NYU is distinctive among research universities not just because of its global network, but for the care we take to integrate our missions of research and performance with our teaching mission. We also recognize that teaching is itself a life-long study, never perfected, and requiring support from an institution as teachers strive for excellence.

This is the second advisory that the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Committee (UAAC) has issued on this topic. In fall 2013, Provost David McLaughlin charged the UAAC with exploring whether the Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT) and the Enhanced Service Model for Instructional Technology Support (ESMITS), two initiatives designed to support and enhance teaching at NYU, met faculty needs. In fall 2014, the UAAC issued an “Advisory on Supporting Teaching at NYU,” in which the committee recommended (a) that the relationship between the CAT and ESMITS be clarified; (b) that their resources and services be integrated, where appropriate; and (c) that opportunities be created, beyond traditional course evaluations, for students to provide input on effective teaching practices. In addition, the UAAC made a number of recommendations specific to the CAT—e.g., that services be extended to instructors at NYU’s global sites; that improvements be made to the CAT’s website; that the CAT solicit faculty with demonstrated records of teaching excellence to “open” their classes for observation by interested colleagues; and that faculty be surveyed regularly about their use of the CAT and possible topics for workshops.

In the 2015-16 academic year, the UAAC returned to the topic of supporting teaching. The committee’s focus this year was on ways of promoting in-service training among both new and experienced faculty (as well as among graduate student teachers) and ensuring an ongoing commitment to teaching excellence across NYU.

The committee notes that the following types of support are currently available to NYU faculty:

1. The CAT provides:
   • individual, confidential assessment and feedback for faculty (including classroom observation and videotaping services);
   • workshops on a variety of pedagogical tools and strategies, from teaching with technology to lecturing, seminar leadership, mentoring graduate teachers, teaching in an international classroom, and beyond;
   • live-streamed and/or recorded workshops, to enable broader participation; and
• in collaboration with the Provost’s Office and NYU IT, a series of short video talks about teaching strategies across the entire University.

2. ESMITS, a University-level collaboration between NYU IT and the Libraries, provides support for faculty from all schools who wish to incorporate technology into their teaching. In addition, each school now has at least one expert in technology-enhanced teaching and curricula on staff, and these individuals collaborate with ESMITS.

3. Individual schools offer formal or ad hoc teaching support as part of the teaching review that is required for all tenure and promotion reviews for all tenure-track faculty. Stern, for example, requires regular peer teaching evaluation of all faculty, and SPS has a Center for Academic Excellence and Support, which provides opportunities for faculty development.

4. Individual departments and programs typically offer orientation and training to graduate student teachers.

The UAAC notes, however, that no University-wide teaching orientation currently exists, and that support for teaching in a diverse and inclusive classroom is available but not universally adopted.

Recommendations

Having reviewed these existing resources, the committee makes the following recommendations for supporting teaching and learning at NYU:

Building both new and existing programs for faculty:

1. All new hires who teach, of whatever rank or title, should participate in a workshop on “the NYU classroom” as part of their orientation to the University. Such training should also be mandatory for all new graduate student teachers.

2. The CAT should ensure that its training and support for faculty in individual consultations (in addition to group programming already available) routinely include advice on teaching in a diverse classroom and creating an inclusive classroom environment.

3. Each school should promote a culture of teaching assessment for all faculty, including review by Chairs and Deans of student evaluations, and other methods (e.g., regular peer visits at a stated minimum), in accordance with local custom in a school.

4. A career-long peer mentoring program should be developed among faculty.

5. Collaboration between CAT, ESMITS, and school-based instructional support teams should be promoted through the establishment by the Provost’s Office of an all-University standing committee or other suitable model.
Engaging individual faculty members:

6. Before tenure or promotion, all full-time faculty should be required either to engage the CAT for individual assessment and feedback or to utilize a similar structure within their home school.

7. All faculty, tenured/tenure-track and clinical, should be given a path toward improvement if they are struggling.

8. Departments and programs should be encouraged to assign introductory-level courses to more experienced faculty. Where this is not possible, they should provide additional teaching support to new faculty who are teaching such courses.

Publicizing teaching support programs:

9. The Faculty News Brief should be used regularly to promote awareness of what the CAT offers.

Since the recommendations above are not resource-neutral, the committee would recommend a budget analysis at both the University and the school levels, to ensure that thorough and scalable support is offered to all faculty.