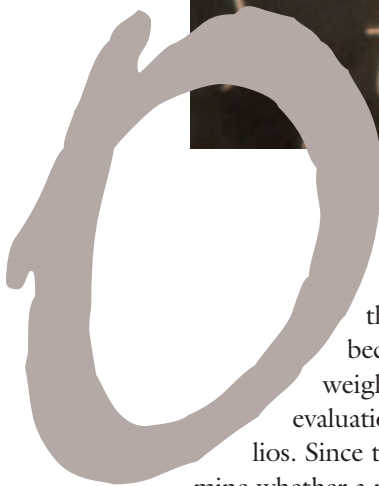


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Grading the Teachers

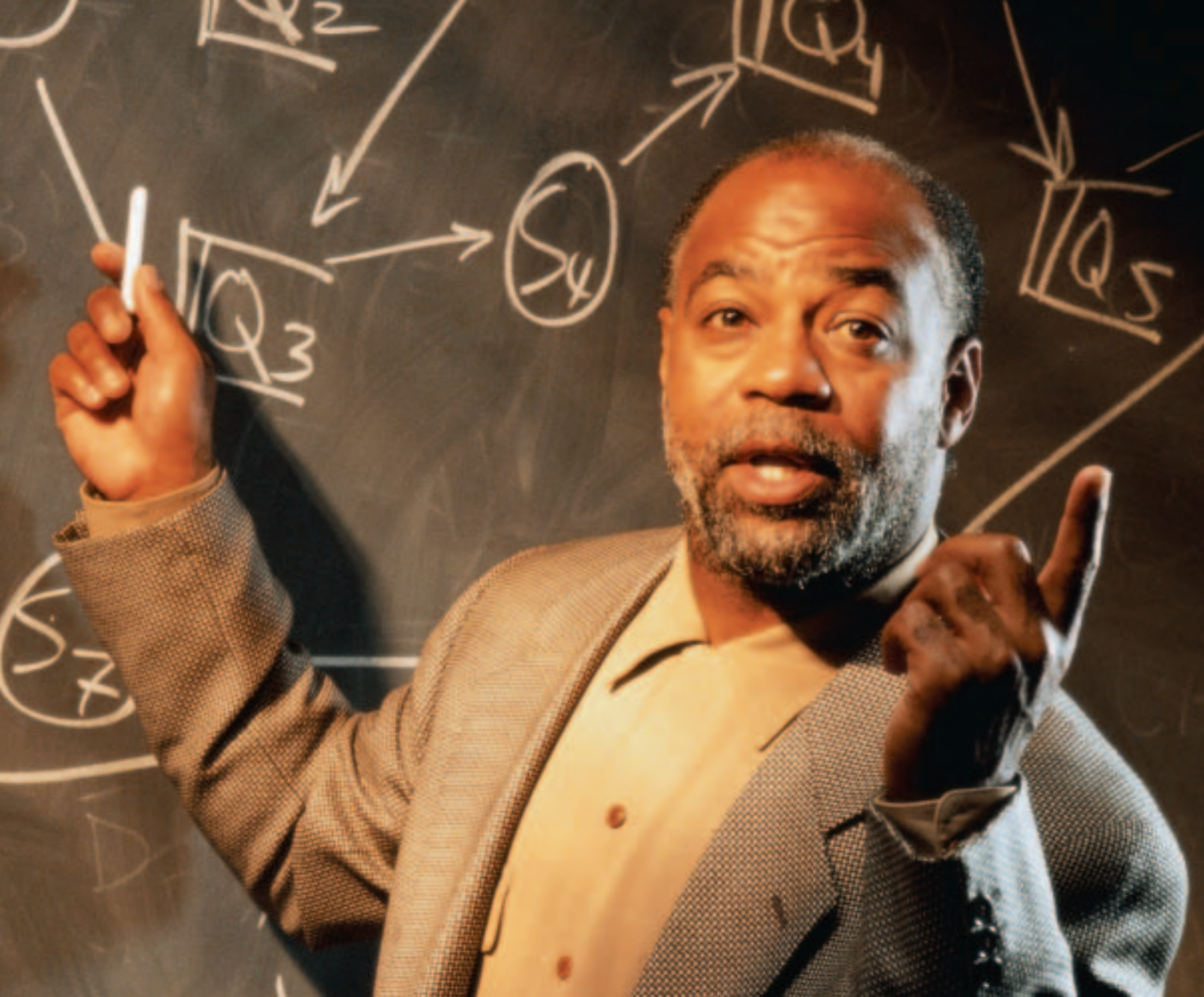
by Lorraine P. Anderson and Lawrence P. Shao

