

# Organizational Change and the Development of Faculty Evaluation Systems

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## Introduction

While most institutions of higher education support the concept of faculty evaluation, such appraisal systems are seldom well received. These negative reactions are often dismissed as resistance to accountability, but they can be based on knowledge of the many real problems associated with performance evaluation programs (Baird, Beatty & Schneier, 1982) and on policies affecting their implementation (Centra, 1980; Millman, 1981). Addressing these problems through application of organizational change theory and diffusion strategies which are participatory permit faculty to construct evaluation systems which combine their practical knowledge and experience with expert suggestions so as to fit existing empirically derived evaluation principles. The resulting evaluation systems are more likely to reflect the needs and context of the institution.

In this article, problems in faculty evaluation and performance appraisal are described. Assumptions and features of newer alternative faculty evaluation systems are presented. A strategy for developing systems involving use of committees and structured phases for faculty input based on organizational change theory is discussed. The recommendations here are based in part on a review of relevant literature and the authors' experiences devising a system for the School of Allied Health Sciences at the University of Texas—Houston.

## Problems in Performance Appraisal

The evaluation of faculty performance is not uniformly conducted and, if done, usually consists of overly simplistic, quantitative general effectiveness ratings. Minimal data result for administrative decision making, the support of promotion and tenure, and professional growth and development. These inadequacies have led some institutions to adopt a more complex performance appraisal approach. The resulting faculty evaluation systems are not without problems, but they appear to provide more relevant and timely information.

Developing and implementing a performance appraisal system raises several substantive problems. One is that the decisions to be served by the evaluation are unclear. Since performance evaluations are multi-purpose by nature, the co-mingling of administrative personnel decisions and faculty development uses of the same data is common and often destructive. A second problem is relevance. To be effective, evaluation must be a continuous, systematic process related to the functions and goals of individuals and the organization. More precise definitions of job duties than typical faculty position descriptions are required. A third problem concerns systems management. To maximize probability of accurate and useful data, the evaluation program must be well received and supported.

New evaluation systems can be devised to incorporate advances in performance appraisal while remaining compatible with existing organizational structures. These systems combine characteristics of management by objective systems (Holstrop, 1975), portfolio evaluation (Berquist & Phillips, 1977), and the congruence evaluation approach (Stake, 1973). They involve developing a portfolio of documents to guide objective setting, negotiation of workload

and criteria, data collection, performance rating, and review. They include descriptions of each evaluation activity, a set of instructions to use during implementation, and rating criteria. Instruments used to obtain measures for each activity may vary among programs, although standardization is desirable.

## System Assumptions

There are at least five fundamental assumptions about faculty members and the purpose of performance assessments underlying system development and use.

**Assumption 1:** *Faculty should be evaluated on their performance of activities for which they are presently employed.*

Faculty should be evaluated on their productivity in areas of teaching, service, scholarly activity, and professional development according to the percentage distributions specified by their employment agreement. This is of primary importance to Allied Health educators whose workload usually differs from other academic faculties and, therefore, is frequently incompatible with typical promotion and tenure requirements. An important outcome is to bring workload and promotion requirements into close alignment.

**Assumption 2:** *Faculty are autonomous professionals who ought to have a significant input into their evaluation process.*

The grounds for evaluation should be mutually agreed upon by the faculty and the evaluator before the evaluation begins. This should include what is evaluated (activities performed), and how performance is to be evaluated (instruments and procedures used).

**Assumption 3:** *Evaluation should accommodate individual differences in faculty as well as differences between departments.*

Faculty members often possess specialized expertise which permit them to make unique contributions to the

achievement of departmental goals and these should be accounted. Moreover, academic departments often are very different in distribution of teaching, research, and service responsibilities; curricular emphasis on didactic and clinical instruction, student practicums and internships; and the division of responsibilities for course development, coordination, and actual delivery of instruction. A school-wide program must accommodate between-department differences while providing within-department consistency.

**Assumption 4:** Faculty evaluation should be used as a means for improving faculty productivity and effectiveness as well as for determining promotion, tenure, pay increases, and/or continued appointment.

This assumption raises the thorny issue of mixing developmental and administrative uses of the same evaluation process. Addressing both can meet the needs of faculty and administrators, providing systems are designed that reward the faculty members for involvement in self-improvement activities, without requiring them to chronicle specific areas of weakness in any detail. Professional growth should be treated as a desirable pursuit expected of all faculty members and reported in a manner similar to descriptions of teaching, research, and service productivity.

**Assumption 5:** The developmental function of the evaluation requires supervisors to provide performance feedback based on systematically collected data presented in a frequent and timely manner.

Accurate and timely feedback is prerequisite to performance improvement. A global assessment of accomplishments on an annual basis is unlikely to be expressed in specific, performance terms which facilitate growth. In contrast, frequent, specific reviews assist in developing new skills and accomplishing negotiated goals.

