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## Welcome Melody Bowdon



Melody is Director of UCF's Karen L. Smith Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, and Associate Professor of Writing and Rhetoric. She received her Ph.D. in English from the University of Arizona and joined the UCF faculty in 1999. Her scholarship focuses on faculty development and community-based inquiry. She is currently co-editing a special issue of *Community Literacy Journal* that addresses community literacy and digital tools.

Welcome to the 2011-2012 academic year at UCF. On behalf of the staff of the Karen L. Smith Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, I want to invite you to stop by and see us in CL1 Room 207 to talk about teaching challenges and triumphs, find out about hot topics in higher education, and reconnect with colleagues you've missed over the summer.

One of the professional highlights of my summer was attending the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (Commission on Colleges division) Institute on Quality Enhancement and Accreditation in Fort Worth, Texas. At this event I met with colleagues from around the region to discuss ideas for promoting faculty development, connecting with contemporary students, and engaging in meaningful assessment from the class level all the way through the institutional level. It was fascinating for me to learn about how other institutions approach this work and gratifying for me to note how well UCF stacks up in comparison with other institutions in many ways, including our institutional commitment to providing professional development for faculty members.

Another way in which UCF stands out from other institutions is the recognition we provide to faculty through our prestigious award programs. Winners of some of those awards have written the pieces in this volume of the Focus.

Like the faculty members featured here, to be successful and satisfied as educators most of us have to remain plugged in, continue to refresh our training, and seek inspiration. With our hectic schedules it is difficult enough to stay on top of the latest developments within our disciplines; keeping abreast of the latest research on teaching and learning is even more of a challenge. Most of us can benefit from talking with colleagues about what we're doing, what's working, and what could be better, but few of us have time built into our maxed out days to do that. I hope you'll make a point of taking advantage of the opportunities for growth and support we offer at FCTL throughout the coming year.

Last year we revised the Winter Faculty Development Conference in December to support interdisciplinary collaboration on issues of campuswide relevance. This year we'll continue with the new model. We'll also continue to grow our Friday Morning Faculty Writing Club and to offer our popular "How to Write a Journal Article in Twelve Weeks" program in the summer with informal groups running throughout the year. In May we held our first "Tech Camp" event. Faculty from around campus attended two days of sessions and presented their work in a showcase finale. We plan to reprise this event in January and May of 2012. As in years past, we will continue to host weekly workshops, teaching circles, book clubs, a variety of funded faculty development opportunities led by faculty fellows, as well as the collaboratively sponsored Summer Faculty Development Conference in May.

We look forward to working with you on these and other projects. Best wishes for a productive and pleasant new academic year.

## The Genesis of a SoTL Project: Questions About our Teaching

Jim Katt



Jim Katt is Associate Professor in the Nicholson School of Communication. He is a consultant and co-author of *Technically Speaking: A Guide for Technical Communicators*. He has produced a video, *Making PowerPoint Work for You*, and he is an FCTL faculty fellow for 2011-2012.

### Road trip?

It began as just a conversation between two colleagues. We were both aware of the research on teacher immediacy behaviors—things a teacher does that reduce the physical and psychological distance between teacher and students. Teachers who did things like making eye contact, encouraging discussion, including personal examples in lectures, avoiding speaking in monotone (and other such distance-reducing behaviors), had students who reported being more motivated and having more positive feelings about the teacher, the class and even the subject matter. But our discussion quickly moved to a place the research didn't address. What happens when we are communicating with our students only in writing? When we write comments on student papers or provide written evaluations for student presentations, we cannot make eye contact or adopt a lively speaking tone—are we destined to have less motivated students who feel less positive about us and our courses? And what if we're teaching online, and we and our students are (literally) in different places? How do we lessen that psychological distance? If being immediate has positive results in face-to-face settings, does anything have a similar effect when our teacher-to-student communication is delivered in written form?

### Drive Through the Village of Anecdotal Data

Next came a bit of self-reflection. We both considered ourselves audience-aware writers who tried to avoid sounding abrupt or critical in our written communication with students, much as we would do in a face-to-face situation. But we found we couldn't clearly articulate just what rhetorical devices we employed when sensitively writing to our students. We needed to examine some authentic teacher-to-student communication. My poor handwriting came to the rescue. Because my handwriting is barely legible, I have for a number of years typed my evaluations of student speeches, and many of those teacher-to-student written messages were still on my hard drive. We noticed that I wasn't always consistent, but that sometimes I employed linguistic strategies that might be similar to immediacy. For example, a perennial weak spot in

student presentations is the conclusion; an otherwise effective presentation often suffers from a weak ending. As a teacher and evaluator I don't want to suggest the poor conclusions ruined their presentations, but I want to point out that they could have been more effective had their conclusions lived up to what preceded them. We found that I used the phrase "Your conclusion could have been stronger," instead of the more direct "Your conclusion was weak." This was also notable because I generally cast my comments in phrases rather than sentences, so the most obvious construction would have been simply "conclusion was weak." We found a number of similar examples. Based on what I had written, I apparently felt the wording would make my feedback more effective, but my rhetorical choices were intuitive and lacked any theoretical rationale.

