Faculty Focus

Volume 3 Number 1 January 2004

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Value Systems and Ivory Tower Cowardice

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John Bell, Associate Professor of Theatre and the Coordinator of Musical Theatre, received his MFA in Musical Theatre from San Diego State University and his BM degree in Music from Ohio Wesleyan University. John has worked extensively as an actor, director, choreographer, musical director, conductor and composer. He is also a published scholar on the work and career of Stephen Sondheim with whom he interned on the world premiere of *Into The Woods.*

A few years ago, after a student in my Musical Theatre Performance class had finished presenting his prepared song, a fellow student replied supportively, "That was awesome!" Because the performer's work had been respectable but not outstanding, I engaged the class in a brief discourse on the accurate use of language. "Do you know the correct meaning of the word awesome?" I asked. "It means to inspire awe. Do you know what awe is? It refers to amazing, magnificent wonder." While Billy's presentation showed effort and application, it didn't, in even the best sense, come close to inspiring amazing, magnificent wonder." I suppose Billy was insulted. I tried to placate Billy by reinforcing that his work was progressing on a path toward greater achievement. But the real issue then and plaguing education now is the value scale being used to assess quality.

There has been a shift in the past forty years, a shift characterized by lowered expectation that has coincided with a technological boom reinforcing the "me" generation's insistence that everything be proffered quickly and conveniently. In short, education is now expected to be easy, easy for the students, easy for the teachers, and easy for the administrators. And in making education easy, the value system has become skewed.

An "A" used to represent exceptional achievement. A "B" used to represent above average achievement. A "C" used to represent average achievement. Now, in an attempt to make education comfortable, an "A" is awarded for slightly above average output and a "B" is doled out for average levels of productivity. Or to an even greater extreme, there are those who say that "A's" stand for average and "B's" stand for breathing.

Some say grade inflation started in the 1960's when professors, not wanting to accept responsibility for students flunking out of school and having to go into the jungles of Vietnam, began adjusting grades upward. Considering life and death consequences, a little grade inflation seemed benign. Some might say it's the result of the corporatization of the educational system. That is, parents and students feel entitled to being treated like consumers. In exchange for high tuition costs, they deserve the elevated grades which can be cashed in on better odds at employment. Never mind that employers report that they are unable to discern quality employees from average employees because they all possess transcripts laden with "A's" and "B's." Some might say it's faculty members' way of ensuring positive student evaluations, desired ammunition in the tenure process and defense against social criticism and demands for accountability. Some educators, considering themselves noble and above the fray, might assert that administrators pressure them to inflate grades in an attempt to build assessment data which can be touted as demonstration that the school is achieving its objectives. This results in higher enrollment and operating dollars.

Most likely all of these viewpoints hold truth. But none of them matter. The problem is that a skewed value system renders the basic

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tenets of the American educational system ineffective. The model for American education is, basically, students enter school assuming they'll encounter expert instruction. The teacher is thereby charged to design a course of study to which a student is asked to make application. And in the end, the instructor assesses the application and/or output.

In a different time teachers were given the authority and autonomy to design a course of study which would prove challenging. A challenge, by its very nature, is difficult, that is, the opposite of easy. And, instructors were expected to pass judgment, that is, to inform the student that the work was exceptional, good, mediocre or unacceptable. Teachers designed a course of study, judged student output and communicated that judgment in an objective context.

As this past century evolved, much of that model changed. First and foremost, education has become about self esteem. Judgment has been judged detrimental. Courses of study have asked less of students. Instead of being forced, by design of an expert, to contemplate one's capacity, students are now asked to fulfill tasks comfortably within reach.

To truly contemplate capacity, one has to confront that which challenges one's ability. In doing so, fears, stakes and strategies are weighed. Self-learning occurs on many levels. A choice not to attempt the challenge teaches about limitation. A failed attempt instructs about the effectiveness of choices or the power of fear. And success, the triumph over doubt, transforms a person's notion of self and makes an impression. Such events stay with a person and form another important stitch in the fabric of life learning. And the instructor who designed the challenge and assessed the outcome with complete integrity will be remembered.

I remember going to an organ lesson in college unprepared. I knew my organ teacher was a marvelous musician but he was a kind man who seemed more interested in my liking him than in treating me with the same standards which he himself had to develop to become the fine artist he had become. I went into the lesson unprepared. The instructor, seeing my increasing frustration, tried to pacify and, at the same time, encourage me. What he should have done was thrown me out of the studio and told me to come back when I was ready and willing to work up to my potential. The more he didn't do that, the more angry I became. I threw myself out of the lesson, feigning that I was so frustrated at my lack of ability that I simply couldn't stay and continue. To this day I don't know which upsets me more: my own pathetic, childish game-playing or my professor's inability or unwillingness to hold me responsible for the contemplation of my capacity. I do remember this teacher but not because I value his teaching.