What criteria should you look at to determine if your professors are doing a good job?



One of the knottiest problems facing business school administrators is how to evaluate the teaching effectiveness of their professors. The problem is compounded because it can be difficult to know how to weigh various sources of data—including student evaluations, peer evaluations, and teaching portfolios. Since teaching evaluations often are used to determine whether a professor deserves promotion or tenure, it is critical that administrators carefully and fairly interpret all the data available to them.

A recent survey of AACSB members was designed to determine what components most deans and department heads believe should be considered in faculty evaluations. A rapid response from many members indicated that the survey indeed hit a nerve with deans and administrators. Findings here are based on 501 completed surveys.



The Top Criteria

In general, deans and administrators tend to look most closely at a professor's depth of knowledge, student evaluations, technical ability, and teaching skill when evaluating teaching effectiveness. The survey suggests that:

- The single most important element in faculty effectiveness is the professor's current knowledge of the field. Of all respondents, 61 percent found this to be extremely important; 33.8 found it somewhat important.

- Stakeholder feedback is also crucial—when it comes from students. Of the 20 items listed in this category, student evaluation scores and student written comments ranked as the most important elements.

- Peer evaluations are more important than a dean's evaluation, but less important than the chair's evaluation.

- According to the majority of respondents, evaluative classroom visits by administrators or faculty are only somewhat important or not important at all.

- Intellectual contributions are not valued as highly as many people think. In fact, survey respondents ranked them seventh in importance, behind being current in the field, student evaluation scores, student written comments, chair's evaluation, teaching awards, and peer evaluations.

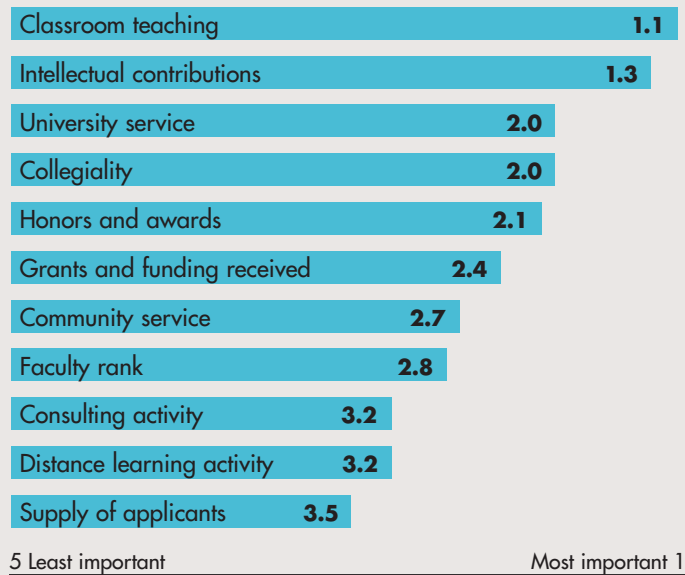
- The teaching portfolio—though gaining popularity in recent years—is not the best measure of teaching effectiveness. Just over a quarter of respondents called it extremely important; half said it is somewhat important.

- Administrators do not appear to be especially concerned about class enrollments, grade distribution, or drop rates. Only 5.2 percent of those who responded think the drop rate of a class is an extremely important factor in determining teaching effectiveness.