### Connect with the Literature Highway

We searched for existing research and found two theoretical threads from which to draw. One had to do with verbal immediacy (face-to-face). Witt and Wheelless (2001) identified twelve verbal immediacy cue categories, among these were "Communicator Participation," "Self Disclosure," and "Object Participation." In the weak-conclusion example, adding the pronoun "your" goes to object participation. If we wanted to be a bit more verbally immediate, we could draw from the other two categories as well and end up with the following statement "I (communicator participation) thought (self-disclosure) your (object participation) conclusion was weak." A second theoretical link came from Gibb's (1961) work on defensive and supportive communication. Among other things, Gibb found that provisional language engenders a supportive response, whereas certain language causes receivers to become defensive. To add this concept to our previous example, we could replace the certain-wording of "conclusion was weak" to the provisionally worded "conclusion could have been stronger." Based on the combined work of Witt & Wheelless (2001) and Gibb (1961) we had reason to believe that students would react more favorably to feedback cast in "provisional/immediate" terms, than to feedback cast in "certain/non-immediate" terms.

### Are we SoTL yet?

We came up with five examples where the same comment could be worded in provisional/immediate ("I thought your conclusion could have been stronger") language or certain/non-immediate ("conclusion was weak") language and (after securing IRB approval) had students read scenarios in which they received feedback about a hypothetical presentation they had recently made. For roughly half of the student participants, the feedback received was the five provisional/immediate feedback items. The rest received the same feedback in certain/non-immediate form. After they read the scenario and the feedback, we asked them to report how motivated they would

be to work on the next assignment for the same (hypothetical) professor and what sort of feelings (affect) they had toward the professor and the course. Students receiving the provisional/immediate feedback indicated higher motivation and affect, even though both groups received the same hypothetical grade. We presented our findings at a conference where we received some useful feedback. We submitted a revised version of our study to a journal, where it was subsequently published.

Since then we have expanded this study, added some questions, presented new versions at several conferences, published a second article, and are getting ready to submit a third. But the genesis of it all was a simple process. We had questions about our teaching. We found a theoretical basis for our tentative (intuitive) answers. We gathered data and shared our results. Now we know a little more than we did before, and anyone who reads the articles can know it, too (see Katt & Collins, 2007; Katt & Collins, 2009).

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## It's All in the Stories: Ruminations of a Faculty Advisor

Patricia Angley



Patricia Angley is an Instructor and the Undergraduate Advisor for the Department of English and has been teaching at UCF since 1998. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa and teaches American literature when she is not busy advising.

Stories intersect with the work that I do at UCF as a literature instructor and as the undergraduate advisor in the Department of English. My students and I read and discuss the stories of myriad voices in the American literatures I teach. We listen to each other in class and read each other's ideas in online discussions and activities, sometimes rejecting this or that passage as implausible or brilliant, sometimes making judgments about the actions of characters or stylistic decisions of writers, but our conversations are always intertwined with storytelling. As the principal undergraduate advisor in my department, one of my tasks is to listen to students vent about their frustrations. In these situations an advisor creates a space where a student's story is heard while also trying to give guidance as to what solutions are or are not possible.

During a recent advising session, I peered across my desk and watched my advisee look at me in disbelief as I told her that she would not be graduating because of a low grade in one of her major courses. This particular unpleasant news, no matter how kindly it's given, can lead students to desperate measures. The first reaction is often to attack the requirement or the instructor or appeal to the sympathy of the advisor in an attempt to have a requirement waived or the grade changed. If nothing is forthcoming but sympathy, threats of going to a higher authority usually come next. Students occasionally call upon their parents to intervene. At these moments, I often think, "And so it goes." In Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Billy Pilgrim says "and so it goes" at points in the novel that refer to death. I certainly do not equate advisees and their grade concerns with violence, death, murder, mayhem and war, but there is something in Billy's narrative that reminds me of student attempts to take someone down with them, so to speak, when their needs are not met. This sort of student reaction is becoming more and more predictable and these interactions do not have easy solutions. Watching CNN's *American Morning* recently, I heard Lori Gottlieb who wrote the cover story, "How to land your kids in therapy," for the July/August 2011 issue of *The Atlantic* describe our

current generation of college students. She said, "College administrators are calling the freshmen that come in 'tea cups' because they are so fragile." She said that their parents have tried so hard to make life "perfect" for their children that the students become depressed easily. Even for an independent, mature student, learning that graduation is postponed because of an unmet requirement is depressing. For some in this generation of students it may cause a major crack in the teacup. Major cracks must be attended to.

As a faculty advisor I attend to these cracks by listening to the students and advocating for them when appropriate. Listening is always the first step as a student narrates what has happened. Sometimes that is enough along with a little reassurance that graduation will be possible the following semester. When that fails, I ask students to write down what happened and provide evidence that supports their grade appeal. This task can also become an end to the story when a student can't gather the evidence (or adequate evidence) to support his or her claim. Others, however, continue the appeal process to the chair of the department who may or may not rule that the student's evidence supports the claim. Then it's off to the dean or even higher authorities. Most often, the students do not receive the change they request, but their voices have been heard. Surely that counts for something.