Conversely, I recall the day in one of my graduate seminar classes when I walked in and the professor announced that I would be presenting my oral presentation on an assigned topic to the class. Having misread the syllabus, I hadn't prepared my presentation. I had thought it was due a week later. The instructor released the class as there was no subject to be covered that day and informed me I would receive an "F" for the assignment, a major percentage of my course grade. I left, and, after trying to figure out how the "failure" would impact my course grade, overall GPA and graduate standing, I simply realized that the instructor was absolutely right in his strict response to the situation. I had not been careful or responsible, and not only had it diminished my own educational experience, but it had also diminished the educational experience of my peers. It was right that I experienced extreme consequence. The lessons I learned from that experience were simple and fundamental but they taught me much about myself and they have stayed with me to this day. I count that instructor as one of my best, not because of what he taught me about the subject matter of the course, but because he wasn't afraid to let the learning spill out into the realm of life. He also didn't care if I liked him. That liberated his power as a teacher and I was the beneficiary.

I've been teaching now for fifteen years. When I first started, I examined my teaching evaluations and noted that, while a few students were frustrated by the work load or the strict grading policies, most students found value in the overall structure and rigor of the course. As the years have passed, I've noticed that more and more of the students are complaining about the work load and the high standard to which they are being held. As a result my teaching evaluations have statistically fallen. At first this concerned me. I considered my teaching. Was I too strict? Was I less clear and careful? Was I expecting too much? Was I not teaching the content sufficiently. The result of my self-reflection, not surprisingly I suppose, was that I was not teaching with any less consistency or integrity. So, naturally I concluded that students have become less and less willing to respond to my brand of educational rigor. Now, I consider it a mark of my success that my teaching evaluations are less favorable. I'll worry that I'm softening if my evaluations improve. And in the meantime, I keep my eyes open for those increasingly rare students who hold their gaze long enough to communicate some sub-textual desire to be challenged and engaged on a deeper level. Those students still exist. There are just fewer of them with each passing year.

My experiences in education have made two things clear to me. With every passing year students want and expect to have to do less in the educational process, while fewer teachers have the courage to hold the line on value systems and assessment. Countless occasions have passed wherein a group of teachers all sit around and complain about their students' performance in their classes. And, in this safe little gathering of educators, they all quickly rise upon their soapbox and proclaim how terrible the problem is and portray themselves as the noble warriors who will fend off such social tide by their strict and swift response. But when faced with the actual grading, most of these teachers are unable to truly assess average or below average work for what it is. Fear of confrontation and reprisal is too great. And so these proclaimers of standards soften, respond to student expectations by shifting their assessments toward the positive. It's

cowardice and this is lamentable because it is the one area where immediate reversal of grade inflation can most efficiently occur. Teachers have to be willing to look students, parents and administrators in the eye and tell them that inadequate application and output is not good enough. An "A" must stand for awesome. Period.

As I read these words, I realize that this essay seems self-serving, that I present myself as a good teacher. I also realize that many of my pedagogical views emerge in this writing and that there are, most likely, many educational theorists who will contest these views from the most philosophical of foundations. So be it. The truth is that I do think I'm a good teacher and I think it's fine for a good teacher to think and say that about him or herself. In fact, I think teachers have been attacked and vilified on so many fronts that there's little evidence these days that good teachers are willing to stand up for their field and for themselves. This has to change. Integrity takes courage and it results in pride.

The Academic Value of Internships

Terri Fine

Terri Susan Fine has been on the UCF faculty since 1989. She has served on numerous teaching award committees during that time. Her own interests focus on American politics with an emphasis on women and politics, political parties and public opinion.

This year I am serving as the Interim Internship Coordinator for the Political Science Department while our permanent Internship Coordinator is on sabbatical in Washington, DC. In my temporary role, I have had the opportunity to see the ins and outs of where students intern, where they find the internship experience useful, and how they perceive their role in politics based on the political science course work taken before enrolling in the program and going out in the field. The experiences are diverse as there are so many local public and private offices that partner with us. This perspective, while it gives me great information, does not look at the big picture. What is the big picture? For internships, it is important to see how an internship fits in with a student's overall academic experience.

About one and one-half years ago, Dr. Aubrey Jewett and I decided to take an empirical look at student performance. Dr. Jewett is the permanent internship coordinator. This research experience provided excellent preparation for me to take on the internship program this year.

We started by identifying all students who had graduated the previous year (Fall 2001-Spring 2002) with a Political Science degree. We then used academic audits to identify which students had completed internships and which had not. Through the use of on-line transcripts, we could identify in which semester students completed internships, how many credit hours of internship were given, how many internships were completed (if more than one), and the grades received for these internships. We also looked at every student's credit hour load, overall GPA and grade received in the internship. These data allowed us to answer some questions about the value of internships.

We wanted to look at this aspect of the value of internships because so many others have looked at internships from one of two other perspectives. The first perspective argues that students gain real world experience by seeing how various offices and programs function. They develop networks of persons who might support them in the future. This support might come in the form of a job offer, mentoring, or reference letters. The focus here is that the experience itself has value. A second perspective suggests that the internship gives students an edge once they graduate. According to this argument, students seeking employment opportunities and professional school will find that evaluators look favorably on this experience.

