. Observe feedback session only intruding when "egg shell" areas surface. 5. At end of feedback session add comments observer has missed. 6. Be a communication helper. 7. Give feedback to observer. 8. Provide summary of process. 9. Make certain closure takes place.
OBSERVER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe course. 2. Relate background of students. 3. Explore objectives of teacher for given class period (espoused goals). 4. Establish ground rules for behavior of observer and facilitator in class. WHAT? content WHY? rationale HOW? strategies, techniques, format 5. Take notes on all teacher comments. 6. Determine areas on which the teacher particularly wants feedback. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Get to class early and observe student and teacher entrances to determine relationship. 2. Take notes on process (organization, techniques, format, delivery, etc.). 3. Quantify as much as possible: - Record communication patterns. - Count # of student questions, responses, input. - Calculate WAIT time 1 and 2. 4. Read facial expressions and body language of teacher and students. 5. Note classroom environment, physical setting, and atmosphere. 6. Watch class disperse. 7. Give brief positive reinforcement to teacher after class. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Perform facilitator Steps 1-3. 2. Control the session. 3. Ask teacher for self-critique of how class session went. 4. Begin with positive comments. 5. Use concrete examples and visuals when appropriate. 6. Reinforce good teaching behaviors. 7. Ask teacher for alternative approaches and "co-generate" them with the teacher using prioritized list as guide. 8. Stress shared generation of alternatives. 9. Validate responses of teacher. LISTEN and paraphrase teacher input. 10. Summarize positive, negative, and "co-generated" alternatives. 11. Thank teacher for opportunity to learn.
TEACHER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Answer observer questions. 2. Share syllabus, text, plan for class session. 3. Explain what students will leave class session "knowing." 4. Explain what will cause the students to attend the next class session. 5. Describe role students play in your teaching; what is your concept of your students as learners? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teach. 2. Consciously attempt to disregard presence of observer and facilitator to avoid interference in established relationship with students. 3. Predetermine whether or not you will explain the presence of the observer and facilitator to your class. 4. Provide materials, texts, etc. for the observer and facilitator. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be receptive. 2. Self-analyze class sessions before feedback sessions. 3. Prepare list of questions and areas of specific interest to you. 4. Describe how you felt with the observer and facilitator in your classroom. 5. Ask for concrete validation. 6. Be willing to clarify rationale for employing particular strategies. 7. Be willing to ask for suggestions for alternative approaches. 8. Request input from the observer and the facilitator. 9. Thank observer and facilitator for the input and the time spent.

The first step in moving from microteaching to viewing colleagues' classrooms is to organize people into triads: the facilitator (the department head), the observer (colleague), and the teacher (colleague). They interact in three different settings: the interview, the classroom observation, and the feedback session. By locating the intersection of the role and the stage of the process on the "Observation Triads: Behavior Chart," an individual can see what behaviors make the process run smoothly at a given stage. Simply, the chart tells who does what when.

To establish observation triads, the facilitator (department chair) may pair colleagues. If the department climate is healthy, participants may be involved in selecting partners. However, because the chair has had the opportunity to watch relationships evolve as participants have explored their teaching philosophies, developed trust, and microtaught, the facilitator is in an excellent position to assign team members. Relying on insight, the facilitator needs to integrate budding affiliations to germinate the seeds of networking that have been sown. The furrows between tenured and untenured faculty can be ignored. As a matter of fact, mixing stock is encouraged because permanent mentoring relationships can be propagated in this mix as can perennial friendships. Once the pairs have been established, the facilitator begins to act as a landscaper of scheduling.

A caveat: Scheduling is not a simple matter. It is a jungle of tangled vines through which cutting a clear path is laborious and which requires fortitude and vigilance on the part of the facilitator. Excuses sprout like tropical undergrowth impeding progress toward the destination—arriving at a neatly plotted matrix schedule. Committee assignments, childcare responsibilities, teaching classes, union negotiations, staff meetings, hockey practice, nail appointments, search committees, writing articles, and letters of reference—all block efforts to schedule in a timely fashion. Facilitators must be reminded that given the appropriate amount of persistence, the process will begin.

Once upon a time when the authors initially began working with observation triads, they foolishly believed the interview phase for both faculty members' classroom observations could be completed simultaneously in one meeting. It is imperative that the reader realize that both colleagues' classroom performances will eventually be viewed by the other faculty member; the observer will become the teacher, and the teacher will become the observer to sequence a round in the process. Obviously, the facilitator plays the same role throughout.