Stories, of course, can be more or less compelling. During another advising session an advisee stated angrily that she was entitled to a "good" grade. As a listener, I empathized with the financial anxiety that drove the grade appeal. After all, the course cost a lot of money and the student had to rely on student loans. In our consumer society, the debate about whether earning a college degree is worth the debt resonates for parents and students. In fact, when I Google "is the degree worth the debt," articles from the mainstream media to rants in the blogosphere pop up. On a CNN Money website recently, a particular series of testimonials from students who have college loans ranging from around \$72K to \$240K caught my eye. These students felt so trapped by their college loan debt that their lives are "poorer" for it. No wonder parents who are at UCF for their children's first orientation to college stop by my office to ask what can their child do with a degree in English. Transfer students ask the same questions as do our majors who are about to graduate. Concerns about the worth of a college degree fueled by the media and economic fears in these difficult times drive students' desperate stories. Students need the grades because they must graduate and find a job to pay back student loans. While I empathize with the enormous indebtedness many students take on, I am sad that learning is sometimes reduced to grade grabbing and that what we do at the university is too often measured by its economic value. But that's another story. My immediate task as a faculty advisor was to try to explain to this particular advisee that

what she paid for her course was no guarantee of success in that course. She was not happy, but she did appreciate having someone listen to her story. Some days that's the best I can do.

"And so it goes."

## Challenges of Teaching Middle Eastern History: Practical Suggestions

Hakan Özoğlu



Hakan Özoğlu is an Associate Professor in the Department of History and Program Director of Middle Eastern Studies. He teaches courses on the Middle East and Islam. His research interests include Kurdish Nationalism and the Ottoman Empire/Turkish Republic.

One of the challenges of teaching a course on Middle Eastern history is that the subject matter may be too personal for some students who might know someone serving on a military base in the Middle East or who might have a family attachment to this controversial region. Removing oneself from an overly emotional attachment to the subject matter for the sake of "study" constitutes a considerable challenge to teaching and learning.

As U.S. involvement in the Middle East increases, and news coverage and opinion pieces on the subject multiply, many students come to the classroom environment with a stereotyped vision of the Middle East. It is, as expected, more difficult to challenge an already formed (and in some cases, biased) opinion than to give students the tools necessary for understanding the region and its dynamics. Since the issue is highly politicized, there exists a plethora of contaminated information, based on which many students establish opinions and attitudes about the region. Therefore, another challenge is to make students aware of the many biases that are skillfully hidden in the popular press and even in academic publications.

How might a college professor train students in a way that they become aware of the contamination prevalent in much of the available information? More importantly, how can students be challenged to understand the biases of their own? After all, such an admission is a monumental step towards "learning." In my classroom teaching, I find the "third-person effect" very helpful in the practice of understanding bias. For example, to challenge common misperceptions, I ask my students to imagine themselves in a shopping mall

asking passersby the following question: “What do you think average people in the mall would say when you ask them what three adjectives immediately come to their mind when you utter the words, ‘the Middle East?’” It should be no surprise that the answers are almost always negative, such as terrorist, backward, fundamentalist, oppressor, etc. If I pose the same question in the first person; that is, “What adjectives come to your mind, when I say ‘the Middle East?’” the answers are not always negative. With only little doubt, I can state that many of the negative qualifiers reflect their own thinking; yet they feel more comfortable in admitting it in the third person. This practice brings some available biases out in the open, and makes my job of helping students scrutinize them easier. In other words, the third person effect is instrumental in bringing the biases about the Middle East to the table for further examination.

The next step is to provide students with some simple facts about the region (such as only a minority of Muslims live in the Middle East and not all Middle Easterners speak Arabic). I do this to invite students to question what they think they know. At this stage, another great challenge emerges, that is, to differentiate being critical from being judgmental. The fine line between the two is not always very clear to students. Questioning the validity of the information presented to them before they make a judgment is the sole purpose of this practice. Without entering the alleyways of epistemology too deeply, we discuss the possibilities of given information being considered an established fact. At this stage we discuss the difference between fact and opinion. In the end, I ask students to form an opinion and support it with facts. They soon realize that many of their core opinions are supported only by “an interpretation” of facts. They learn to be flexible in their judgments and to respect other interpretations as they realize that they can use a similar basis or facts to support opposite conclusions.

In fact very often I challenge students to make an argument for opinions opposite of their own. This practice helps stretch their minds to accommodate differing viewpoints. In the end, students realize that the so-called “truth” is more elusive than they originally thought, and that there is no short cut to becoming an intellectual.

I have always been against the “mug and jug” style of teaching and learning. That is, students are considered to be mugs waiting to be filled with the so called “knowledge” available only in the teacher’s jug. In my opinion, wisdom cannot be transmitted or taught; it is practiced and experienced. It is personal. In teaching Middle Eastern Studies, students’ intellectual curiosity must be tickled. Let me end with a cliché: a teacher’s responsibility is to teach students how to think, not what to think.