Yet there is a third perspective that we found worth pursuing, and one that other departments and programs might find useful as they fine tune or develop internship programs. This third perspective looks at whether the internship itself had academic value separate and apart from the actual experience. For example, did students perform better in their classes before or after they completed the internship?

Our results showed differences between the intern and non-intern group. First, GPA at graduation was somewhat higher among interns than among those who did not intern. GPA in the major was also higher among those who completed internships than those who did not. This can be explained by two factors: first, a large proportion of the internship grade is usually based on work at the internship site. And, much like children who behave better when visiting their friends or grandma than they do at home, many students behave better at their internship site than they do here on campus. For example, I have students this semester who are taking my class and who are enrolled in an internship. If their attendance was as bad for the internship site as it has been for my class, I'm sure that I would have heard from their internship supervisor by now. So, students may earn an "A" in an internship even if they are generally "B" students. Second, even though the political science department does not require a minimum GPA in order to participate in the internship program, stronger students may pursue internships than may weaker students. Stronger students may also have an easier time balancing their schedules.

We also found a higher percentage of women among the interns than among the non-interns. Among those who interned, 65% were women. By contrast, 45% of those who did not intern were women. These findings suggest that internships may represent a unique opportunity for female

students. Greater "real world" participation and experience among women may be a factor in confronting the barriers that they face in the political world.

We also found that student academic performance improved the semester or semesters following their internship. We attributed this to increased motivation among students once they realized that good grades and good writing and research skills were necessary for success in the real world. While we did not survey the students, we did see a distinct pattern of improvement over time, particularly after the internship, that we did not see in corresponding semesters (i.e. last year or last semester) among those students who did not complete internships. The lessons of this small research project are many. We saw a particular value for women students that may hold true in other male-dominated disciplines along with evidence that a break away from the classroom may have improved later classroom performance and motivation.

The "Unplugged Day"

Denver Severt

Dr. Denver Severt, Associate Professor in the Rosen School of Hospitality Management, has had 25 years experience in all phases of the restaurant industry from front-line service positions to general manager positions. Denver teaches guest services management, managerial accounting, and financial accounting. He has 8 years university teaching experience and loves interacting and helping students see and begin to reach for their true potential.

There is always that time in the semester when there is student fatigue or monotony and something new is needed. As a professor who subscribes to the view that teaching involves drawing information out of students as well as giving information to students, I realize that many times I do not get enough opportunities to draw certain truths from the students, or to share with them certain truths about me. This is particularly true with larger classes.

To combat this and the mid-semester monotony, to establish an unexpected classroom atmosphere, and to foster relationships beyond subject matter, I have instituted the unplugged day. It is unannounced and a purposeful surprise for students. On this day, students come either after an exam or with some expectation of what we will do. Usually, I choose the heart of the semester because fatigue and boredom are aggressive enemies to learning, especially after the first series of midterms has flowed across the campus.

I tell the students we will change our pace. I tell them that I use this day to add to the value they receive from their education and I make sure they know that this time is just as sacred to me as a normal class. With that said, I ask them to place their books underneath the desk leaving one sheet of paper on the desk. I make sure no technology is on and I usually position myself more vulnerably than usual—in a chair or sitting on a desk.

Next, I ask students to write any question they may have for me. Everyone must write a question. My attempt and strategy is to capture any salient topics that are on their minds. They turn the questions in. I sort the questions because some will be identical. One by one, I answer the questions. I have received much positive feedback from the unplugged class, and I glean new information and questions for students. Many students recall the day as fun and laid-back yet enjoyable.

I save the questions that I do not get to answer and I read and answer them randomly during the beginning or end of future classes. Not only does this help the students understand more about me but it helps me to understand the pulse of my courses and my students.

Some of the questions I receive include:

(Unrelated to class...)

- Define your career path.
- Why did you choose this field?
- Why did you decide to be a teacher?
- What is involved in becoming a professor?
- What advice would you give to students at this juncture in their education?
- What do you do for fun?
- What has been the happiest day of your life?
- What has been the saddest day of your life?
- What accomplishment are you most proud of?
- How do we compare to other students you have taught?
- What was your career path?
- Why do you teach?

(Related to class...)

- Will you be willing to offer a review before the next exam?
- Would you explain problem 9, number 4 again?
- Do you allow any type of extra credit?

Another variation on the unplugged day is to ask students to write questions to other students in the class. Again, I read the questions and other students volunteer to answer the questions. As a variation on unplugged I have used half the time for questions to peers and half the time for questions to me. Unplugged has dramatically increased the connectivity in my classes and I would recommend it to anyone. For additional chat about this activity, feel free to e-mail me at Dsevert@mail.ucf.edu.

Collaborative Writing

Nancy Stanlick & Michael Strawser

Dr. Nancy Stanlick, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, received a 2003 College of Arts and Sciences Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award and the UCF Excellence in Teaching with Technology Award. Dr. Stanlick is currently teaching American Philosophy and Ethical Theory, and she has recently co-authored a two volume work entitled *Philosophy in America*, published by Pearson Prentice-Hall, 2004.