- It pays to be tech-savvy. Respondents rated a professor's use of technology as a more important factor than colleagues' opinions, grade distribution, course notebooks, course level, course type, class enrollment, and drop rate. About 56 per-

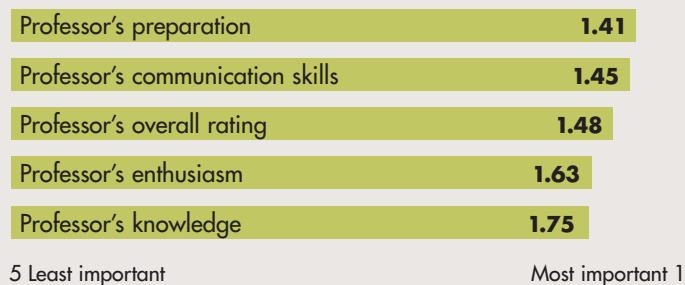
“ try to consider all aspects of each faculty’s contribution to our overall mission. Not everyone makes strong contributions in the same areas, but

■ What is the most important component in evaluating annual faculty performance?*

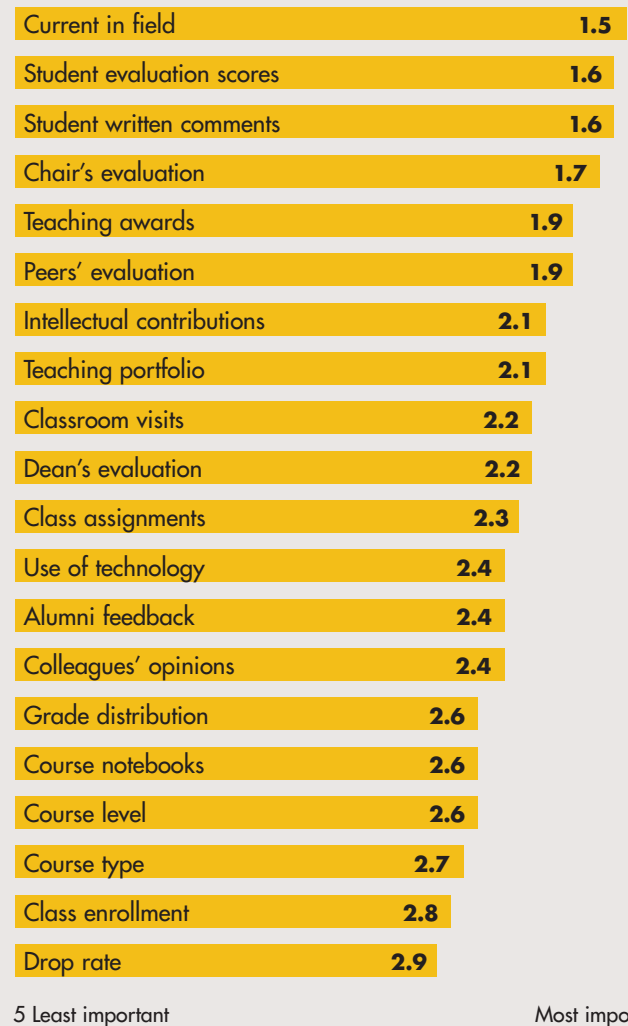


*Mean figures on a scale from 5 to 1, 1 being most important

■ What is the most important item on student evaluations?



■ What is the most important component in evaluating teaching effectiveness?