## Integrating Simulation in Nursing Education

Kelly Allred



Kelly Allred is an Assistant Professor in the College of Nursing. Her research interests include innovative teaching methods for nurses and nursing students as well as pain management. She joined UCF in 2007 after receiving her Ph.D. in Nursing.

Educating nursing students becomes more challenging as patients and health care become more complex. Working with a variety of health care professionals and encountering patient situations that are complicated by multiple diseases and conditions can overwhelm the novice nursing student. With that in mind, the faculty in the College of Nursing is excited to be using high fidelity simulation technology to introduce realistic clinical situations to our students in an effort to educate, reduce stress, build confidence, and ultimately to improve patient outcomes.

Using earlier low fidelity simulation technologies to teach nursing skills is still effective, and we continue to include this as part of our standard curriculum. What the high fidelity simulators bring to clinical education is the ability to create realistic clinical situations involving a complex patient cared for by multiple health care providers. Adding to the reality of the situation, we have created a realistic clinical setting in our newly renovated nursing laboratory, including several individual patient rooms and a nurse’s station. This allows the student to learn in a realistic setting where it is safe to make mistakes before encountering the same or a similar situation in the hospital. Including multiple health care providers in the simulation gives the nursing student the opportunity to learn and practice effective communication skills. In fact, one of the main learning objectives for most of the simulations is effective communication. Students need practice having critical conversations that require immediate attention to ensure a good and safe patient outcome.

In groups of four or five, the students problem-solve to determine what is going on with the patient while mentally processing all the information they have available to them. The students practice critical thinking in a safe environment. Under the control of faculty, the simulator reacts to the interventions the nursing students implement. The management of the simulator is directed from a computer in a separate control room nearby. In the control room, faculty can hear and observe students in the simulated situation and determine how

the simulator should react to the treatment provided. Upon completion of the simulation, a formal debriefing is held to discuss concepts learned and opportunities for improvement. Debriefing is an essential component of effective simulation.

One challenge with implementing the simulation program is staffing. It takes at least four people to run a simulation, but six staff members make for the ideal scenario. Exploring all of our resources, we decided to include graduate students in the simulations. This was very successful, especially for those enrolled in the Nurse Educator track, as their education is enhanced by being exposed to and involved with this education technology. The graduate students assist in the simulation in a variety of ways: managing the technology of the simulator and debriefing, or interacting in the simulation as a nurse manager, nurse practitioner, or family member. Undergraduate senior nursing students have now started working with the entry-level students in simulation. Both the graduate and senior nursing students enjoy and learn from working with high fidelity simulation.

We are currently using simulation to augment teaching and clinical experiences, but not to evaluate clinical competency. We want our students to feel comfortable making mistakes where the lessons learned will cause no harm to the patient or their grade. I imagine in the near future we will begin to explore the use of simulation as an evaluation tool to determine if students have obtained the key learning objectives in the clinical courses. Our ultimate goal as educators is to have students graduate as competent and safe health care providers. This technology is an awesome tool for meeting that goal.

We have found integrating realistic clinical situations for our students has had positive learning outcomes. I encourage all faculty to seek new ways to bring the “real world” to their students. It is amazing to watch the learning take place, to see the light bulbs come on, and to know that students are more prepared for what lies ahead, regardless of the discipline you are teaching!

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## **Creating a Culture of Research**

### **Mubarak Shah**



Dr. Mubarak Shah, Agere Chair Professor of Computer Science, is the founding director of the Computer Visions Lab at UCF. He has published extensively on topics related to visual surveillance, tracking, human activity and action recognition, object detection and categorization.

**M**entoring doctoral students means exposing them to the excitement of research and providing them with opportunities and tools in a way that inspires and enables them to become lifelong learners and productive citizens. I often push students far beyond what they believe themselves to be able to accomplish. I do this because I want to prepare students to be leaders in the field, not followers.

During my 25 years at UCF, I have supervised 23 Ph.D. candidates, 13 masters of science students, and 11 Honors in the Majors projects. My former students are currently at prestigious institutions such as Oxford, INRIA, Carnegie Mellon, Michigan, Ohio State and companies such as IBM, Facebook, Harris, SAIC and SRI.

As a mentor, my goal is to help my students to participate actively as researchers in and members of my discipline. In my view, mentors can best help their students by arranging opportunities for them to not just “feel” like researchers but also to begin to be active contributors to their discipline. This means creating a culture where doctoral students have many opportunities to interact with their cohorts to share ideas, engage with researchers in the field, and act as mentors for undergraduate students.

For instance, every summer we host 10 undergraduates from all over the country under our NSF-REU (Research Experience for Undergraduates) site. This provides a great opportunity for doctoral students to mentor undergraduates and gain leadership experience in guiding research projects. These projects are often highly competitive research efforts, funded by agencies like the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency.

