Chapter 12
Fostering Scholarly Approaches to Peer Review of Teaching in a Research–Intensive University

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter examines a recently launched institutional initiative around scholarly approaches to summative and formative peer-review of teaching within and across the disciplines at the University of British Columbia (UBC), Canada. The peer-review of teaching initiative, led by a team of UBC national teaching fellows, was fuelled by institutional concerns about the quality of student learning experiences and the effectiveness of teaching in a multi-disciplinary research-intensive university context. Canadian universities have long recognized the importance of attending to the evaluation of teaching practices in their particular context; however, the enactment of localized scholarship directed at these practices remains very much in its infancy. Traditional approaches to the evaluation of university teaching have often

resulted in the over-reliance on student evaluation of teaching data and/or ad-hoc peer-review of teaching practices with numerous accounts of methodological short-comings that tend to yield less useful (and less authentic) data. Issues addressed in this chapter include contemporary approaches to the evaluation of teaching in higher education, faculty "buy-in" and the evaluation of teaching in a research-intensive university, scholarly approaches to summative and formative Performance Reviews of Teaching (PRT), faculty-specific engagement in summative and formative (informal to formal) PRT training and implementation, and strategic institutional supports (funding, expertise, mentoring, technological resources).

INTRODUCTION

Historically, inadequate means of evaluating teaching have undermined the consid-eration of teaching in tenure, promotion, and re-appointment cases within research-intensive universities (Arai et al, 2007; Elen, Lindblom-Ylänne, & Clement, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Shulman, 2011). For the most part, this has been due to the lack of rigour, authenticity, and credibility in peer reviews of teaching. Peer Reviews of Teaching (PRT) for high-stakes decisions (e.g., consider-ation for tenure and promotion) face a number of challenges (Chism, 2007; Harris, Farrell, Bell, Devlin, & James, 2008; Hubball & Clarke, 2011; Seldin & Associates, 2006), including:

- Lack of systematically prepared and knowledgeable assessors.
- Confusion about the relationship and distinction between formative and sum-mative PRT.
- Exclusive reliance on classroom observations by peers or student evaluations of teaching.
- Methodological shortcomings that result in less less authentic and credible data.
- Potential conflict of interest associated with peers acting as reviewers.

This chapter describes an institutional initiative intended to address many of these historical shortcomings through the development of scholarly, and therefore more credible, approaches to the PRT within and across the disciplines at the University of British Columbia (UBC), Canada.

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