GUIDE TO PEER OBSERVATION

In order to ensure that faculty colleagues benefit from a peer observation, the following practices are suggested:

For peer observers

- Arrive at class ahead of time.
- Have a method of recording what takes place.
- Try not to affect the teaching-learning process. Be invisible and do not intervene.
- Note the time in the margin of the observation form every few minutes so that the class structure can be put in context.
- Diagram instructor and student positions and interactions illustrating the degree of participation, who participates in class and how often.
- Observe an entire class session. If you must leave, make sure the instructor knows beforehand.
- Provide feedback that,
  - is accurate and specific, with examples. “33% of students raised hands to answer instructor question” rather than “students appear engaged and responsive” or “Instructor voice trailed off while summarizing concept #3 at 3:45” rather than “instructor mannerism is distracting or confusing.”
  - contributes to what the instructor has already thought about (dovetails with Pre-Observation Form information and instructor self-knowledge).
  - is given in a supportive, nonjudgmental manner.
  - has positives intermixed with areas for growth.
  - provides specific alternatives for teaching practices needing change or improvement.
  - is sensitive to what the instructor can control, their experience level.
  - prompts discussion between the instructor and observer.
- Conduct a post-observation discussion with the instructor. In a post-observation discussion,
  - begin by discussing what the instructor is doing well, and why.
  - provide specific examples which are more useful than generalities.

For instructors

- Take the first opportunity to comment in a post-observation discussion, before the observer does. Frame your own impression of the class, where you felt your strengths shown through and areas you are actively seeking suggestions for improvement. This will help guide the feedback from the observer and set the stage for a discussion.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the peer observation – as an opportunity for reflection/discussion around maintaining strengths and improving teaching. The summary section in the Peer Observation Form template provides a designated space for this evaluation, among other items.

For observers & instructors

- Conduct an honest exchange, of both strengths and suggestions for improving teaching.
- Treat the post-observation meeting as a discussion, not just the observer delivering feedback.