I have also regularly sent students to conferences even if they do not have papers to present, so that they have a chance to learn about the latest research and network with researchers from industry and academia. And, I have brought industry and academia to UCF. Every year, I invite several top international

researchers in computer vision to UCF. Typically, the visitor gives a technical talk in the morning and students get a chance to present their work and get the visitor's feedback in the afternoon. More recently, I have encouraged these visitors to give "journey talks"—stories about how they started their graduate studies, their Ph.D. work, their first jobs, research problems, and their students. These talks have been very popular among my students because they reveal the human side of a scientist.

Finally, I emphasize the "publish or perish" paradigm: to graduate, to get a job, to get a promotion or tenure, to become an editor or fellow of a professional society, publishing is essential. I do not dictate what doctoral students do in their research. My role is to act as a critic who helps them refine their research instead of simply solving problems students encounter.

All of these activities function together as ways to help foster a culture where doctoral students are conducting their own research, participating in mentoring undergraduates, engaging with academic and industry professionals, and, ultimately, becoming active participants in the research culture of their field.

## Taking Loggerhead Learning Online: A Problem-Based Approach to Science Inquiry

Deirdre Englehart



Deirdre Englehart is an Instructor in the Early Childhood Development and Education Program in the College of Education. She earned her doctorate degree in 2008 while working at UCF. Her research interests include online learning, pre-service teacher dispositions, science education and children's literature.

Someone recently asked how I prepare teachers for the 21st century, specifically, "What will teachers need to know and do to support children in the year 2025?" Of course I had many ideas, but one thing that resonates strongly with me is the fact that students of the future must address many issues and problems our society has created. Children must learn how to think critically; therefore, I need to prepare future teachers to teach with methods that support this type of thinking. One format that allows me to model thinking is problem-based learning. Lerner and Pinou explain: "in problem-based learning, students are presented with a realistic scientific dilemma.... Students work collaboratively to research the problem, conduct hands-on activities to learn more about it... and eventually make informed recommendations for solving the problem based on their findings" (2007, p. 50). Problem-based learning (PBL) fits with my science methods course. It also aligns with scientific inquiry because it is based on an authentic problem and provides opportunities for students to investigate and learn science while they address the issue at hand. This format can also be used with young children in the classroom setting.

To prepare my class of pre-service teachers in PBL, we engaged "Taking Loggerhead Learning Online," an online project that used loggerhead turtles as the central theme. Many students in the course live in coastal Florida communities where sea turtles lay their eggs, supporting the issue of threatened loggerhead turtles. In this unit, the problem-based learning approach reflected the following characteristics: learning was driven by ill-structured, authentic problems; students worked in groups; and learning was facilitated by the teacher while allowing for student direction, reflection, and implementation (Savery, 2006). The driving question for this project was, "What can we do to support the survival of Loggerhead Sea Turtles?" Students participated in various activities to help them develop background information related to sea turtles; they then identified a problem related to loggerhead sea turtles, investigated their own questions and developed possible solutions. Students were encouraged



**Pictured above:** Faculty participate in the Poster Showcase session in the Library Knowledge Commons at the 2011 Summer Faculty Conference, held in May. The conference offered roughly 90 different sessions primarily led by UCF faculty, covering topics ranging from implementing service-learning courses to strategies for helping students in distress. Learn more about participating in our conferences at <[ftl.ucf.edu/events](http://ftl.ucf.edu/events)>.

to implement their ideas during the semester and share their progress at the end of the term.

During an online meeting, students participated in various activities to learn about the sea turtles. A picture was posted that showed a turtle eating a piece of plastic. Students were invited to comment and share their thoughts. Students then met in groups to discuss what they knew about the turtles and what they thought they knew. These ideas were then shared with the whole class and discussed. Two polls were used to find out students' past experiences with loggerhead sea turtles, revealing that most students had seen the sea turtles but did not see them laying eggs. Students watched sea turtles through the use of video footage to make observations. In another activity, students estimated the number of turtles that would survive to adulthood from a nest of 100. Students participated in counting the eggs as I explained different threats to turtle eggs and to young turtles. I then modeled an activity entitled, "You are what you eat?" in which I used a nutcracker to demonstrate how the loggerhead's powerful jaws can crush different hard-shelled mollusks to eat. Students had materials at home to engage in their own explorations.

One activity involved tracking a sea turtle using a tracking device. "Sea Turtle biologists worldwide are currently working together to track turtles to learn about sea turtle behavior and migration in an effort to conserve these endangered animals" (Lener and Pinou, 2007, p. 24). In our online meeting, students were able to track the movements of a turtle and plot them on a map. Students discussed their observations of the turtle's movements in small groups. A news clip was shared indicating that loggerhead turtle nesting numbers were down for the season.

After students participated in the various activities, they were placed in breakout groups to discuss what crucial issues loggerhead sea turtles face. Students had time to discuss and pursue their own unanswered questions related to sea turtles. Students then identified "problems" for sea turtles and possible solutions. As a part of the solutions, groups discussed advocacy efforts. The project culminated with students sharing plans related to how they will advocate for loggerhead sea turtles in our community.

