Peer Observation Best Practices

Job Description

The role of peer observers is to provide feedback for faculty as they reflect on current practices; expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas; and teach one another as faculty members at Columbia College.

Recommended Meeting Times:

1. Meet prior to the observation
2. Meet after the observation
3. Meet with the Supervisor

Guidelines for Classroom Observation:

1) *Pre-Observation Conference:* In the pre-observation session, the faculty observer gains information from the instructor about the students, teaching style, and course goals. This is also an opportunity to share material related to the course (syllabus, handouts, etc.). Questions may include:
    a) What will be happening in the class I will observe?
    b) What is your goal for the class?
    c) What do you expect students to be doing in the class to reach the goal?
    d) What can I expect you to be doing?
    e) What have students been asked to do to prepare for this class?
    f) What was done in earlier classes to lead up to this one?
    g) Will this class be generally typical of your teaching? If not, what will be different?
    h) Is there anything in particular that you would like me to focus on during the class?
2) *Classroom Observation:* In addition to utilizing the Peer Observation Form provided, observers may focus on the following areas:
    a) Knowledge of Subject Matter
    b) Organization and Clarity
        i) Structure
        ii) Teaching Strategies
        iii) Closure
    c) Instructor-Student Interaction
        i) Discussion
        ii) Kinds of Questions
        iii) Level of Questions
        iv) Student Questions
        v) Student Responses
    d) Presentation and Enthusiasm

e) Student Behavior
    i) Note-taking
    ii) Body Language
    iii) Interaction among Students
f) Overall Effectiveness

3) *Post-Observation Conference:* The post-conference session is most beneficial within a few days of the observation. You want the activities to be fresh in your mind. The overall goal is to promote reflection about the lesson, as well as analysis of what happened as expected and what happened differently.

   Questions may include:

   a) In general, how did you feel the class went?
   b) How did you feel about your teaching during the class?
   c) Did students accomplish the goals you had planned for this class?
   d) How will the content be evaluated?
   e) What worked well for you in the class?
   f) What didn't work well for you in the class?
   g) What were your teaching strengths?
   h) What were your teaching problem areas that still need improvement?
   i) Do you have any suggestions or strategies for improvement?

Weimer, Maryellen. *Improving College Teaching: Strategies for Developing Instructional Effectiveness*. Jossey-Bass, 1991.