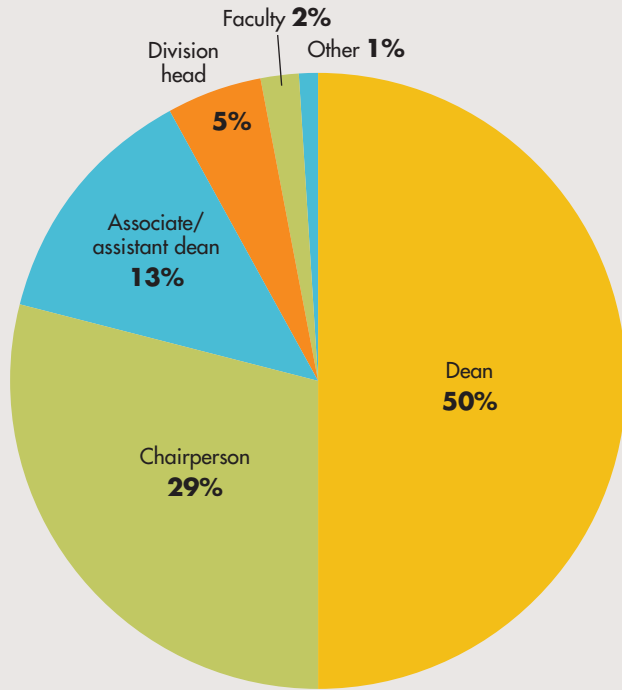


■ What is the most important means for comparing student evaluations?

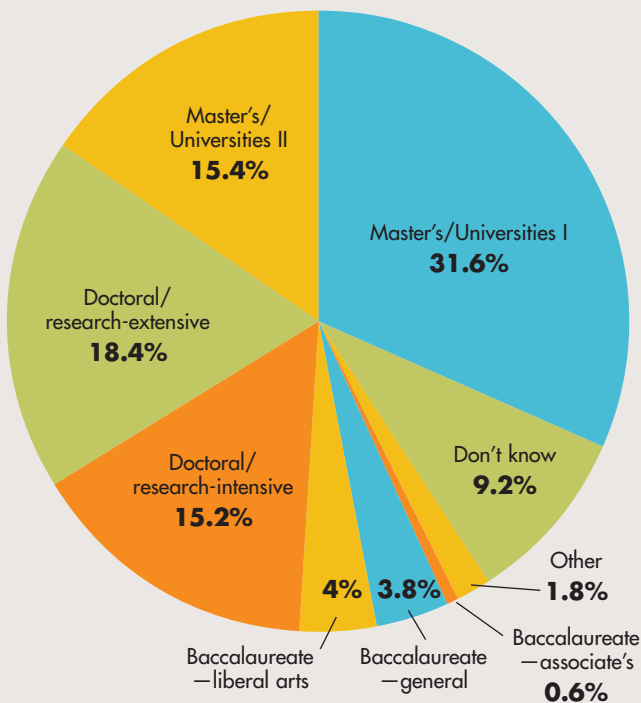


everyone has something of value to offer."

■ **What is your position?**



■ **What is your Carnegie classification?**



cent believe that the use of technology is somewhat important; 9.5 percent believe that it is extremely important.

■ Classroom teaching is the most important element of overall annual faculty performance, rated as extremely important by 94.6 percent of the respondents. It outranks intellectual contributions, which is considered extremely important by just 73 percent of respondents.

■ Within student evaluations, professors' preparation and communication skills are the most important aspects of their teaching.


■ Respondents believe that, in comparing the mean scores from student evaluations, the department mean should carry the most weight, followed by the discipline mean. They consider the college mean and university mean far less important.

Thoughtful Comments

AACSB members who completed the survey noted that faculty evaluations also should be tied to the mission of the institution. This can be problematical, as several respondents indicated, when schools with teaching missions are asked to place significant emphasis on intellectual contributions.

With all the conflicting imperatives, it's no surprise that faculty evaluations remain a "bucket of worms," in the words of one respondent. Another respondent succinctly summed up the views of many: "For tenured faculty, there are no consequences, good or bad, attached to evaluations." The process weighs heavily on administrators, many of whom would agree with this comment: "Faculty evaluation is one of the most difficult areas to quantify precisely. I can rank most of my faculty roughly. The best and worst are easiest to identify. It is the middle that is difficult."

One of the reasons faculty evaluations might be so problematic is that many administrators perceive that every professor brings some value to the school. One dean said, "I try to consider all aspects of each faculty's contribution to our overall mission. Not everyone makes strong contributions in the same areas, but everyone has something of value to offer."

It is clear that different administrators place weight on different components of the evaluation process, and many tools are necessary to determine whether or not a teacher is doing a good job. Knowing how other deans judge their professors should help administrators at all business schools design an evaluation process that is rigorous, fair, and accurate. 

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