

Responding to
Administrative
Priorities

Recognizing Teaching: Changing the Reward System

Capsule: It is widely perceived that the high emphasis placed by research universities on research and acquiring external funding results in a system that places less importance on teaching. If so, then practical means that can redress the imbalance are offered.

Summary: Anderson et al. (2011) advocate for a changes in the academic reward system to emphasize the equal importance of teaching in relation to research and acquiring funding. Anderson views the scales as unbalanced, too often teaching is in competition for research when comes to professors time commitment. Furthermore, academic professors a research and some extent teaching universities rely on money that has been allotted to researchers for research. Therefore, the system is set-up to encourage academics to pursue research, so that they not only get paid, but are also rewarded for their accomplishments. There have been improvements in acknowledging teaching contributions, but the argument is that there is more than can be done to encourage universities to value teaching. In Anderson's view, there must be a change in the culture of university systems and funding agencies to acknowledge the role of teaching at universities. Anderson et al. present seven recommendations to assist academia in changing the reward system.

The recommendations suggest that teaching should be treated as a scholarly activity. The authors encourage the professors to read and utilize education literature, just as they would read research in their own discipline. The reward system should provide opportunities for seminars from effective educators. There should also be discussion group that focus on teaching. In the addition, teaching equal to research in terms of importance for tenure. This also means that universities should provide funding to support the implementation of effective teaching practices. Lastly, Anderson et al. recommend that there should be a conscious effort from college administrations to support and promote the importance of teaching among faculty.

Implications in Engineering Education:

There is a need to reduce the attrition rates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. This need implies that it is imperative that universities reevaluate their practices. Based on the recommendations of Anderson et al., the current academic reward system needs to be revamped. The Anderson et al. paper provides a prospective for how the reward system could be revamped. The implications of their paper suggest that the engineering education research needs to be brought to the attention of practicing academics. The Anderson et al. paper also emphasizes the importance of engineering education research that evaluates the teaching practices of engineering community. Engineering education research can serve to inform the engineering education community of effective and ineffective teaching practices.

References:

Anderson, W. A., Banerjee, U., Drennan, C. L., Elgin, S. C. R., Epstein, I. R., Handelsman, J., et al. (2011). Changing the Culture of Science Education at Research Universities. *Science*, 331.

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