

## Evaluation of Teaching Scholars Program—2000-2003

TO: John Stone  
FROM: Steve Friedman, LEARN Center  
RE: Teaching Scholars Program (TSP) Assessment Report  
DATE: March 1, 2004

TSP started as a pilot project during the 1999-2000 school year at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Under the direction of Dr. Greg Valde, the program targeted faculty in their second through sixth years of service with the goals of improving their teaching skills and engaging them in the scholarship of teaching. Teaching improvement was the focus of bi-monthly meetings covering a range of topics facilitated by Dr. Valde, often with the assistance of speakers from on-campus. Each participant was also expected to conduct a research project in his/her classroom—i.e. use a new teaching strategy and determine its impact on learning. Ten faculty members participated in the program.

TSP was funded through a grant from The Office of Professional Instructional Development (OPID) for each of the following academic years—2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002-2003, and current year. The program's organization has been fairly consistent over the years with the exception of the current year where the learning improvement activities have been de-emphasized in favor of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) projects. Generally, ten faculty members have participated in each year of the program, with some attrition, depending upon the year. Typically, this has been due to faculty members taking a different position. A detailed evaluation plan accompanied the grant proposal in 2000-2001. What follows is a summary of the data gathered during 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2002-2003 analyzed by Steve Friedman, evaluator for the project.

The first set of items was administered towards the end of the spring term, 2001, in order to assess the overall value of TSP. The following scale was used:

- 1=of no value*
- 2=of little value*
- 3=of some value*
- 4=of moderately high value*
- 5=of great value*

The average of the responses for each item were as follows:

**Table 1**  
**Average Scores for Three Cohorts of Participants Regarding the Usefulness of the Teaching Scholars Program**

	<b>00-01</b>	<b>01-02</b>	<b>02-03</b>
1. How useful was it to you to complete a teaching improvement project?	3.78	4.40	3.38
2. How useful was it to participate in a teaching peer partnership with a fellow teaching scholar	4.00	4.10	4.50
3. How useful were the TSP bi-monthly seminars?	4.33	4.30	3.86
4. How useful was your attendance at LEARN Center sponsored workshops and conferences?	3.00	4.20	3.29
5. Overall, how useful was the TSP to you in your development as a teacher?	4.11	4.40	4.13
6. I have made changes in my teaching as a result of my participation in the TSP.	4.22	4.40	4.13
7. I believe that I am a better teacher as a result of having participated in the TSP.	4.11	4.30	4.00

For the most part, averages for all of the items across all years are near 4.00 (of moderately high value). The most noteworthy exceptions are the usefulness of the teaching improvement project and the workshops/conferences sponsored by the LEARN Center. In 2000-2001, one of the respondents that circled "1" appended a note that he/she had not attended any LEARN Center functions, perhaps helping to explain the relatively low ratings. Overall, the most valuable aspects of the program were the peer

partnerships and the bimonthly seminar meetings. Also, respondents indicated that they have made changes in their teaching as a result of participating in TSP, and they believe that they are better teachers.

There was an opportunity for participants to respond to four, open-ended items. The first centered on the most meaningful or most beneficial part of TSP. The main theme that emerged was that the participants enjoyed interacting with their colleagues—“learning from each other.” When responding to the second open-ended item—what was least meaningful or least beneficial—the research project was mentioned often. One participant felt that too much time was spent discussing the projects. The third item focused on specific changes that participants might have made in their teaching as a result of TSP. The majority reported making some changes already. One was planning some definite changes while another “may” depending upon the outcome of the final project. Finally, several improvements were suggested. Some comments addressed when the meetings were held, and alternatives were suggested. One felt that more “get to know you” time should be allowed at the beginning of the experience. Another proposed being given released-time to engage in TSP as opposed to a stipend.

