

Memo

To: Todd Brun (EFC Chair) and Viterbi Department Chairs and Program Directors

From: Mark Redekopp, Chair, Viterbi Teaching Evaluation Committee

Cc: Timothy Pinkston, Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs
Erik Johnson, Vice Dean for Academic Programs

Date: November 5, 2018

Subject: Draft Definition of Teaching Excellence

The EFC Teaching Evaluation Committee's mission is to assist with the School's response to the Provost's request for each school to develop a plan for how it will **define, develop, assess,** and **reward** excellence in teaching. To that end, our committee has attempted to define the qualities of teaching that may guide our faculty in our pursuit of excellence. As a basis for our definition, we referred to a 35-point [Definition of Teaching Excellence document](#) provided by the USC Center for Excellence in Teaching to serve as a definition for the broader University. However, while we believe this Definition is valuable for its detailed characteristics of teaching excellence, we were concerned that its guiding values might be lost in its detailed enumeration and that some of its criteria may not be applicable to the Viterbi faculty's diverse approaches to teaching. So, while we believe the CET document is useful as a reference document for faculty seeking further details regarding best practices, our committee wanted to provide a concise set of higher-level points that can guide our faculty's approach to teaching excellence. Because of the diversity of our faculty and the various styles of courses and teaching approaches in Viterbi, our committee did not want to over-prescribe our definition of excellence.

The committee met on several occasions to discuss the topic and would like to present our proposal, stated below, for a definition of excellence in teaching. Additional considerations that were discussed include the difference in teaching graduate vs. undergraduate students, in-person vs. online (DEN) classes and the more informal yet very important role of teaching and mentoring students through research. The committee believes that the following definition represents aspects of teaching that are applicable to most, if not all, in-person and online courses and represent the core of teaching excellence in Viterbi. The committee also acknowledges that departments may wish to append additional items relevant to their specific needs and educational goals. This may include mentorship of Ph.D. students, handling of graduate vs. undergraduate courses, etc.

We now seek feedback from the Viterbi faculty through the means of the EFC and its elected representatives from each department and program.

Teaching excellence is demonstrated through instructional practice which...

- *Clearly articulates challenging, academically rigorous, and attainable expectations and learning outcomes.*
- *Treats students professionally, respectfully, and with integrity.*
- *Creates an inclusive environment where all students are welcome to engage with course instructors (including TAs) and their peers.*
- *Provides instruction in the classroom characterized by*
 - *Content and materials that are clear, organized, and relevant to modern practice.*
 - *Teaching activities that model and foster critical, analytical, and creative thinking along with real-world problem-solving skills.*
- *Employs student assessments that are aligned with course content and learning outcomes, and provides feedback to students that encourages their academic growth.*
- *Fosters a mindset where growth is always possible, and ability is not fixed.*
- *Utilizes, as applicable, innovative methods and technology to improve teaching, learning, mentoring and assessment.*
- *Utilizes student and peer feedback as well as scholarly practices to improve and refine content, teaching style, mentoring, and assessments.*

We would welcome your feedback as this definition will guide how we can **develop**, **assess**, and **reward** teaching excellence. Feel free to send feedback to Mark Redekopp (Chair, EFC Teaching Evaluation Committee, redekopp@usc.edu), Timothy Pinkston or Erik Johnson.

Committee Members: Michael Neely (EE-S), Paul Ronney (AME), Shahram Ghandeharizadeh (CSCI), Elisa Warford (EWP), Gisele Ragusa (DEE), Mark Redekopp (EE-S/CSCI), Erik Johnson, ex-officio (CE and Vice Dean for Academic Affairs), Timothy Pinkston, ex-officio (EE-S and Vice Dean for Faculty Affairs)

Revised: 12/5

Passed by the EFC: 12/5