Learning Objective: *The student will be able to develop useful feedback in the process of scheduled instructor evaluations as they relate to curriculum delivery and/or development.*

In Part 1 of this Coffee Break series, we discussed the value of properly scheduled evaluations. A crucial element of evaluations is the process of feedback. Providing effective feedback can make the evaluation process a positive experience with the potential for improving instructor delivery and student achievement. Listed below are several feedback characteristics that evaluators should know and use as a checklist when observing and then formulating and sharing feedback with instructors. Positive feedback experiences happen when a positive relationship is established between the evaluator and the instructor, based on trust, good communication, and a factual but respectful approach to the meeting.

The following characteristics of useful feedback are from a list originally brainstormed by Lehner and Wright in 1963. (Berquist, W. H., & Phillips, S. R. (1975). *A handbook for faculty development* (Vol. 1, p. 224). Dansville, NY: The Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges.)

1. It is descriptive rather than evaluative. By avoiding evaluative language, it reduces the need for the individual to respond defensively.

2. It is specific rather than general. Provide accurate examples taken from the observation.

3. It should be given to help, not to hurt. We too often give feedback because it makes us feel better or gives us a psychological advantage.

4. It is directed toward behavior which the receiver can do something about.

5. Solicited feedback is extremely valuable. Feedback is most useful when the receiver has formulated the kind of question which those observing can answer.

6. In general, feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity after the given behavior. The reception and use of feedback involve many possible emotional reactions.

7. It involves sharing information the receiver can use rather than the amount we would like to give. To overload a person with feedback is to reduce the possibility that he or she may be able to use it effectively.

8. It concerns what is said and done, or how, not why.

9. It is checked to ensure clear communication. One way of doing this is to have the receiver try to rephrase the feedback to see if it corresponds to what the sender had in mind. No matter what the intent, feedback is often threatening and thus subject to considerable distortion or misinterpretation.

In Part 3 of this series, we'll look at some examples of constructive, discipline-specific feedback.

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