Dr. Michael Strawser, Visiting Instructor of Philosophy, is enjoying his second year at UCF after teaching for a decade in Sweden. Dr. Strawser has published a book on Kierkegaard's philosophy and is currently teaching three sections of Introduction to Philosophy and Modern Philosophy. In the past summer semester he had his Introduction to Philosophy students cooperate to create their own philosophy textbook.

Tired of grading hundreds of term papers, but reluctant to give up the ideal that students should write? Here are a pair of ideas formulated during FCTL's Winter Faculty Development Conference and being put into practice this semester that, when adapted to your own needs, may lighten your load and, more importantly, benefit the students in the process.

The first idea is the implementation of a "team writing" project in large sections of Introduction to Philosophy (the largest has 150 students), which will replace an individual paper. First, from the class textbook *Twenty Questions* (an anthology of primary sources) students will be asked to rank individually their top three questions, write a brief justification for their first choices, and also note their majors. Based on these responses, teams of four will then be formed. The teams will then cooperate to complete the writing assignment. A similar procedure could be followed in most classes where students reflect on the class content and choose the material (chapter, subject, etc.) they are most interested in exploring. Forming teams in this way avoids the problems of allowing students to form their own teams (e.g., friendship ties) or forming teams at random (e.g., uninterested team members).

The team writing assignment will consist of the following parts. First, there will be a one-page introduction to the philosophical question (some examples from the text are "What is the right thing for me to do?" "Does religion give meaning to my life?" "I like it, but is it art?"), including a clarification of the question, a discussion of its significance, and an identification of the method and sources. Initially, each student will be required to write a separate introduction, and then one class period will be allotted to provide students with the opportunity to discuss how their separate introductions could most fittingly be woven into one text.

Second, the body of the paper will consist of each team member's separate critical analysis of a selection from the class textbook that deals with the question. Here again students will have time in class to meet and discuss their readings and evaluations, which should broaden and deepen each student's reflections on the question. The time spent on teamwork in class will also be valuable for the instructor to deal with any problems that the group may be experiencing. Of course, students will be expected to collaborate outside of the classroom as well, in order to read and improve each other's writing.

Third, the conclusion of the paper will consist of each team member's one-page individual response or solution to the question reflecting his or her understanding of the material contained in the body of the paper. Again, students will be required to read and discuss each other's responses and will be given some class time to do so. Students will be given a team writing checklist at the outset of the project, which they will sign and hand in with their finished thirteen-page paper.

The benefits of this process are many and cannot all be described in this small space. Although students will write less, individually, their writing should be more focused, and they will spend considerable time discussing each other's writing. Such an implicit peer evaluation process should improve the clarity and overall quality of the students' writing—not to mention their learning of the content—while also preventing the possibilities of plagiarized papers. Additionally, it is to be expected (since research has shown it to be the case) that the vast majority of students will benefit from interacting with each other and will value and take pride in their contributions to a successfully completed project.

The second collaborative writing strategy is an on-line research component of two courses (American Philosophy and Ethical Theory), which will facilitate and enhance student writing as well as limit significantly the chance of plagiarism such as that found in traditional research papers. In a manner similar to that expressed above for Introduction to Philosophy, students will submit an interest assessment form listing the four term paper topics (available in the course syllabus online) in which they are most interested, and based on these responses, collaborative groups of 4-5 students per topic will be created. All collaborative work on these papers is to be discussed online in WebCT in discussion boards and chat rooms. The presentation area of WebCT will be used for presentation of the final papers. Final papers will also be submitted by the "chair" of the collaborative research group for all the members of the group.

Preparation of sections of the papers begins in the third week of January. One student will be appointed chair of the group and will be responsible for coordinating all the members of the group, and submitting the final paper on WebCT. Two students will write interpretive summaries of primary sources on the topic to which they are assigned, and three others will write critical appraisals of a problem or reading. Each student submits their 3-4 page section of the paper individually, and ultimately all the sections will be combined into one substantial paper consisting of an introduction (written collaboratively by all group members), a summary of the problem, question, or concept that is the primary topic of the paper (created by combining the two students' interpretive summaries), and three separate critical appraisals of the problem, question or concept written individually by three group members. Finally, all the group members will write the conclusion of the paper, indicating the implications or importance of the problem about which they have written. All members of the group will engage in the process of combining the separately written sections of the paper and ensuring that there are clear transitions between sections, checking for errors, and refining arguments and clarifying explanations. The bibliography is the last section of the paper, listing in appropriate format all the works used by all the students who are members of the group.

"Quality control" will be achieved in a four-part process in grading. First, all members of the group submit their individual sections of the paper prior to the final paper's submission. This ensures that every member of the group has written his or her own section and has done so early enough that all members of the group have the opportunity to read and respond to every other member's contribution. Second, all group members evaluate their own work as well as the work of others in the collaborative group. Third, the draft versions of individual sections of the paper will be evaluated, and then assigned not only an individual grade for the particular section a student has written, but also (fourth) a group AND individual grade based on the quality of the final paper that is submitted by the group.

