

Appendix A: Deans' Statement on Teaching

Statement on Teaching Council of Deans

The University of Denver has always been an institution that values teaching, research, and service and expresses its commitment to all three of these traditional areas of faculty endeavor in its "Faculty Handbook" through guidelines for promotion and tenure. Excellent teaching is so much taken for granted that its importance can be diminished by not speaking of it as often or forthrightly as we should. Furthermore, excellence in teaching is not so easily defined and varies considerably by discipline, profession, and level of instruction, so that speaking about its uniform importance is difficult. Nonetheless, as the deans of various schools, colleges, and divisions, we want to raise the standards for teaching and reaffirm its importance to our collective mission at the University of Denver.

This is not so much a statement about the balance of teaching and scholarship, as it is about the high expectations we have for teaching, for it is not how one divides one's time, but what is done with that time to pursue excellence and high quality. Teaching in a modern university requires being aware of how learning takes place, the characteristics of the learners, and the new technologies available to support and extend learning, as well as a high level of expertise in one's subject. Bringing these highly developed instructional skills into the classroom, laboratory, studio, or to one-on-one coaching is what makes teaching excellent. Engaging these skills in crafting courses, curricula, and new programs that are innovative, current, and unique is another way of achieving excellence.

The challenge of excellence is not without support. The university has made great strides in developing distinctive environments for teaching and in providing resources for improving teaching. Sometimes the best help is in the office next door in the expertise of experienced colleagues; but a broad continuous conversation, both formal and informal, with faculty from across the university is also helpful, not only to the individual, but in creating a culture of teaching excellence that inspires everyone. How important is excellent teaching? Certainly no faculty member should receive tenure, be promoted in rank, or receive a merit salary increase without demonstrated excellence in teaching. Beyond these come the rewards of seeing students learn, their expressions of appreciation, and the formal recognitions by colleagues that are associated with being fully and consistently professional as a teacher. A great university simply must have excellent teachers.