Policy Name: School of Pharmacy Teaching Enhancement Policy

Policy statement: Course coordinators and instructors whose average student ratings on course and/or instructor evaluations fall below the school’s benchmark (4.0/5.0) and/or whose comments indicate teaching problems will develop and implement a school-approved teaching enhancement plan including a time line.

Reason for policy: The School of Pharmacy strives to provide excellent instruction for students. Course evaluation ratings and/or students’ comments may indicate instructional weaknesses or student concerns that can be corrected and that provide an opportunity for improvement.

Procedures:

1. The dean’s office sets a benchmark for quantitative ratings consistent with accreditation requirements and the desire for excellence in teaching. Ratings are compared to the benchmark for all course and instructor evaluations.

2. Concerns regarding ratings/comments can be identified by the associate dean for academic affairs, division chairs, course coordinators, or self-reported by individual instructors.

3. Ratings and/or comments may lead to a recommendation for a teaching enhancement plan. Instructors may proactively seek assistance. The appropriate administrator(s) will review ratings/comments to determine if a teaching enhancement plan is desirable or necessary.

4. The instructor and administrator will develop a plan, including a timeline, to improve valid areas of weakness or concern. These plans will be individualized and will likely have considerable variability in timing and content of implementation. The goal of the plan is to effectively address weaknesses in instruction, course materials, classroom comport, or related course issues. The plan may include multiple strategies (see Appendix A for examples). The plan will become part of the faculty member’s MBO for the current year.

5. Progress will be noted throughout the implementation of the plan and the administrator may amend the plan to include further suggestions for teaching or course management enhancement.

6. The instructor and administrator will discuss the outcomes of the plan and the administrator will make a decision as to the need for further work or the successful conclusion of the plan.

Notes: a) For non-School of Pharmacy instructors, refer to the policy on communicating course evaluation results to external instructors; b) The assessment committee strongly recommends that faculty who expend effort formally assisting other faculty with teaching be given teaching credit, release time, or other compensation (e.g., travel funds).

Approval authority: School of Pharmacy Executive Committee, December 20, 2011
Definitions:
1. The appropriate administrator for a faculty member is their direct supervisor. The dean is the appropriate administrator for associate/assistant deans and division chairs. For all other faculty, division chairs are the appropriate administrators.
2. Teaching problems are issues identified in the student evaluations or other mechanisms of evaluating teaching that detract from the learning process.

Responsibilities:
1. School of Pharmacy administration will provide course and instructor evaluations in a timely manner.
2. The associate dean for academic affairs, direct supervisors, course coordinators, and instructors are responsible for reviewing and responding to evaluations under their purview.
3. The appropriate administrator will develop and assign teaching enhancement plans as necessary.
4. The course coordinator/instructor will implement teaching enhancement plan(s) as assigned by their supervisor.
5. Division chairs/direct supervisors and course coordinators/instructors will share progress on any teaching enhancement plan(s) with the associate dean for academic affairs in a timely manner.

Appendices: A & B

Appendix A

Strategies for improvement may include, but are not limited to, the following:
1. Seek peer review by objective observers (e.g., other faculty members, associate dean for academic affairs)
2. Conduct anonymous surveys or small focus groups with students to understand reported weaknesses
3. Gain regular feedback from students (e.g., ask students to turn in written questions or comments at the end of each class with or without their names attached)
4. Seek advice from colleagues who are known to be excellent teachers
5. Visit and analyze other classes that are working really well
6. Seek help through university resources, such as FACET
7. Review research on effective teaching techniques
8. Seek help from experienced colleagues at other universities who are known to excel at teaching the particular course or similar courses.
9. Revise course materials if appropriate (e.g., consider alternate textbooks if frequent complaints are received about the text, modify PowerPoint slides, incorporate interactive questioning).
10. Examine the connection between course instruction/materials and test questions (e.g., create a test blueprint).
11. Examine the quality of test questions (e.g., clarity, lack of ambiguity, appropriate level of cognitive complexity, relevance to course learning objectives).
12. Analyze recordings of classroom lectures to assess clarity of speech, logical flow of information, courtesy towards students, engagement of students in lecture/discussion, etc.
13. Work with the curriculum committee if it is determined that there should be changes in prerequisites or concurrent coursework.

Appendix B

Why gain the students’ perspective?
1. “The positive and statistically significant correlation of student ratings with learning gains.
2. The unique position and qualifications of the students in rating their own increased knowledge and comprehension.
3. The unique position of the students in rating changed motivation (a) toward the subject taught; perhaps also (b) toward a career associated with that subject; and perhaps also (c) with respect to a changed general attitude toward further learning in the subject area, or more generally.
4. The unique position of the students in rating observable matters of fact relevant to competent teaching, such as the punctuality of the instructor and the legibility of writing on the board.
5. The unique position of the students in identifying the regular presence of teaching style indicators. Is the teacher enthusiastic; does he or she ask many questions, encourage questions from students, etc.?
6. Relatedly, students are in a good position to judge—although it is not quite a matter of simple observation—such matters as whether tests covered all the material of the course.
7. Students as consumers are likely to be able to report quite reliably to their peers on such matters of interest to them as the cost of the texts, the extent to which attendance is taken and weighted, and whether a great deal of homework is required—considerations that have little or no known bearing on the quality of instruction.
8. Student ratings represent participation in a process often represented as ‘democratic decision making.’
9. The ‘best available alternative’ line of argument.”