In total, the final collaborative research paper, preliminary and group work, and student and instructor evaluations of collaborative and individual work constitute 35% of each student's grade for the course. Students see in this process that they are graded both on their individual contributions and the quality of the final product submitted by the group, enhancing cooperative strategies in research, critical reading and writing, and understanding of the varied ways in which individuals may approach, understand, and critically evaluate a particular problem or concept that is part of course content.

The goal of collaborative writing and research is at least fourfold. First, each student has the opportunity to delve deeply into the particular topic about which they are most interested. Second, every student gains valuable experience in working collaboratively with others. Third, students engage in critical appraisal not only of the topic of their paper, but also of the work of others, demonstrating and honing their own skills in critical reading and writing. Fourth, the overall quality of papers should improve dramatically given that all students in the group will be required to ensure the readability of prose and the quality of argumentation presented by themselves and by others.

We are hopeful that the collaborative research strategies that we are developing and have developed will prove useful in a variety of courses in a variety of settings. Especially in philosophy, where quality of argumentation is essential, we are hopeful that our students will gain an appreciation of and skill in producing philosophical argumentation that will serve them in all of their academic pursuits.

Engaging Students by Making Classroom Discussions Real: Having Students Relate Media to Course Topics

Jill Davis

Jill Davis is a visiting instructor in the School of Social Work where she teaches both graduate and undergraduate courses. She received her MSW from UCF and has clinical work experience as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and a Registered Play Therapist. Jill is a regular visitor at the Faculty Center to enhance her abilities in both student engagement and learning outcomes.

Throughout my three years of university teaching experience, students have commented positively that I am able to bring the subject of social work to life with real-world examples. I use many strategies to do so: inviting guest speakers from community social work agencies, assigning students to visit a local agency, and bringing in videos and even *Judging Amy* clips that depict the work of social workers.

Last fall I was inspired at a Faculty Center Teaching Circle meeting by Mary Macklem of the Music Department, who discussed having students bring in their favorite music to share with their Enjoyment of Music class. I decided that having students bring in songs or other forms of media that discuss issues relevant to social workers (which is practically everything and anything) would be an engaging way to get them to connect our course topics to the everyday world around them. For full credit, students not only shared the media item with the class but had to link it back to a particular topic from class discussions.

Soon, students were bringing in articles from newspapers, magazines, and the web, CDs and lyrics, poems, and even movie clips and relating them back to issues we had covered in class. One student brought in an article from the web about a child who was sexually abused by an older student on

the school bus and stated it as an example that children are most often abused by someone that they know and trust, and not by a stranger as is commonly thought. Another student brought in the movie *What Has Love Got to Do with It* depicting Tina Turner's abusive relationship with her now ex-husband cued up to the scene where Tina and Ike are beating each other in the backseat of a limo. Tina is left with a swollen eye and bloody face, and she finally gets the courage to leave Ike while he is sleeping. The student related the scene back to the dynamics of power and control and the escalating violence of spouse abuse.

Yes, my students laughed when I read the lyrics of a rap song and struggled with the vernacular. But I was able to get my students to watch for references to course topics in their everyday lives. And students who are active and engaged in their educational experiences learn more. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) asserts that the level of student engagement is an accurate indicator of academic quality. Having students relate media to course topics meets three of the five NSSE benchmarks of effective educational practice:

- Enriching educational experiences
- Student-faculty interaction
- Active and collaborative learning.

In this way, the students not only got a real-world glimpse of social work practice and issues, but they were actively finding those examples and sharing them with their classmates. In addition to engaging students in their own and peer-peer learning, the assignment also helped students utilize critical thinking skills by having them identify topics from course materials in their everyday lives and reflect on how those issues relate to class discussions. And instead of having the connections explained to them, students were responsible for searching out references that could give them a better concept of social work practice and issues, which was enriching to students and me alike.

Inquiry-Based Learning through Webquests: Hoping to Pass the Torch

Kerry Purmensky

Kerry Purmensky is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, and a 2004 UCF Fellow of the Academy. She is interested in transformative practices in preK-12 classrooms.

It would be difficult to pinpoint only one reason that I started the process of transforming a course for pre-service teachers from one of knowledge-based materials to one of inquiry-based projects. Reading research on educational practices, conducting your own research in the classroom, paying attention to what your colleagues are doing, and attending workshops on the scholarship of teaching and learning all have serious consequences—they nag at your psyche constantly to review, revise and improve your teaching practices. This past Faculty Center Winter Conference provided me with the extra time and training I needed to instigate this process, starting one task at a time.

In my case, I have been training pre-service and in-service teachers for about 12 years. Regardless of the preparation for pre-service teachers, the reality of in-service teaching can be a rude awakening—that first year alone in front of a classroom. We have long known that teacher shortage is not always related to the number of teachers we are training, but the number of teachers we are retaining. If we are losing teachers after just a few years in the profession, how can we vitalize this critical pre-service training period to make it more relevant, more preparatory for teachers? My quest became, what could I accomplish in only one semester to better prepare teachers for the reality of the classroom?