Individual students and groups readily engaged in the class activities. Comments during the class and in student reflective journals indicate they were engaged with the topic of loggerhead turtles.

Student advocacy fell into two categories including things they can do now and advocacy in the community. One student wrote that, "we talked about possible steps that could be taken to help reduce our harmful interactions. Some of these included recycling, raising awareness about issues affecting

turtles, restricting driving on the beaches where the turtles nest, limiting lights that can be seen from the beach, and, overall, taking a hands-off approach to touching any turtles in nests and disrupting their natural inclination to move toward the ocean after they hatch." At the end of the term, my preservice teaching students were invited to share their progress and implementation of ideas from the class meeting.

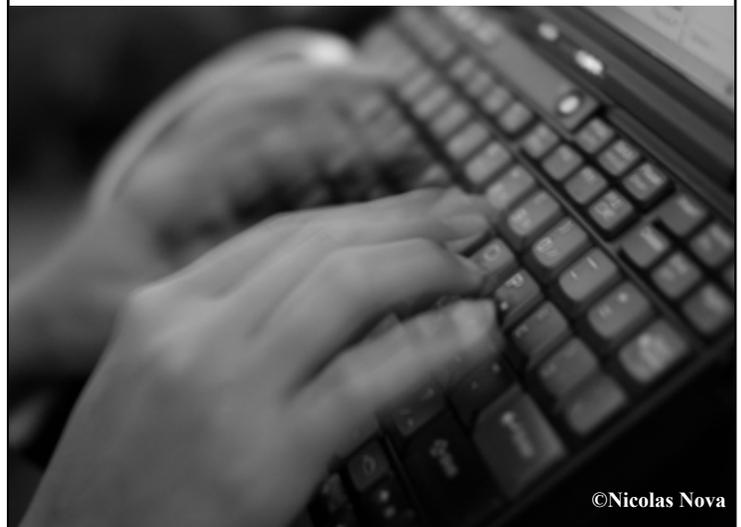
Involving pre-service teachers in these practices during their science methods course at the university helps prepare these future teachers to be comfortable with them so they can implement them in their own classrooms. Students experienced an authentic problem in their community and thus developed stronger understandings of scientific inquiry and problem based learning, I hope the impact of this project will support the teachers of 2025 and empower students of the future to solve the problems we are creating today.

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*Having trouble getting into a good writing rhythm?*



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Join us for the **Friday Morning Writing Club** at the Faculty Center from 10 a.m. to noon.

## The Importance of Teaching Writing Skills (Even if You Are Not an English Teacher)



Kristen Schellhase is the Program Director and an Instructor for the Program in Athletic Training in COHPA. She teaches several courses in the program, including Clinical Skills for Athletic Trainers, Therapeutic Modalities in Athletic Training, Organization and Administration of Athletic Training, Sports Medicine in Field Application and Senior Seminar. She

is also the primary advisor to the program students, and advisor to the Student Athletic Training Organization (SATO).

Don't they teach English in English class anymore?" How many times have you heard this or similar comments from faculty at this and other universities? Those words are usually spoken by someone who has likely just finished grading another round of papers riddled with typos, incomplete sentences, or (heaven forbid) sentences that end in prepositions! I know I can say with certainty that I have expressed this sentiment many times in my career. It can be frustrating to have juniors and seniors in our classes who still cannot write well.

Many instructors want to think that the people who teach English (or Writing and Rhetoric, as it is called here at UCF) should be able to do it well enough to ensure that students can write well. For some reason, we hope that the skills needed to write effectively can be packaged up and handed to students in two 16-week sessions. We want to believe that the same skills students were taught in writing a Comp I opinion paper on "Why Organ Donation is Important" should translate to writing a research paper on "The Transmission Properties of the Various Therapeutic Ultrasound Conduction Mediums."

The truth of the matter is that it takes constant reinforcement and a multidisciplinary approach to teach students how to write well, especially because many majors have discipline-specific writing styles. Of course primary schools and parents lay out the writer's foundations, but the student's writing curriculum should not end with a First-Year Comp II course. Rather, it should continue within the humanities, the sciences, and in whatever discipline the student chooses.

Although I teach in the Athletic Training major, I can often be found explaining to students why they should avoid the use of passive voice (it is not wrong, but is not always appropriate) or that words do not get capitalized just because they are important. Making sure the graduates of my program can write well is high on my priority list; I know they will need

to write if they go to graduate school, and they will need to write once they get a job. If I want them to shine, I had better make sure they look good on paper. For this reason I thought I would provide a few examples of things any faculty member, regardless of discipline, can do to encourage effective writing:

