

# LAFAYETTE COLLEGE

## **Memo: Fall 2020 Peer Observations of Teaching for Evaluative Purposes**

Dear Colleagues,

At Lafayette College we follow recommended practices and use multiple measures to evaluate teaching. These include self-evaluations, teaching portfolios, peer observations of teaching, student course evaluations, and letters of support. Given that all classroom observations of teaching will be conducted online this semester, there are a few technical adaptations that should be made to peer observation procedures. Information about changes in procedures to formal student course evaluations will also be addressed in a forthcoming memo.

Faculty in departments and programs conducting classroom observations of teaching for evaluative purposes this semester should still consult Section 4.2.1.1.1 of the [Faculty Handbook](#) for important information on general procedures to follow, as well as any additional departmental or program guidelines. We also ask that you take note of the following modifications for the online teaching environment:

- Together with the general course materials shared during the pre-observation discussion, observers should review additional dimensions of the online aspects of a course to more holistically assess student engagement, timeliness and quality of instructor feedback, and other aspects of distinctive teaching, in addition to what occurs during the observed synchronous class session. This is a recommended practice whether courses are online or face-to-face. Temporary guest access could be provided to course sites and related course applications (e.g. Moodle, Perusall, etc.) to enable peer observers to review discussion board postings, instructor communications, and other relevant materials. The observed faculty member can also provide screenshots of course materials.
- Just as would occur on campus, the peer observer(s) should arrive (i.e., log in) a few minutes early to the virtual class session, be introduced at the beginning, and be as unobtrusive as possible throughout the class session. After being announced, the observer(s) should turn off their video and mute their microphone during the observation as a recommended practice.

Please review the CITLS resource [Conducting Peer Observations of Teaching](#) which provides recommendations as well as sample instruments that faculty might consider using or referring to when conducting peer observations of online courses. CITLS will also hold a workshop on Monday, August 31st from 4 - 5:15 pm on peer observations of teaching for which all faculty are

welcome to [register](#). During this workshop there will be an opportunity for faculty members across departments and programs to share their effective practices with one another and discuss how they plan to carry out such efforts online this semester.

For those interested in further reading on recommended practices for the evaluation of online courses, the ebook version of [Evaluating Online Teaching: Implementing Best Practices](#) by Tobin et al. (2015) is being obtained through Skillman Library. When this ebook becomes available, the access link will be posted to the CITLS website and distributed through Lafayette Today.

For any questions regarding classroom observations of teaching, please feel free to contact Tracie Addy, Associate Dean of Teaching & Learning ([addyt@lafayette.edu](mailto:addyt@lafayette.edu)).

John Meier  
Provost

Jamila Bookwala  
Dean of the Faculty

Tracie Addy  
Associate Dean of Teaching & Learning