My focus has centered on three concepts that I thought were vital. First, if I wanted students to be prepared for excellent teaching, I had to not only model it but also allow students to practice it. The old adage continues to hold true in research today, that we retain 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 30% of what we see, 70% of what we say, 80% of what we do, and 90% of what we teach. Second, engaging all students in the tasks I would set out for them was essential. They may work hard knowing their grade depends on it, but that would only further fragment the class into its usual status quo—"A" students doing excellent work, "B" students doing enough to get by without really challenging themselves, and "C" students just meeting the minimum requirements. I wanted to challenge the students to break their comfort mold, and see the work as vital to their careers, not their grades. Third, infusing technology was a must. National surveys have all indicated that we are continuing to make strides in bringing computers into our public schools, but anywhere from 30-70% of teachers indicate they are not getting the training they need to utilize the technology to its fullest.

Having used Webquests in the past to engage high school ESL students in cooperative work, I focused on this inquiry-based project methodology as very adaptable to my population. The method has certain qualities that I thought were perfect to encourage imitation. It is engaging because it frames tasks as a quest; it has a simple, organized structure that is easily adaptable to any discipline; and it uses computer technology, but does not need any special hardware, software or advanced training. My goal from the beginning was to implement it in a way that would encourage students to one day infuse it into their own instructional repertoire. Because Webquests are a method of teaching that engages students in asking questions and finding solutions, involves a process of investigation which enhances students' ability to retrieve real-world information (data-mining), and promotes sharing findings with others in an organized way, and is a

powerful tool for teachers. I hoped to take it further, though, and make the task thoroughly engaging, yet accessible enough to be replicated in any content-based classroom, be it science, English, or math.

WebQuests were developed in 1995 at San Diego State University by Bernie Dodge and Tom March (http://webquest.sdsu.edu/). Most contain an introduction that sets a motivational goal and provides background information, a task that is engaging, a set of information sources needed to complete the task via the Internet, a description of the process the learners should go through in accomplishing the task, guidance on how to organize and present the information, and a conclusion that leads to further inquiry and presentation. Excellent models of award-winning Webquests can be found at http://webquest.org/.

Initially, I am using a Webquest for students to create lesson plans that they can teach to their classmates. Transforming my course will take time, and I want to take one step at a time, evaluate my results, and then make informed decisions as to the effectiveness of what I am doing. In education we love change and new trends, but before I lead my class down a rosy new path, I want to make sure that path is worth taking. In Stage I of this plan, for their first group Webquest, the students will each take on a role in order to complete their given task of creating an ESOL-infused (English for Speakers of Other Languages) lesson plan for a content area. They will have to teach this lesson plan to the other students in the class and judge (defend) the quality of their own work. In Stage II, they will be creating their own Webquest to use in the classroom.

There is only one way I have deviated from the norm in this task. I do think rubrics are an excellent tool for defining the criteria upon which to judge student work. As I mentioned, though, I am concerned about students defining their work according to comfortable molds. For this Webquest, my rubric, if it can be called that, only defines excellent work, the only work that is acceptable in this project. My hope is that this will encourage students to move past creating work that fits into any other category.

My goal is to create a momentum that will eventually infuse every task for this course. It is a work in progress, but the draft of my webquest can be found at www.arrowstudio.com/webquest.

What is the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)?

Alison Morrison-Shetlar

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is research into educational practices that inform our teaching and give evidence of student learning in the classroom environment we create. Research will include the rigorous assessment of student learning and will lead to the documentation, presentation and publication of research findings to the educational community at large. In the 1990s, Ernest Boyer wrote, "the most important obligation now confronting the nation's colleges and universities is to break out of the tired old teaching-versus-research debate and define, in more creative ways, what it means to be a scholar. It's time to recognize the full range of faculty talent and the great diversity of functions higher education must perform."

To start a university-wide discussion about the role of SoTL at UCF, Provost Dr. Terry Hickey invited Dr. Tom Angelo to be our first speaker in the distinguished lecture series. Dr. Angelo is a nationally and internationally recognized and respected leader in SoTL and has written/coauthored books related to SoTL and classroom assessment. Over 100 participants (faculty, chairs and deans) attended sessions on January 16, 2004 and engaged in learning classroom assessment techniques, the role of SoTL in disseminating effective teaching practices, and discussion on examples of SoTL projects/research.

From the evaluations, the most commonly asked questions were "Will SoTL be valued in my discipline/department?" "How do I get support if I want to start a research project on T & L?" and "What grants are out there that would support this research?" The responses to these concerns are discipline-specific and vary among colleges. Talk to your chair to find out how SoTL will be received by your college and promotion committee before engaging in this type of research. NSF, NIH, and many other funding agencies offer grant opportunities for the scholarship of teaching and learning. The Faculty Center can help you define a project and offer advice with grant preparation, while Vaidy Vaidyanathan in the Office of Research can help you identify grants that will support your research.