- Set clear expectations for writing in your syllabus and/or in the writing assignment. If possible, enlist the efforts of all faculty teaching in the major to use the same or related expectations. Knowing that all of their instructors believe writing is a priority will motivate the students to rise to expectations.
- If at all possible, require a rough draft a week before the final due date. Have the students trade papers and critique each other's content, grammar, and spelling. Encourage students to compliment each other's work and talk about what they learned from each other's papers.
- Refer students to the University Writing Center website or for a consultation about their specific writing assignment.
- Make sure there is a short writing assignment early in the semester. Getting the red ink early will help students realize if they are not up to the expectations you have set for them. If you make it worth only a small percentage of the grade, the message will be sent without the disastrous results a poor grade on a major paper bring.
- Take the time to grade student papers thoroughly. While it is time consuming, it is crucial that students get as much feedback on this type of assignment as they do on another assessment. If students earn a poor grade without enough indication of what the specific errors were, they are more likely to repeat those errors and become frustrated.
- Mark errors within the paper, but look for patterns. Often students will make the same kind of error over and over. Noting their specific tendency at the end of the paper may help them remember their problem the next time they write. For instance, many students incorrectly use the past perfect tense (has had, had been, had shown) and repeat this error throughout the paper. I mark each one, but also make a note at the end telling them to look up "past perfect tense" and give them a simple tool to use to train themselves, such as using the "find" feature of the word document to look for the words "had" and "has" in their draft. They can look at each sentence and see if it is correct.

The goal cannot be to simply turn out students who know the facts and skills of a specific discipline. Every graduate needs to be able to communicate those ideas well. Providing clear expectations and more feedback will go a long way toward accomplishing that goal. It takes faculty of every discipline to reinforce writing skills and ensure that all graduates of UCF are prepared.

## Mentoring: Lessons Learned from my Life

### Mentors

Lisa Dieker



Lisa Dieker is a Professor and Lockheed Martin Eminent Scholar in UCF's College of Education. She received her undergraduate and master's degree from Eastern Illinois University and her Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. Her primary area of research is collaboration between general and special education at the secondary level.

I humbly write this article to share what I have been taught by many great mentors throughout my life starting with my mother and continuing today with great colleagues at UCF. I had the privilege of winning the UCF Graduate Mentoring Award this past year, which was a great honor especially since my past doctoral students nominated me. When the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning asked me to write a short piece on mentoring, I decide to share not what I know, but what I have been taught along the way. Very early on in life, my mother led by example, as a great mother and a parent of a child with a disability. I then married a gentleman whose mother also is the parent of a child with a disability. I then became a teacher of students with special needs and was mentored through my undergraduate and graduate program by an advisor who insisted that after I had teaching experience I would get a doctorate. A great advisor at the University of Illinois then mentored me. I began my career with a formal mentoring program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee where I had an official mentor outside of my college and two mentors within my college to ensure I was successful as a new professor. In 2002, I came to UCF, where mentors have been abundant in my life from deans to department chairs to terrific colleagues within the College of Education as well as throughout campus and in the community.

What have I learned about mentoring from all of these examples is what I believe in today—great mentors do not tell you what to do—instead, they lead by example. When asked to write about what I believe about mentoring, I refer back to a very basic philosophy each one of these formal and informal mentors has shown me: they are great not in what they say but in *what they do*. I am the first to sacrifice my time for students, and yet always try to show my students the importance of balance. My primary example focuses on a strong commitment to go above and beyond the job, yet showing a balance of work in teaching, research and service, much like the great mentors I have had and continue to have in my life. I believe this balance must demonstrate to students that they must not put work commitments before

their own health or that of their families. I start all my classes as a professor as well as my first meeting with my doctoral students reminding them: “You pay my paycheck.” I then share that my students come first right behind God and my family. I try to share the struggles I have in making decisions as a mother of a child with a disability as well as a wife and a faculty member. Too many times students, especially graduate students, only see the “faculty” side of getting an advanced degree. However, the great mentors in my life shared and continue to share and demonstrate the importance of a healthy balanced life, however a student might define that balance for him or herself.

Beyond simply leading by example, my mentors have taught me time and time again to model the highest level of academic integrity in all relationships with students. I am always there to support students, but much like my mentors in life have expected from me, students must learn to support themselves quickly as they will leave UCF and need to be successful on their own. I constantly try to remind graduate students, whether they will be teachers or faculty members, that as soon as they graduate they will move immediately from mentee into the instant role of mentor, where I expect them to also lead by example.

The last bit of wisdom to share is a lesson my mentors have taught me that I believe is one of the most important of all. I feel a great mentor both listens and learns from his or her mentee. With having been at UCF in the role of exceptional education Ph.D. program coordinator almost since the program began, I along with my colleagues have mentored a range of students with disabilities and a range of students from numerous cultural backgrounds. I am quick to tell students who are from very diverse backgrounds that I am not perfect, and if I say or do anything to offend you let me know as I want to learn from you as much as you are here to learn from me. I have the privilege to mentor students who are twice exceptional in that they are getting doctorate degrees and that they represent various areas of disability. In addition, I have had the privilege to learn from students from many different cultures in the last seven years, I have realized mentoring means being willing to grow as much and many times even more than your mentee. The ultimate lesson my mentors have taught me is that to lead by example is admitting you can always learn and grow in every opportunity you are given in life. I hope these small kernels of wisdom that I have learned from my great mentors are helpful as you learn from and grow with your mentees while serving as a mentor at UCF.