The second instrument was designed to gather information about perceived levels of knowledge of educational foundations, instructional skills, and assessment skills. This was administered as a pre- and post-test—in the fall when TSP was beginning and in the late spring. There were ten respondents in the fall and nine in spring. At the second administration, participants would recall few, if any, of their responses from the first administration. There were some missing responses on both the pre- and post-test, which were excluded from the analysis—i.e. the averages below are based on only those who actually circled one of the choices for each item. The following scale was used:

- 1=little or no knowledge*
- 2=some knowledge*
- 3=good deal of knowledge*
- 4=great deal of knowledge*

The average of the responses for each item, pre- and post-test, and the average composite scores for the three key areas—foundational knowledge, instructional skills, and assessment skills—were as follows:

**Table 2**

**Pre-/Post-test Average Scores for Three Cohorts of Participants Regarding Knowledge and Skills in Areas Teaching Scholars Program**

	<b>00-01</b>	<b>01-02</b>	<b>02-03</b>
<b>Foundational Knowledge</b>			
1. Subject matter in your field(s) relevant to the courses you teach	3.89/3.78	3.50/3.67	3.82/3.86
2. History and philosophies of higher education	2.22/2.56	2.30/3.33	2.27/2.57
3. Student psychology/developmental patterns (cognition, personality, ethics, etc.)	1.89/2.67	2.40/3.00	2.09/3.14
4. Student diversity (cultural, ethnic, disabilities, gender and orientation, regional, etc.)	2.60/2.44	3.10/3.56	2.90/2.88
5. Theories and research on human learning	2.20/2.67	2.50/3.11	1.91/2.86
6. Various methods of instruction (lecture, small group, case-based, etc.)	2.90/3.33	3.30/3.67	2.89/3.25
7. Instructional technologies (audio and visual equipment, overhead, email, pc, etc.)	2.70/3.11	3.10/3.33	2.55/3.13
<b>Instructional Skills</b>			
8. Course design (development of goals/objectives and corresponding course elements)	3.10/3.22	3.10/3.11	2.91/3.13
9. Skill using			
a. Lecture	3.20/3.56	2.90/3.22	3.45/3.13
b. Leading large group discussions	3.40/3.33	3.20/3.44	3.09/3.00
c. Facilitating various types of small group work	2.70/3.56	3.40/3.33	2.50/2.88
d. Cooperative learning activities & projects	2.50/2.89	3.30/3.22	2.27/2.88
e. Case studies	2.40/2.67	2.70/2.78	2.00/2.25
f. Use of technologies to present information	2.50/3.00	3.00/3.11	2.55/3.38
g. Demonstrations	2.70/3.11	2.78/2.89	2.55/2.88

	h. Modeling	2.90/2.89	2.67/2.75	2.50/3.13
	i. Role playing	2.50/2.89	2.40/2.56	1.64/2.63
	j. Simulations	2.30/2.67	2.11/2.33	1.64/2.63
	k. Discipline-specific teaching methods (studio instruction, etc.)	2.40/2.44	2.70/3.33	2.30/2.57
	l. Distance teaching	1.50/2.50	2.30/2.33	1.60/2.13
	m. Use of guests, panels, videos, and student presentations, etc.	2.80/2.67	2.70/2.67	2.73/3.38
	n. Peer teaching	2.00/2.44	2.56/2.67	1.90/2.87
10. Skill in	a. Developing rapport (with and among students)	3.20/3.44	3.44/3.56	2.82/3.00
	b. Dealing with controversial issues	2.40/3.22	3.10/3.00	2.73/2.86
	c. Classroom management (preventing problems, etc.)	2.70/2.89	3.20/3.00	3.36/3.00
	d. Large classes	2.70/2.75	2.90/2.67	2.82/2.88
	e. Motivating students (to participate, get involved, work, learn)	2.89/3.00	2.80/2.89	2.64/3.00
	f. Advising/counseling students	3.00/3.50	3.30/3.33	2.73/3.13
	g. Teaching writing	1.89/2.75	3.10/3.22	2.91/3.25
11. Use of	a. Papers	2.78/3.00	3.10/3.33	3.09/3.37
	b. Projects	2.89/3.25	3.00/3.11	2.82/3.00
	c. Presentations	2.78/3.25	3.00/3.44	2.91/2.88
	d. Reading	2.67/3.37	3.11/3.11	3.18/3.29
	e. Lab work	2.11/2.37	2.25/2.22	1.64/1.67
	f. Simulations	2.22/2.71	2.20/2.56	1.55/2.29
	g. Independent study	2.67/2.87	2.90/3.11	2.90/3.17
	h. Research	2.56/3.12	3.60/3.22	2.78/3.13
	i. Field work, volunteer work, etc.	2.11/2.50	2.60/2.89	1.64/1.57
<b>Assessment Skills</b>				
	12. Alternative philosophies and strategies for evaluating students (norm referenced, etc.)	2.30/2.75	2.10/2.78	1.55/2.57
	13. Test design and administration (objective and subjective)	2.30/3.00	2.50/2.44	2.50/3.57
	14. Scoring & grading (of tests, papers, projects, etc.)	2.40/2.75	3.00/2.44	3.00/3.00
	15. Portfolio and alternative assessment	1.56/2.25	2.56/3.11	1.64/2.88
	16. Teaching evaluation (self-assessment, peer evaluation, student evaluations)	2.50/3.12	2.80/2.89	2.70/2.88
	17. Course evaluation	2.40/2.87	2.90/2.56	2.60/2.88
	18. Program assessment	2.10/2.50	2.56/2.67	2.30/2.86
<b>Foundations Composite</b>		18.25/20.56	20.20/23.56	18.56/22.33
<b>Instructional Skills Composite</b>		78.14/91.00	90.17/92.00	76.00/93.50
<b>Assessment Skills Composite</b>		15.22/19.25	19.38/18.89	16.20/20.71

