

Evaluation of the Faculty Seminar on Learning and Teaching Excellence

Evaluation Questionnaire: Part 1

Responses of the participants who filled out questionnaire showed that they agreed (Score of 4 or higher on the Likert scale of 5 points) that the place/setting was supportive of discussion/reflection, the materials were informative and interesting, and the size of the group was reasonable. Moreover, they agreed that having participants from different disciplines was advantageous, information was useful to improve future teaching practices, and that the seminar provided pedagogical space that was both bounded and open, hospitable and charged, welcomed both silence and speech, invited the voice of the individual and the voice of the group, and honored 'little' stories of the participants and 'big' stories of teaching/learning. Finally, respondents agreed that the facilitators, created an environment supportive of reflection, raised good questions, and guided group discussion without being too directive. It is worth noting that participants' evaluations of the 2002/2003 Faculty Seminar on Learning and Teaching Excellence were almost identical to those of the 2001/2002 Seminar with only a differences. Specifically, participants rated higher the items that asked about inclusiveness of the topics presented in the Seminar, the fact that the seminar met participants' expectations, honoring little stories, and the fact that facilitators created an environment supportive of reflection, were good listeners, and the fact that they did a great job higher during the academic year 2002/2003 (an increase of at least .3 points out of a maximum of 5)

Participants were neutral when asked about the time of the seminar and the comprehensiveness of the Seminar topics, and seemed to disagree with the statement that said that the seminar topics were difficult. Appendix I presents the results of the 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 Part 1 of the Evaluation Questionnaire.

Evaluation Questionnaire: Part 2

In response to the open-ended questions, participants indicated that many sessions were useful, however, they found the session on identifying and stating objectives and preparing course syllabi most useful. This was followed by the sessions on problem-based learning, portfolio assessment, and teacher-oriented methods (lecture and handling large classes). Conversely, participants found the session on evaluating student learning least useful, followed by the one student

portfolio assessment. Moreover, Participants wanted more information about most of the topics because the sessions, according to them, were relatively short.

When asked what they liked most about the Seminar, participants said that sharing, interaction, collegiality, learning from others, discussions, being with faculty members and facilitators from other departments, and the interdisciplinary nature of the seminar were among the things they liked most about the seminar. On the other hand, they said that what they liked least was that one person monopolized the discussions in many sessions. Lecturing in some sessions and not starting on time followed this. Finally, the majority of participants thought that the Listserv was useful, even though it was not used to its full capacity.

Suggestions for Future Seminars

Suggestions for future seminar were numerous. First, participants thought that seminars focused on specific topics should follow the short, two-hour sessions, given in the Seminar. Topics of most interest were problem-based learning, the use of information technology, handling large classes, and AUB position on attendance. Other suggestions included evaluating each session separately, incorporating more group work, changing the time of the Seminar, and providing materials before each session. Appendix II presents the results of the open-ended part (II) of the 2002/2003 Seminar Evaluation Questionnaire.

A session dedicated to wrapping up and oral interactive evaluation of the seminar took place on Wednesday, May 14, 2003. A summary of the ideas given in that session appear in Appendix III which was circulated to participants and facilitators on Friday, May 16, 2003.

Appendix I

Faculty Seminar on Learning and Teaching Excellence

Spring 2002/2003

Results of the 2001/2002 and the 2002/2003 Seminar evaluations

Part I

Scale out of a maximum of 5

	Mean	Mean
	2001/2002	2002/2003
1. The place/setting was supportive of discussion/reflection	4.3	4.3
2. The seminar materials/handouts were:		
i. Informative	4.3	4.3
ii. Interesting	4.2	4.1
iii. Difficult	2.5	2.2
3. The size of the group (20) was reasonable	4.7	4.7
4. Having participants from different disciplines enriched discussions	4.6	4.7
5. The duration of the seminar (8 weeks) was sufficient	3.6	3.4
6. Time (5-7 p.m.) was convenient	3.7	3.7
7. The topics covered in the seminar were all inclusive	3.1	3.7
8. The seminar experience provided insights that might be helpful in my future teaching practices	4.2	4.5
9. The seminar met my expectations	3.7	4.0
10. The seminar provided 'pedagogical space' that*		
i. is both bounded and open	4.0	4.2
ii. is hospitable and charged at the same time	4.2	4.2
iii. welcomed both silence and speech	4.1	4.1
iv. invited the voice of the individual and the voice of the group	4.1	4.3
v. honored 'little' stories of the participants and 'big' stories of teaching/learning	4.0	4.3
11. The facilitators:		
i. created an environment supportive of reflection	4.0	4.3
ii. raised good questions	4.2	4.1
iii. were good listeners	3.9	4.2
iv. guided group discussion without being too directive	4.0	4.0
v. overall, they did a great job	3.9	4.3