## Campus Quick References

**Who is my first contact for teaching and learning questions?**

Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning  
[www.fcfl.ucf.edu](http://www.fcfl.ucf.edu)  
407-823-3544

**How can I find my way around the UCF campus?**

Campus Map  
[campusmap.ucf.edu](http://campusmap.ucf.edu)

**How do I know when the semester starts? Ends? When do I give my final exams?**

Academic Calendar  
[www.registrar.sdes.ucf.edu/calendar/academic](http://www.registrar.sdes.ucf.edu/calendar/academic)  
[www.registrar.sdes.ucf.edu/calendar/exam](http://www.registrar.sdes.ucf.edu/calendar/exam)

**What is the difference between my PID and my NID?**

Your PID is used at [my.ucf.edu](http://my.ucf.edu)  
Your NID is used for e-mail.

**Where do I get my UCF ID card?**

UCF Card Office  
[www.ucfcard.ucf.edu](http://www.ucfcard.ucf.edu)  
407-823-2100

**Where do I get a parking decal?**

Parking Services  
[parking.ucf.edu](http://parking.ucf.edu)  
407-823-5813

**What do I do regarding seriously disruptive students or emergencies?**

Police Department  
[police.ucf.edu](http://police.ucf.edu)  
407-823-5555

**What is the Faculty Union?**

United Faculty of Florida-UCF Chapter  
[www.ufffucf.org](http://www.ufffucf.org)

**Where do I go for help with multimedia classroom and Tegrity training, video conference and faculty photography support, slide and high-speed scanning, video and audio recording and editing, and large format archival printing and laminating?**

Office of Instructional Resources  
[www.oir.ucf.edu](http://www.oir.ucf.edu)  
407-823-2571

**Where do I go to develop online materials for a course, or to learn how to use Webcourses?**

Center for Distributed Learning  
[teach.ucf.edu](http://teach.ucf.edu)  
407-823-3718

**How do I place books on reserve for my class?**

Library  
[library.ucf.edu](http://library.ucf.edu)  
Books: 407-823-5209; Media: 407-823-4322

**Whom can I call for help with dial-up Internet, wireless Internet, on-campus Internet, e-mail?**

Service Desk  
[helpdesk.ucf.edu](http://helpdesk.ucf.edu)  
407-823-5117

**How can I access my Outlook e-mail from any computer with an Internet connection?**

Login at [webmail.ucf.edu](http://webmail.ucf.edu) with your username and password.

**How do I make sure the bookstore carries my textbook?**

UCF Bookstore  
[www.bookstore.ucf.edu](http://www.bookstore.ucf.edu)  
407-823-2665

**Does UCF have a gym for faculty to use?**

Wellness Research Center  
[pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~wrcenter](http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~wrcenter)  
407-823-3509

**How do I buy tickets for UCF athletic events?**  
Athletic Ticket Office  
<http://ucfathletics.cstv.com/tickets/ucf-tickets.html>  
407-823-4653

**How do I open a UCF Credit Union account?**

UCF Credit Union  
<http://www.ucffedeu.org>  
407-823-3176

**Where can I send my students when they need help with their writing for my course?**

University Writing Center  
[www.uwc.ucf.edu](http://www.uwc.ucf.edu)  
407-823-2197

**Where can my students go for tutoring or supplemental instruction?**

Student Academic Resource Center  
[www.sarc.sdes.ucf.edu](http://www.sarc.sdes.ucf.edu)  
407-823-5130

**Where can students go to find a job after graduation?**

Career Services  
[www.career.ucf.edu](http://www.career.ucf.edu)  
407-823-2361

**With whom do I work to help accommodate students with disabilities?**

Student Disability Services  
[www.sds.ucf.edu](http://www.sds.ucf.edu)  
407-823-2371

**Where can I refer a student who is having emotional difficulties for counseling?**

Counseling & Testing Center  
[www.counseling.sdes.ucf.edu](http://www.counseling.sdes.ucf.edu)  
407-823-2811

**Where can I refer a student who needs medical care?**

Student Health Center  
[www.hs.sdes.ucf.edu](http://www.hs.sdes.ucf.edu)  
407-823-2701

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## ***Submissions***

The *Faculty Focus* is a publication for all instructors at the University of Central Florida. This includes full-time and part-time faculty and teaching assistants at all UCF campuses. Its purpose is to provide an exchange of ideas on teaching and learning for the university's community of teachers and scholars. It is envisioned that this publication will inspire more dialogue among faculty whether in hallway discussions, departmental meetings, or in written articles. This represents an opportunity for faculty members to reach their peers throughout the growing UCF community. The *Faculty Focus* invites you to contribute your ideas on teaching and learning in a short essay.

See the guidelines for submission online at <<http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/Publications/FacultyFocus/submission.php>>. Please send your submissions to [fctl@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:fctl@mail.ucf.edu).

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Center*

**Check us out online!  
[www.fctl.ucf.edu](http://www.fctl.ucf.edu)**



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Karen L. Smith Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning  
P.O. Box 160066 CL1-207  
Orlando, FL 32816-0066  
407-823-3544