### System Features

The first feature of newer faculty evaluation systems is the requirement of a negotiated agreement between the faculty member and supervisor-evaluator concerning activities, evidence, and criteria for each evaluation period. The two parties meet and the faculty member's workload for the academic year is discussed and agreed upon. Teaching, research, service, and professional development activities are

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Evaluation Plan

Area of Responsibility	Expected Performance (negotiated activities)	Actual Performance (measured activities)	
		Qualitative	Quantitative
Teaching			
Research			
Service			
Professional Development			

proposed by the faculty member, discussed, and more fully defined. The amount of effort expected in each area, the outcomes to be achieved, and the criteria to be satisfied are determined. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to negotiate workloads consistent with departmental requirements and goals, while faculty members negotiate for workloads consistent with their professional interests.

A second feature is the integration and demarcation of developmental and administrative uses of evaluation results. A system should provide data gathering mechanisms addressing both purposes. Three mechanisms address faculty professional development. First, development activities are included as an evaluation category and are considered a professional responsibility. Second, faculty members and supervisors meet regularly (usually quarterly) to review progress, providing "coaching" opportunities for supervisors and renegotiation of any unrealistic or inappropriate performance goals. Such flexibility is crucial since duty reassignments and resource shortages occasionally occur, making it impossible for faculty to perform as negotiated. Third, the faculty member and the supervisor must specify both the individual's and the department's action to remediate any identified deficiencies in performance at least once annually. Administrative functions, in contrast, are satisfied during initial negotiation and annual reviews concerning workload distribution and overall

performance. The combined emphasis on development and administration issues is often considered to be the most difficult aspect of performance appraisal to implement (Baird, Beatty, & Schneier, 1982).

A third feature is use of annual portfolios as performance evidence (Berquist & Phillips, 1977) which are rated on standard forms. Portfolio construction is a faculty responsibility that is cumulative and expected to be integrated with the dossier preparation required by promotion and tenure committees.

The fourth feature is a management plan which includes a set of critical events and a timeline. The evaluation period is usually defined as one academic year for administrative purposes, with quarterly meetings to accomplish developmental functions. The events and activities are depicted in Figure 2.

### System Development

Faculty evaluation is often an administrative mandate imposed on employees and their supervisors. Such autocratic implementation risks user resistance and sabotage (Havelock, 1973; Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971).

Alternatives to autocratic implementation are systems based on what is known about successful organizational change. This approach treats faculty evaluation as an innovation which is adapted and diffused throughout the organization in a progressive manner

characterized by a series of activities keyed to psychological stages of change. It encourages faculty and administration involvement in designing and developing the innovation. Faculty and administration involvement will result in a more relevant evaluation system and increased user commitment to the system that is developed.

An innovation is any "idea, practice, or object which is perceived as new by an individual" (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971). Whether the idea is actually new or just newly discovered is unimportant. It is unfamiliarity and the inherent challenge and uncertainty "newness" represents, that change theory and diffusion models address. Although a number of schemas exist describing the psychological processes of accepting or rejecting new ideas (Zaltman, Duncan & Holbek, 1973), most suggest change originates with some awareness of a gap between a current situation and a desired situation which might be bridged by an innovation (Zaltman, Florio & Sikorski, 1977). This initial awareness stage is followed by acquisition of additional knowledge, the formation of attitudes about the innovation, a mental or an actual trial, and evaluation supporting decisions to adopt or reject. Although these change stages are not strictly linear, they have sufficient accuracy and descriptive power that strategies facilitating an individual's progression toward change at each stage can be applied. Such strategies are essential if change is to be successful and enduring. Change strategies associated with the development of faculty evaluation systems are summarized in Figure 3.

The participatory process in developing faculty evaluation systems can be initiated with the formation of a commit-

tee to obtain direct faculty participation since committees are a common and familiar means of governance and policy setting in higher education. Faculty opinion leaders from each program in a school and instructional developers might comprise the committee. This structure creates a good working relationship between experts and clients, provides a reasonable likelihood of identifying needs, and helps insure the innovation will not only be generated, but also eventually accepted.