*Palmer's paradoxical tensions

Appendix II

Faculty Seminar in University Teaching

Spring 2002/2003

Responses to the Second Part of the Evaluation Form

Question	Response	Frequency
Which of the eight sessions was most useful?	Identifying and stating objectives and preparing course syllabi	8
	Problem based learning	5
	Portfolio Assessment	4
	Teacher-oriented methods I (lecture, handling large classes)	3
	Institutional profile, our students' characteristics, and basis of effective college teaching to improve student learning	2
	Teacher-oriented methods II (discussions, demonstrations, lab experiences)	2
	Student-oriented methods I (active and collaborative activities)	2
	Evaluating student learning: Student assessment and course grading	1
Which sessions was least useful	Evaluating Student Learning	6
	Using Portfolio Assessment	4
	Teacher-oriented methods II (discussions, demonstrations, lab experiences)	2
	Problem based learning	2
	Teacher-oriented methods I (lecture, handling large classes)	1
	Identifying and stating objectives and preparing course syllabi	1
	Wrap up session	1
Which topic do you think needed more time/information?	Student Assessment	8
	Problem based learning	5
	All Topics	3
	Student Portfolios	1
	Handling Large Classes	1
	Preparing Syllabi	1
What did you like most about the seminar?	Sharing, Interaction, collegiality, and Learning from others	6
	Discussions	3
	Being with faculty for different departments	2
	Facilitators From Different departments	2
	General atmosphere to teaching	2
	Interdisciplinary Nature of the seminar	1

	Different Approaches	1
	New Information about a variety of topics	1
What did you like least about the seminar?	One Person Monopolizing Discussion Food Was Boring	4
	Not starting On Time	3
	Lecture Method Used In Some Sessions	2
	Food	2
	Argumentation Participants	1
Was the listserv a useful tool?	Yes	11
	No	2
Suggestions for future seminars.	Long Seminars on special topics (IT, handling large classes, problem based learning, AUB Position on Attendance)	12
	Shorter seminar with specialized sessions	2
	Evaluate Each Session	1
	More Group Work	1
	Change Time To 4-6.	1
	Provide Material Beforehand	1
	Identify and use innovators In Future Sessions	1
	More Applications	1
One Facilitator Per Session	1	

Appendix III

Faculty Seminar on Learning and Teaching Excellence

Week 9 – May 14, 2003

Wrap-Up Session and Evaluation:

Facilitators: Provost P. Heath

Prof. W. Nasr

Prof. S. BouJaoude

Prof. A. BouZeineddine

Part I: Feedback and wrap-up

Part II: Evaluation

Part I: Feedback and Wrap-Up - Provost P. Heath and Prof. W. Nasr:

We would like to hear your feedback on the course and your ideas about how to change and improve it. What topics should it include? What topics should be expanded? What was useful that was included? What should be included that wasn't?

For example, we could offer shorter sessions on various topics, etc.

Comments: (Note: comments are grouped roughly by topic, rather than listed in chronological order.)

General Seminar Format:

- The interaction between the group was rewarding and helpful. We learned from each other and benefited from hearing about each other's experiences.

- Working in small groups was helpful.
 - One of the ideas behind the course is to take a mix of teachers from different faculties, of various ranks and experiences, etc. to facilitate exactly this kind of learning and exchange.

- It was helpful to see where one's own faculty/department stands with regard to the latest teaching methodology.

- It would be nice to have an evaluation halfway through the course, so that the facilitators can adapt the remaining sessions to participants' suggestions.

- It would be nice to put the content of the seminar on the web, so it can be viewed, reviewed and revisited in the future.

- It is interesting that the seminar classroom environment was the same as what we deal with, even though we're educators.

Greater Depth, Feedback on Implementation:

- The seminar was a good eye-opener/sampler. But we need more detailed information on how to apply these methods and need follow-up. Perhaps facilitators should get participants to try applying the new methods in their classes, then talk about how it worked before moving on to the next topic.
- Perhaps we should have more time for group work, which sometimes got dropped. Having 2.5-hour, rather than 2-hour sessions might help in this regard.
- One way to deal with things in greater depth is to have a follow-up series of workshops that deal with particular topics. People can then choose those relevant for their fields.
- It would be nice for previous participants to serve as facilitators so they can share their new experiences with the next years' group and discuss how the new methodologies worked in class.
- Maybe we need more than 2.5 hours or 2 sessions on some topics.
 - Also have to recognize that professors are busy at the beginnings and ends of semesters.
 - Perhaps a 10 week session would be better (people seemed to agree with this suggestion).
- What were earlier seminars' comments? Were they incorporated into subsequent seminars?
 - Last year there was more on computers. However, participants asked that such topics should be covered in a computer lab or not at all, so that participants could follow along in a hands-on manner. It wasn't very helpful to simply have someone talk about how to do something on a computer.
- A computer session would be helpful for some things, particularly language classes.
 - Professors have many different levels of computer expertise. Perhaps we need to divide the group and have appropriate sessions for professors with different levels of experience.

- The Academic Computing Center does hold special sessions. Faculty can request sessions on particular topics. The head of the center, Dr. Roseangela Silva, knows a lot about languages.

