

# The Squeaky Wheel Gets the Grease?

## Insights and Impacts During Resource-Challenged Curricular Transformation

Max Anderson, MLIS, MS<sup>1</sup>, Linda Love, EdD<sup>2</sup>, Sandra Yingling, PhD<sup>1</sup>, Abbas Hyderi, MD, MPH<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Illinois, College of Medicine at Chicago, Chicago, IL 60612 <sup>2</sup>University of Nebraska Medical Center, Omaha, NE 68198

### Background

Medical schools across the country are embarking on curricular change/redesign, or have recently completed a significant curricular overhaul. Modern academic medicine must rapidly absorb change and welcome innovation while ensuring consistent excellence in teaching. Very real time and resource constraints may lead faculty and their organizations to continue familiar teaching traditions that do not lead to sustainable and successful adaptation.<sup>1</sup>

Two schools have examined approaches to sustaining a high performing medical education enterprise by providing feedback to its most important mission-based impact factor – its teachers.<sup>2</sup>

The University of Illinois College of Medicine – Chicago (UICOM-C) and the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) identified areas for teaching improvement through student performance data, student evaluations of courses and direct observation by instructional designers (IDs). Need for ongoing quality improvement was identified in facilitation skills, use of educational materials and technology.

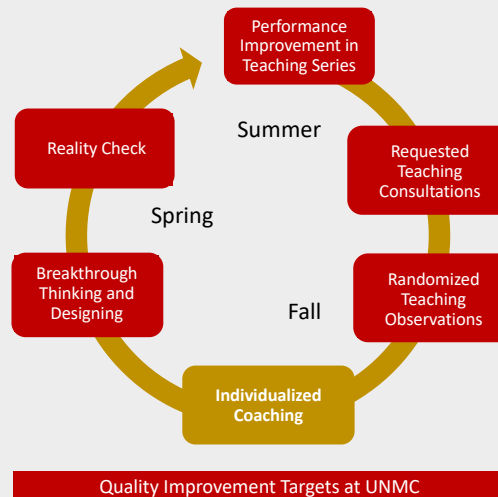
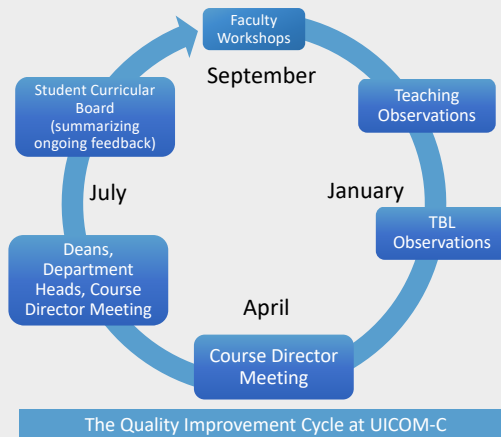
### Methods

At UICOM-C, the ID implemented a continuous quality improvement cycle of feedback to instructors. The ID feedback included quality reviews of educational materials, using evidence-based multimedia design, and an analysis of evaluation data.<sup>3</sup>

Since AY 2015-2016, the ID has employed a comprehensive quality reporting system for individual faculty. This system is part of a longitudinal plan that tracks faculty teaching performance from year to year.

At UNMC, an organization-wide, cohort-based, quality and performance improvement intensive laid a foundation for scholarly inquiry and ongoing feedback. This served as a framework for real-time feedback on teaching. Ongoing faculty development supported additional improvements in teaching and assessment.

To accelerate teaching improvements, each school used individualized coaching of faculty by IDs to support the goals of the new curriculum that rely on interactive, technology-enhanced teaching.



### Future Plans

At UICOM-C, production of the ID's evaluation reports will be automated and templated, thus improving accuracy and timeliness. Faculty will receive contextualized data to improve their decision-making. Students' "evaluation fatigue" will be addressed through sampling strategies, resulting in higher quality evaluation reports. Faculty will receive development workshops tailored to specific topics identified through analysis of data trends.

UNMC plans to incorporate rapid response student feedback mechanisms to give faculty better and faster data to improve teaching in real time. Expanded 1:1 faculty coaching through UNMC's Interprofessional Academy of Educators is underway.

### Results

UICOM-C provided feedback for 196 faculty members on the quality of their teaching in the past three years. The ID lead has worked closely with the administration and faculty to provide specific, actionable feedback, and to advise on strategies for the future. Faculty reported that they welcomed the individual attention to their curriculum and specific suggestions for improvement. Faculty trusted suggestions for improvement because the feedback from the ID was evidence-based.

UNMC has provided interprofessional feedback to 42 faculty members with varying outcome measures for change. Frequently targeted areas of faculty concern are skill in using new educational technologies, efficient/effective use of time in large group interactive teaching, and formative assessment techniques. Selected feedback included observations of student behaviors in class. 1:1 coaching helped increase faculty confidence in change.

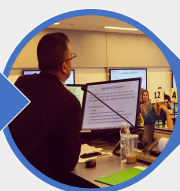
### Conclusions

It is important to ensure that faculty and department heads are given appropriate feedback in a timely manner, with which to improve their teaching effectiveness. However, feedback alone may not result in the desired outcomes. Experiences at UICOM-C and UNMC have shown that the type and frequency of feedback is important and necessary for ongoing teaching effectiveness and have led to the following conclusions:

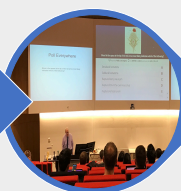
- A systematic, comprehensive, and multi-faceted review of teaching quality is necessary to understand outcomes, gaps, and opportunities in the launch of new curriculums.
- Individualized and focused coaching may help faculty and organizations reach quality goals faster and better than broad diffusion of development or training alone.
- Providing performance data alone was not a significant motivator for change. In order to create sustainable change among faculty who have time constraints and are uneasy with new methods, supportive ID relationships are required.
- Instructional designers and faculty developers are key contributors to the advancement of teaching quality.



"Information about what students were actually doing during my class was eye-opening."



"I had no idea how to actually improve my teaching. The 1:1 coaching was a true lifesaver."



"This process has provided helpful feedback and data that (unfortunately) most faculty do not implement."

### References

1. Feinberg, R. N. & Koltz, E. F. (2015). Getting started as a medical teacher in times of change. *Medical Science Educator*, 25, 69-74.
2. Newman, L., Roberts, D., & Schwartzstein, R. (2012). Peer observation of teaching handbook. MedEdPORTAL Publications. 8:9150.
3. Stark, P. B., & Freisztat, R. (2014). An evaluation of course evaluations. *Center for Teaching and Learning, University of California, Berkeley*.