The easiest way to facilitate rapid progress through the process is to work through the three steps of the first segment of a round (interview, classroom observation, and feedback session). Then have the observer and faculty

member switch roles, repeating the interview, classroom observation, and feedback session stages. What appears to be more work is actually less in the long run. The interview needs to occur after the last class has been taught and before the class to be observed is taught. If, for example, the class is a Tuesday/Thursday class, the interview might be held on a Wednesday before the Thursday class or on Friday or Monday before the Tuesday class.

By using the "Observation Triads: Behavior Chart" as a checklist, each member of the triad will be able to perform the expected behavior to ensure the successful completion of a round.

How many rounds need to be done before the process is completed? The answer to this question depends on a number of factors: How much time can participants give and still maintain their professional presence? How committed are both the department chair and the faculty members to the improvement of teaching? How much of a catalyst to change has this process been to participants? How concerned are faculty with developing teaching skills in comparison to evaluating colleagues' performances? Is there another service available on campus that would allow faculty to more intensely investigate their own teaching? Are there other ways in which faculty can interact in productive relationships? (e.g., Should they write about their experiences, and/or should they get involved in classroom research?) The process is a springboard to many activities, all of which contribute to raising the status of teaching and teachers on university campuses.

Conclusions

The ultimate answer to how long the process continues depends on whether the potential benefits are realized for the faculty: increased awareness of self in the classroom; greater understanding of students; improved ability to read student reaction, to know when further explanation is needed; introduction to alternative teaching styles and strategies; increased networking and friendships among department members; sharing of similar goals while respecting philosophical differences. The following statements are testimonials to the fact that faculty do reap benefits in this process.

During the peer observation, I felt the strongest and most confident. I was on familiar ground in the classroom with real students and little doubt remained concerning the trust which I had invested in my associates.

In the end, I was elated to find that, what began as a test by fire, became an opportunity for affirmation and growth. Through this experience, I affirmed my own competence and uniqueness at teaching. I found that areas which I perceived as weaknesses had become sources of growth and change. Finally, the trust and respect between my colleagues and me rose to a level

which it otherwise may not have attained had we not endured these events together.

"An Untenured Perspective" (1990)

An aspect of this process that fascinates me is the growing appreciation for how competent we all are as teachers and yet how different our teaching styles are

Learning how to observe our peers and to offer constructive critiques of their teaching has brought our group closer both professionally and personally. It is good to get together once a week in a less formal setting than our traditional department meetings. We are much more relaxed with one another than when we began this process. For me the most beneficial part of the experience to date has been sharing our philosophies of teaching and the techniques we find helpful. I will be trying some new strategies in my classroom now that I have seen them demonstrated.

"A Tenured Perspective" (1990)

Chairs maximize their role as front line faculty developers by being viewed as collaborators in the teaching process, not critics of it. As if the sorcerer's wand were waved across the department, taking committee assignments, accepting responsibility for chairing searches, being the department representative to the faculty assembly, and a host of other "Please, can't you?" jobs are much more likely to be filled by volunteers. Morale improves; internal strife diminishes. Departments that were sick can become collaboratively healthy. Department chairs are now coaching a team. Although Menges (1987) states status differential can have a negative effect on institutional review processes, we have found that working through this peer observation process does, indeed, enable the department chair to be a member of the teaching improvement community. Furthermore, chairs will feel more capable of filling their leadership role because of their knowledge and understanding of their department members. The chair can maximize departmental potential by treating faculty in a humane manner. Yes, a department benefits.

The authors chose to use department structure as a means of explaining how this system functions. As illustrated in Hilsen's "Maximizing Consultant Time by Utilizing Group Consultation" (1990), the reality is that an institution, with the help of a consultant, can be broken down into any kind of manageable unit, and the process will still work. For example, at the University of Minnesota-Duluth next year, a consultant with the Instructional Development Service will act as facilitator for a group of interdisciplinary faculty within a college. Any structure will work as long as the steps outlined

and the roles delineated are followed. To reiterate, the agenda for training in peer observation is as follows:

Agenda for Peer Observation Training Groups

Hilsen (1991)

1. Overview the entire process.
2. Discuss the difference between peer observation and peer evaluation, and formative and summative evaluation.
3. Openly discuss the anxieties of both tenured and untenured faculty working together to improve teaching.
4. Use video to get participants to see the difference between random and focused observation, and descriptive and judgmental observation.
5. Discover the underlying value systems that propel instruction by utilizing the "Teaching Values Clarification Exercise."
6. Use the "Visualization Exercise: Classroom Climate" to discuss common factors which contribute to good and not-so-effective teaching.
7. Use Helling's "Looking for Good Teaching: A Guide to Peer Observation" to establish a shared teaching vocabulary.
8. Train participants how to observe through videotapes and the micro-teaching process, completing as many rounds of micro-teaching as needed to help participants feel comfortable.
9. Set up observation triads and begin classroom observations.
10. Repeat the process or move on to new ventures, reaping the benefits of participation.