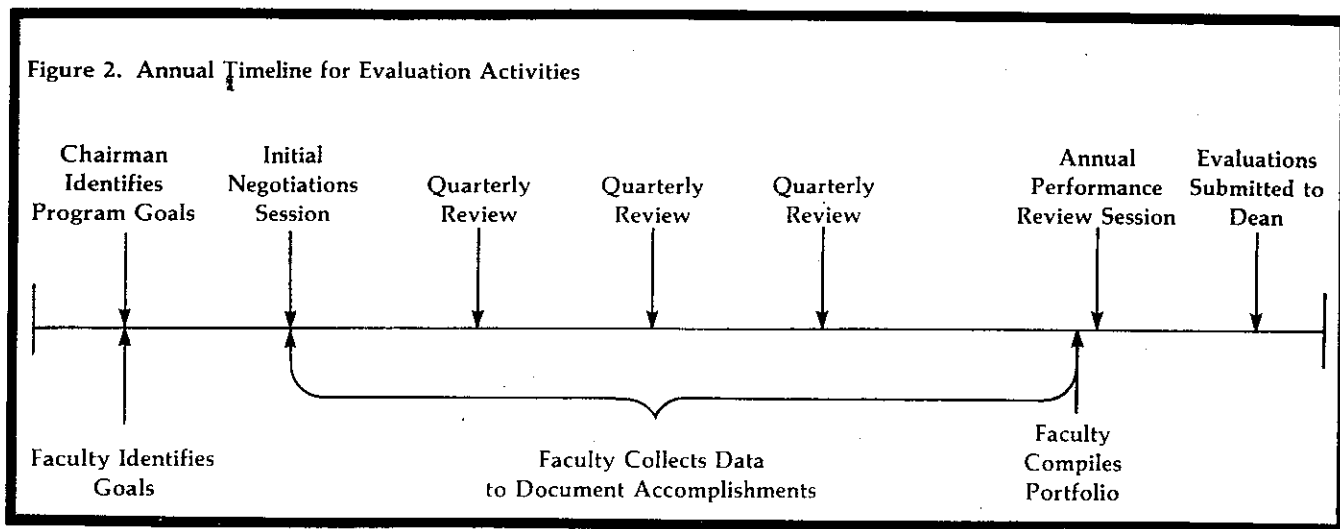
Initial committee deliberations should center on developing the evaluation plan and operating procedures through a consensus process. Operating procedures consistent with change theory (Zaltman, Florio & Sikorski, 1977; Havelock, 1973; Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971) allow individual faculty and program concerns to be brought forth as discussion topics and full faculty review to be solicited at key junctures. Each component of the plan can be revised to reflect these concerns and to insure "ownership." A "sunset provision" requiring formal review after one year, helps to insure a genuine trial and protect against adopting a flawed program. Finally, mechanisms to communicate the entire plan to the faculty should be specified, including written descriptions, open discussion meetings, and assessment procedure demonstrations, as appropriate. These strategies permit the committee to make increasingly specific determinations of faculty needs, to design an innovation which reflects the organizational context, and to provide sufficient data supporting adoption/rejection decisions.

It is possible to develop plans in three general phases, each representing a key juncture requiring a written report dis-

tributed to the entire faculty for comment and approval. During the first phase, the committee specifies a set of basic assumptions concerning functions the evaluation program would serve and the nature of the work to be evaluated. During the second phase, a conceptual evaluation model is defined based on the assumptions approved. Phase three involves operationalizing the evaluation model by developing procedures and instruments. A draft of the full plan is presented to the entire faculty, and feedback obtained to fine-tune the system. Once this done, training can be provided.

## Conclusion

Newer, more responsive, relevant, and equitable faculty evaluation systems are beginning to emerge. Although they share many common assumptions and features described here, how they are articulated in a given school depends on local circumstances. In a way, every institution must develop its own system, tailoring general features to specific requirements. Development is as much a change problem as a technical one. Meaningful implementation requires development approaches incorporating strategies concerning diffusion and adoption of innovation. The development process described here is predicated on the notion that change at the organizational level requires a large number of adoption decisions by individual members. There are "early," "middle," and "late adopters" who must be provided sufficient lead time to assess innovations. Change strategies need to be incorporated into a development approach that address their individual differences. One is building a "critical mass" of early supporters who can pro-



vide leadership. Another is providing information about the innovation to all potential adopters, including factual data, descriptions, and actual demonstrations of the innovation at appropriate stages. Third is gradually expanding involvement to include the full adopting community during the trial stage. The innovation should be either newly designed or specifically adapted within the organization to insure suitability to group culture and operating procedures. Ownership promotes endurance.

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## Figure 3. Strategies for Developing and Implementing Faculty Evaluation System

### Awareness

- Form a critical mass of opinion leaders
- Insure representation from all departments
- Adopt a problem solving-orientation
- Communicate committee charge to full faculty
- Provide factual data, descriptions, illustrations
- Inform/insure support of committee for diffusion strategies

### Acquisition of Additional Knowledge

- Include ID/resource person on development team
- Engage in literature and existing evaluation program reviews
- Present reports on technical matters to committee as relevant
- Encourage members to report progress at department meetings
- Solicit input about needs/values/attitudes of full faculty

### Formation of Attitude

- Distribute reports of committee progress to the full faculty
- Solicit full faculty review & input at key junctures
- Revise documents to reflect faculty comments & language

### Evaluation/Trial of Innovation

- Involve full user community
- Conduct open meetings with full faculty
- Verbally present the plan using visuals to support key points
- Conduct role play demonstrations of major activities in plan
- Engage faculty in small group discussions/critiques of plan

### Adopt/Reject Decision

- Include a "sunset provision" mandating formal program review
- Examine faculty identified problems & revise accordingly
- Initiate use only after overwhelming consensus is expressed

### Implementation/Integration

- Maintain sufficient flexibility in plan to accommodate department & individual faculty differences
- Present an orientation & demonstration
- Rely on committee members from each department for troubleshooting
- Provide full training to users
- Include examples of accomplishment documentation
- Insure continuing verbalized support by Dean
- Establish ongoing dialogue with promotion & tenure committee

### Review/Renewal

- Survey faculty & department chairmen after 6 months & 1 year
- Use third parties to conduct interviews
- Listen/engage in hallway talk with users
- Review system for possible revisions on a biannual basis
- Establish links with institutional goals wherever possible
- Communicate revisions & goals to faculty regularly