One example of SoTL was a study by a physics professor who presented a short lecture on a concept, then asked the students to think about a given application of the concept. On a scantron, the students gave their answer to the question as well as rated their perceived confidence in that answer. Students were then asked to convince one of their peers that their answer was correct, then try the question and rate their confidence again on the same scantron. Over a very short time span, students were gaining confidence in their own ability to problem-solve, more often staying with their original answer. The whole process took 3-4 minutes, but the feedback from the scantrons and afterwards from student interviews indicated increased engagement in the subject matter, increased confidence in problem solving, and increased attendance in class. Subsequently, student success on tests and exams using similar types of problem-solving questions revealed increased student achievement. This "Think/Pair/Share" strategy is now used widely as an effective learning tool in many disciplines. There are many such strategies available to faculty that are well researched and documented. The Faculty Center provides workshops on many of these strategies with hands-on activities and research evidence of their effectiveness.

So, How Many Hours Do You Think Your Students Spend on Your Class?

The first strategic goal of the university stipulates a commitment to UCF's offering the best undergraduate education in Florida. The Strategic Initiative Statement makes the promise to offer the "highest quality undergraduate education to a diverse student population by integrating curriculum, student development, and support services into a unique UCF experience that makes an education at UCF distinctive from that offered by other universities." In order to best determine the current level of student engagement, the university will conduct the NSSE, National Survey of Student Engagement. The NSSE will complement statistics on grades, student credit hours, and numbers of diplomas granted, by asking students questions, for example, how much time they study each week; how much support is offered to them to assist them on campus; how many of their instructors know them by name; and how connected they are to the campus community.

Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Rick Schell, Associate Vice-President of Academic Affairs and Retention; Maribeth Ehasz, Assistant Director in the Office of Operational Excellence and Assessment Support; Patrice Lancey; and Julia Pet-Armacost, Assistant Vice President for Information, Planning and Assessment, have worked together to identify how the university can better offer students opportunities for personal growth in order to make their time at UCF "a positive life-transforming experience." They chose the NSSE as their assessment tool because it addresses both aspects of the university student experience: curricular and co-curricular. NSSE measures student responses to queries in the following categories:

- Level of Academic Challenge
- Active and Collaborative Learning
- Student-Faculty Interaction
- Enriching Educational Experiences
- Supportive Campus Environment.

Results from this survey contribute to the ongoing research in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, an increasingly prominent campus initiative, because they identify specific attributes of effective university environment. The more clearly the criteria for "effective educational experience" can be defined, the better it can be assessed and improved at UCF.

Surveys of incoming first year students and graduating seniors will be conducted online in February 2004 and then follow-up surveys will be conducted in certain classrooms. Faculty who have taught undergraduates will also be surveyed online in March 2004 with the accompanying FSSE (Faculty Survey of Student Engagement) to offer a better context for data analysis of the NSSE. The faculty survey focuses on the kind of learning faculty find essential to their teaching, how their classes are organized, the frequency and quality of interactions with students and their expectations of students. This information will complement the NSSE data to identify where UCF needs improvement and where our strengths lie.

So when we discover how many hours per week our students actually spend preparing for our classes, it may prove surprising, but like so much of the information gleaned from the NSSE, it may also help us to better focus our efforts to maximize student engagement and improve student learning.

University of Central Florida
Division of Graduate Studies
UCF Program Announcement

Awards for Excellence in Graduate Teaching and Research

The Division of Graduate Studies is pleased to announce the availability of new awards for excellence in graduate student teaching and for excellence in thesis and dissertation research. Specifically, four new awards have been established for graduate students, as follows:

- **Award for Excellence by a Graduate Teaching Assistant**: This award recognizes excellence by Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) who are responsible for a laboratory or other similar teaching assignment under the direction of a faculty member who serves as the instructor of record. It focuses on the quality of the assistance provided by the GTA to the lead instructor and students in the class.
- **Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Teaching**: This award recognizes excellence in teaching by Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) who have independent teaching responsibilities. It focuses on the quality of the student's teaching activities and the academic contributions to those activities.
- **Award for the Outstanding Master's Thesis**: This award recognizes excellence in the master's thesis. It focuses on the quality and contribution of the completed master's thesis.
- **Award for the Outstanding Dissertation**: This award recognizes excellence in the doctoral dissertation. It focuses on the quality and contribution of the completed dissertation.

These recognitions will be awarded for the first time within the current academic year. Application materials must be submitted by Friday, February 6, 2004, and award recipients will be announced at the Research Forum to be hosted by the Graduate Student Association and the Division of Graduate Studies on March 22-23, 2004. University-level award winners will receive $1,000 cash awards. For more information, see the graduate website at www.graduate.ucf.edu.

UCF Summer Faculty Development Conference
April 26 - 29, 2004

The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning will provide 120 $1,000/person grants for faculty members who are transforming courses by emphasizing assessment, research, and the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Faculty members from all colleges are invited to apply (team submissions will be given preference). The RFP is due on February 20.

http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/events/summer_conf/index.htm

Invitation to Faculty Artists

The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning wishes to extend an invitation to all faculty artists to consider showing some of their artwork at the center.

Please come by the Faculty Center in CL1-207 or call 407-823-3544 for more information.