Department chairs, administrators, or consultants can be effective front line faculty developers by learning to constructively critique colleagues in the classroom. Community building occurs as faculty proceed through the peer observation process. With the concentration on improvement of instruction as opposed to evaluation, the status of teaching on campus rises. Emphasis shifts from evaluation to improvement, from competition to collaboration, from a random pattern to a systematized model.

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Appendix A

Teaching Values Clarification Exercise

AIGNER FORM NO. 84016

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[illegible]

DIRECTIONS:

Out of the 20 teaching behaviors listed on side one of TABS Form B (Teaching Analysis by Students), pick the 5 items you consider to be most important for effective teaching in your classroom. Enter your name on line one. Rank the 5 items you have chosen in order of importance.

(A = most important; B = second most important; C = third; D = fourth; E = fifth).

TABS Form B*

Section I: This section includes statements describing a variety of teaching skills. Please read each statement carefully and decide the extent to which you feel your instructor does not or does need improvement. Respond to each statement by selecting one of the following:

- A. No improvement needed (very good or excellent performance)
- B. Little improvement needed (generally good performance)
- C. Improvement needed (generally mediocre performance)
- D. Considerable improvement needed (generally poor performance)
- E. Not a necessary skill for this course

Please make your decisions about the need for improvement on the basis of what you think would be best for this particular course and your personal learning style. Rather than let your overall feelings for the instructor determine all of your responses, try to consider each statement separately.

THE INSTRUCTOR'S PERFORMANCE IN...

1. making effective use of class time
2. making clear the purposes of each class session and learning activity
3. integrating the various topics treated in the course
4. making clear the distinction between major and minor topics
5. adjusting the rate at which ideas are covered so that I can follow and understand them
6. clarifying material which needs explanation
7. wrapping things up before moving on to a new topic
8. assigning useful readings and homework
9. maintaining an atmosphere which actively encourages learning
10. responding to questions raised by students
11. inspiring excitement or interest in the content of the course
12. using a variety of teaching techniques
13. taking appropriate action if students appear to be bored
14. asking thought-provoking questions
15. getting students to participate in class discussions or activities
16. relating to students in ways which promote mutual respect
17. explaining what is expected from each student
18. making clear precisely how my performance is to be evaluated
19. designing evaluation procedures which are consistent with course goals
20. keeping me informed about how well I am doing

(Over)

(Page one of three. Only one page included.)

*Adapted from the Teaching Analyses by Students (TABS) of the Clinic to Improve University Teaching. University of Massachusetts at Amherst (1974). Use of TABS B is granted to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Teaching and Learning Center by Glenn Erickson, Director, Instructional Development Program, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, Rhode Island. (Minor modifications of TABS B made by Joyce Povlacs, Instructional Consultant, UNL Teaching and Learning Center.) For information regarding the use of TABS B, call 472-3079.

Appendix B

VISUALIZATION EXERCISE: Classroom Climate

Linda Hilsen, University of Minnesota-Duluth

Think back over all the classrooms you have been in as a student or as an observer. In some, you felt very comfortable; in others, the atmosphere was not relaxed, and often you wished the hour would get over. This exercise will help you discover what contributes to and detracts from an effective learning environment.

Time

- 2 minutes** 1. Think about the elements in each situation described above which caused you to feel the way you did. Close your eyes and put yourself in those actual classrooms. Visualize your favorite teacher. Why did you feel comfortable in that class? Conjure up a classroom you disliked. Why did you feel uncomfortable in that classroom?

- 4 minutes** 2. Jot down reasons why you felt comfortable or uncomfortable in a given classroom. Try to generate six reasons for each.

Comfortable

Uncomfortable

- 1 minute** 3. You will be assigned to a small group.

- 4 minutes** 4. Share your lists with the members of your small group to create a master list which includes ideas which are acceptable to all group members. Pick a recorder who writes legibly. The recorder will write your group's ideas on the transparency provided.

- 1 minute** 5. Through consensus, determine who will act as the reporter to disseminate your transparency list to the large group.

- 6 minutes** 6. Group reporters report to the large group.

- 2 minutes** 7. Debriefing: close your eyes and visualize changes you will make in your own classroom because of this discussion.

- 2 minutes** 8. With a person near you, share one change you intend to make or one idea you might like to try out in your next class.