Faculty & Participants:

- Participants didn't wear their nametags. It would be nice to have people identify themselves, giving their name and department, so the others will know who they are.
 - Perhaps we should have people introduce themselves at the beginning of the seminar.
- It would be nice to see an AUB faculty as well as student profile. Who are they, what are their backgrounds, etc.
 - There are even a number of faculty whose families have taught at AUB for generations.

Discipline-Specific Methods and Particular Topics:

- It would be helpful to focus on specific fields – are there methods that are particularly suited to computer science, for example?
 - Could something like this be done with a diverse campus-wide group such as this seminar, or would it be better done with the Computer Science Department?
- Perhaps we can have a group from the Education Department meet with the Computer Science Department to work on particular topics.
- We have been exposed to a nice range of methods, but now want more information on particular methods that are suited to our fields. Now that we know what exists, it's up to us to ask for more detailed information on specific topics.
- It might be helpful to separate methods that are appropriate for/work in large v. small classes, social science v. science classes, etc., and then divide into appropriate follow-up workshops.
- It was helpful to learn about a range of evaluation possibilities.

- Problem-based learning is a large topic, and the facilitators mentioned that it would require much more training than one seminar meeting. Perhaps we need more time on this subject and could spread it over multiple sessions.

- It would be nice to have more on evidence- and problem-based learning. Perhaps this could be the topic of a separate workshop.
 - AUB is currently having workshops for chairs and a couple of members of each department.

 - There is also an AUB web/computer resource center.

 - Would it additionally be helpful if we had several departmental meetings (say over the space of one month) to talk about teaching resources and methods? For example, does the Biology Department want to learn about WebCT and problem-based learning?

 - Would it be helpful to have these sorts of meetings/workshops within departments?

- Perhaps departments should be asked what sorts of things they need/could use (a needs assessment). Nursing, for example, has clear objectives and outcomes (have worked on this at the departmental level), though maybe some other departments don't. But nursing may need to move towards community-based learning, and if so, will need to learn about this.

The University's Role in Improving Teaching Methods:

- There is currently a lot of attention and thought devoted to how to improve teaching. It is critical to have individual faculty learning about and advocating change. But, we also need departments to be receptive to the need for change. This requires administrative pressure and encouragement (since departments often resist hard, time-consuming changes).

- The university has to set the general direction – are we moving towards WebCT, for example? If the university requires departments to put courses on WebCT to catch up with other universities, then it can focus on providing the appropriate workshops, etc.
 - AUB doesn't need to catch up – we're on par with the methods used at US universities. For example, Princeton has 1,000 students using WebCT, whereas AUB has 2,000.

- Having seminar participants serve as trainers for colleagues is a good idea, and will spread the knowledge gained in the seminar. But this should be done in a structured way, to ensure that it happens.
- Some things are universally applicable (learning objectives and outcomes, WebCT, etc.). These things should be pushed for at a university level. Other things vary in appropriateness depending on the course material and individual teaching styles. These things should be optional.

Prof. Nasr:

- Initially, AUB's efforts regarding teaching methods were disjointed. There was skepticism about the need for accreditation and new teaching methods. But the willingness to learn about new methods is really important and does exist.
- A professor who visited US universities found that some of the most useful things in improving teaching methods were voluntary efforts by faculty – which are also some of the cheapest.
 - Faculty can learn a lot from their departmental colleagues, if they come together and share their experiences.
 - AUB has many teaching resources. We have professors who know about many different methods. This year's facilitators are some of the participants from past years. Knowledge gained by some faculty spreads to others.
- How close are we to having a teaching center at AUB?
 - We have parts of a center now, and are going to put it together hopefully with support from the Mellon Foundation.
- Will AUB evaluate new methods as they're implemented?
 - Sure, though it might be good to do this with outside cooperation and support as well, for example from the Council on Learning.
 - There is a whole field of teaching methodology.
 - Also, there are numerous websites on learning and teaching excellence. Amal has e-mailed the addresses for some of these:

<http://ject.lib.muohio.edu/>

<http://president.scfte.nwu.edu/publications.html>

<http://www.nyu.edu/cte/researchbased.html>

<http://www.iusb.edu/%7Ejosot/>

<http://www.udel.edu/cte/publications.htm#OtherOnline>

Attendance:

- Student attendance is an issue – each faculty seems to have its own policy. What use are good teaching methods if students don't come to class? It might be helpful to have a university-wide attendance policy.
- One participant tells students at the beginning of the semester that they're responsible for material covered in class that isn't available in the book, to encourage them to come to class.
 - Even requiring students to keep weekly journals and taking attendance doesn't get all students to show up to class.
- The increasing availability of course materials reduces the need to go to class. Some students think they can get the material from WebCT, etc. Some students see class merely as a place to get material, not as a time to learn. Some students work on their own and do all right even without attending class, but many do not.
- Perhaps asking students to be responsible for applying the concepts/material they are learning would increase the importance of coming to class.

Thanks:

- Finally, thanks to Saouma and Amal for facilitating everything, and for following up on all the references to resources on the web and providing us with the relevant websites, etc.!