For 2000-2001, on the pre-test, the four lowest areas (those with an average less than 2.00) included student psychology/developmental patterns, distance teaching, teaching writing, and portfolio and alternative assessment. By the post-test, the average for all increased with largest increase coming in distance teaching (from 1.50 to 2.50). As a matter of fact the average score increased for virtually all areas. Not surprisingly, the averages for subject matter knowledge were relatively high and similar on both the pre- and post-tests. The focus of TSP is on improving knowledge about teaching, and there was remarkable improvement seen on some topics, like that noted above for distance education. The average for lecture increased from 3.20 to 3.56. It stands to reason that the average for this topic would be relatively high, even on the pre-test, since, for many faculty, this is the method of choice. The average for facilitating various types of small group work was 2.70 (pre-) but was 3.56 by the post-test—the same as the post-test for lecture. Thus, at least based on this example, TSP appears to be accomplishing the goal of improving participants' skills—especially in areas where they might not have had especially strong skills at the onset of the program. Most of the composite averages increased from pre- to post-test; however, they are based on different numbers of items. When taking into account the number of items, the composite that increased the most was assessment skills.

For the 2001-2002 group, the pre-test averages are uniformly higher than for the 2000-2001 group. In fact, none of the averages are less than 2.00. Still, in the area of foundational knowledge, all of the post-test averages exceed those for the pre-test. In the case of knowledge of histories and philosophies of education, the difference is almost a full point. However, for the instruction skills items, the composite average for the post-test increases only modestly from the pretest. The composites for assessment skills are similar with the pre-test average actually exceeding the post-test average.

The data for 2002-2003 bear some resemblance to that gathered in 2000-01. There are several areas where the pre-test average is less than 2.00—knowledge of theories and research on human learning, skill in using role-playing, simulations, peer teaching, lab work, field work, alternative assessment philosophies/strategies, and portfolio/alternative assessment. In virtually all cases, the post-test averages for these items exceed the pre-test averages, sometimes by almost a full point on average. The composite averages are very similar to the 2000-01 data with the greatest perceived improvement coming in the area of assessment skills.

Based on the data for the three years, it appears that participants believe that they are improving their foundational, instructional, and assessment skills. With the current cohort, these skills have been de-emphasized in favor of allowing faculty to devote more energy to their SoTL projects, and it remains to be seen if the desired effect has been accomplished—namely, accelerating the process of gathering, analyzing, and reporting the data in a public forum. Past participants' comments indicated that the SoTL project was less worthwhile than other elements of the program. Hopefully by better supporting the efforts of faculty—in terms of both time and consultation services via the LEARN Center—that perception might change.

Your feedback is encouraged. Steve Friedman can be reached at ext. 1970 or in 2023 Roseman