American Cancer Society
Relay For Life
A Team Event to Fight Cancer

UCF Relay For Life 2004

The Relay for Life is the American Cancer Society's signature event and the number one non-profit special event in the country. UCF will host the Relay on April 2nd and 3rd at the UCF track. If you are not on a team but would like to be, come join our team at the Faculty Center. For more information go to <http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/events/relayforlife/>.

Dr. Judy Welch, Dr. Alison Morrison-Shetlar, and Dr. Ruth Marshall are making another quilt as a gift for the Relay for Life and Meg Schell is making one of her own to offer. We are offering the quilts in a drawing which will be made on Friday evening, April 3th at our Relay booth. If you would like to place your name in the bowl for the drawing to receive the quilts, please stop by the Faculty Center.

Proceeds go to Relay for Life
Donations are welcome.
Stop by the Faculty Center (CL1-207) and enter now!

RELAY FOR LIFE
American Cancer Society

Teaching-Related Conferences

2004 AAHE Learning to Change Conference
Learning in 3-D: Democratic Process, Diverse Campus, Digital Environment
American Association for Higher Learning
April 1-4, 2004
San Diego, California
http://www.aahe.org/convenings.htm

2004 AERA Annual Meeting
American Educational Research Association
April 12-16, 2004
San Diego, California
http://www.aera.net/meeting/

Educause Southeast Regional 2004
June 7-9, 2004
Atlanta, Georgia
http://www.educause.edu/

CALICO 2004
June 8-13, 2004
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
http://www.calico.org/

Syllabus 2004 11th Annual Education Technology Conference
July 18-22, 2004
San Francisco, California
http://www.syllabus.com/

Educause 2004
October 19-22, 2004
Denver, Colorado
http://www.educause.edu/

Please tear this page out along perforation and keep for quick reference.

Campus Quick References

Who is my first contact for any faculty-related questions?
Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning
www.fctl.ucf.edu
407.823.3544

How can I find my way around the UCF Campus?
Campus Map
http://www.ucf.edu/campusmap/

How do I know when the semester starts? Ends? When do I give my final exams?
Academic Calendar
http://www.ucf.edu/toplinks/academic_calendar.html
http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~enrsvc/registrar/examschd.html

What is the difference between my PID and my NID?
Your PID (Personal ID) is used to access information on Polaris
connect.ucf.edu
Your NID (Network ID) is used to access network services such as your email.

Where do I get my UCF ID Card?
UCF Card Office
www.ucfcard.ucf.edu
407.823.2100

How do I get a parking decal?
Parking Services
parking.ucf.edu
407.823.5813

What do I do regarding seriously disruptive students or emergencies?
Police Department
police.ucf.edu
407.823.5555

Where do I go for help with digital imaging, photography, teleconferences or video production?
Office of Instructional Resources
www.oir.ucf.edu
407.823.2571

Where do I go to develop online materials for a course, or to learn how to use WebCT?
Course Development and Web Services
reach.ucf.edu/~coursedev
407.823.3718

How do I place books on reserve for my class, or suggest books for the library to get?
Library
library.ucf.edu
407.823.2562

Who can I call for help with dial-up internet, wireless internet, on-campus internet, e-mail?
Computer Help Desk
helpdesk.ucf.edu
407.823.5117

How can I access my GroupWise email from any computer with an internet connection?
Login at mail.ucf.edu with your GroupWise login and password.

Does UCF have a toll-free number I can use to dial up to the internet while I am traveling?
Set up a temporary account at:
UCF on-the-go http://www.ucf.edu/onthego/

How do I make sure the bookstore carries my textbook?
UCF Bookstore
407.823.2665

Does UCF have a gym for faculty to use?
Wellness Research Center
407.823.3509
http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~wrcenter/

How do I buy tickets for UCF Athletic events?
Athletic Ticket Office
407.823.4653

How do I open an account at the UCF Credit Union?
UCF Credit Union
407.249.0008

Where can I send my students when they need help proofreading or editing their papers for my course?
University Writing Center
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
407.823.5130

Where can students go to find a job after graduation?
Career Resource Center
407.823.2361
www.crc.ucf.edu

Who can I work with to help accommodate students with disabilities?
Student Disability Services
407.823.2371 TDD: 407.823.2116

Where can I send a student who is having emotional difficulties for counseling?
Counseling & Testing Center
www.counseling.sdes.ucf.edu
407.823.2811

Where can I refer a student who needs medical care?
Student Health Center
407.823.2701

Submissions

The *Faculty Focus* is a publication for all instructors at the University of Central Florida. This includes full- 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. Toward this latter goal, the *Faculty Focus* will lead to an annual "Best Practices" edition where some of the ideas that were generated in the bi-semester editions will be expanded and developed into full articles. The annual edition will be peer-reviewed and disseminated regionally. This represents an opportunity for faculty to reach their peers throughout the growing Central Florida 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 <www.fctl.ucf.edu/focus/guidelines.htm>. Publication dates will be the middle of the first and last full months of each semester, and submission deadlines will be the Friday of the week prior. MLA format is preferred. Please send your submissions to *Faculty Focus*, fctl@mail.ucf.edu.

Faculty Center
CL1-207, 407-823-3544

Check us out Online!

www.fctl.ucf.edu

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