Faculty Focus

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Contents

The Nuts and Bolts of Internationalizing Your UCF Course: How to Proceed?

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Keith Folse is Associate Professor of TESOL in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. He has taught in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Japan, and Kuwait, and he has given talks and workshops all over the world, from Argentina to Uzbekistan.

For the 2009-2010 academic year, I am serving as a Faculty Fellow for Course Internationalization at the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning and the International Studies Office. This Fellow position is completely new, so the purpose of this article is to explain what "course internationalization" means, how internationalizing your course can be good for your students and you, and how I can assist you in internationalizing your course.

What does "internationalizing" your course mean?

It's the classic case of "ask 10 people and you'll get 11 answers." The phrase "internationalizing the curriculum" can have an array of meanings. In fact, if you google this phrase, you will get 286,000 hits. Some people think that internationalizing the curriculum means sending more students to do study abroad. Yes, this is a great idea, but how many of our 53,537 students at UCF can afford the money and the time to complete a semester abroad? Yes, study abroad is certainly an excellent option, but only about 600 UCF students actually participate in study abroad each year, which is slightly more than 1% of the UCF student body. While this figure may seem shockingly low to you, the really bad news is that UCF's numbers are indeed standard for a US university. According to a survey by the American Council on Education (2007), an impressive 81% of college students say they are interested in study abroad, but only 1.5% of U.S. college students actually end up studying abroad.

So if study abroad is not the default synonym for internationalizing the curriculum, then what is? How can we faculty reach the remaining 98.5%? The answer lies in a definition of internationalizing the curriculum—and one truly useful for us in improving our own courses—from the California Colleges for International Education: "the infusion and/or introduction of international perspectives and themes into existing or new classes through alteration of the curriculum, course activities and lecture focus. Curricular modifications assist staff and students to transcend their own cultural conditioning and to become more knowledgeable about and sensitive to other cultures" (<http://ccieworld.org/curriculum.htm>). Now that we have a workable definition, what does this mean for faculty? What could internationalizing our courses actually entail? Internationalizing a course can take many different forms. Here are several concrete possibilities of modifying an existing UCF course:

History: Adding online modules with computer-based map software that teach students the pertinent geography of an area in relation to a history lesson (e.g., Europe just prior to World War II for the lessons on how, where, and why the war took place).

Science: Creating digital videos of interviews with international researchers in the field of global warming or chemical engineering or genetic mapping.

English Comp.: Connecting a UCF composition class with a university class of students in France, Brazil, Japan, or Estonia who are learning English. UCF students could interview the foreign students and then write a compare-contrast paper on difficulties of the English language.

Business/Marketing: Including a web- and field-based assignment in which students have to collect examples of 10 TV commercials from a foreign country and then elicit

Americans' reactions to the commercials in terms of likelihood of buying that product.

Statistics: Creating a data library with data sets from financial, economic, social and environmental applications for various countries to use in statistics courses; countries could be chosen to represent entities such as G-8 countries, Latin American countries, kingdoms (compared to republics), etc.

How can internationalizing your course be good for your students and you?

We all want our students to master the content of our courses, but attending college should also increase students' ability to think critically, communicate in speech and writing, and make wiser decisions in life. At the same time, attending college should help students understand their role in the community, including at the world community level.

It is challenging for our students to empathize with a situation in South Korea or Iceland or Argentina if they know nothing of these countries. To be blunt, some of our students are woefully ignorant of the world and just don't see that this is *their* problem. In a course last year, students had to participate in conversation hours with international learners here at UCF to help nonnative speakers with their English. One student complained in our class later that she felt the foreign students were laughing at her for no good reason just because she didn't know some of the places they were talking about. At first, I thought she was correct and they were mentioning states or towns that few outside that area could know about, but then she said, "It was like some building or something, the Taj, like that." The place she didn't know or had never heard of was the Taj Mahal. (Can you hear the huge gasp of disbelief from the professor at this point?)

As a faculty member, my goal is that when my students hear news about Honduras, Latvia, or Malaysia, they will be able to stop and relate to the news a bit more because they actually know someone from that country. I want my students to know about the world and be able to adapt—or at least consider—some of these "foreign" ideas to their own lives, but that is not possible if students are not familiar with other countries' people and ideas. Adding an international module to your course can help overcome this deficit.

How Can I Assist You in Internationalizing Your Course?

As the Faculty Fellow for Internationalization this year, I am available to meet with you to brainstorm possible options for modifying your course to include some kind of international component. This component could be as simple as a reading that you add to your course, or it could be as intricate as an online module with video clips, web sites, and interactive games.

In 2010 and beyond, more and more of our courses are transitioning from the traditional face-to-face format to either fully online or at least mixed mode of half online, half face-to-face class time. My own program and many of our undergraduate courses are already moving to online delivery in some form, and including an international component in my courses has been a huge part of this transition.

Want Help?

For the remainder of spring 2010, I am available in the FCTL to help you from 11:30 to 1:30 on March 16, March 30, and April 13. If you have specific questions, please email me at kfolse@mail.ucf.edu.

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Focusing on Objectives: Teaching as Acting

Barry Mauer

Barry Mauer is an Assistant Professor in English, where, as a generalist, he devotes much of his time to work with Film, Digital Media, Simulation, Drama, and Sociology. His research is aimed at inventing new media practices for the academy and beyond, approached through a program based on grammatology and heuretics.

We would like our students to come to class focused and ready to learn. But it's no secret that students often arrive distracted. If we add to the picture a teacher who is unfocused, we can expect an unproductive class.

Most of us know when we're having a bad teaching day. Sometimes we have car trouble, feel under the weather, or have concerns about family, money, politics, or any number of other things. But if we allow these pressures to interfere with our teaching, students know it. They know when a teacher is unfocused, and they are liable to react to this perception with discomfort or boredom or worse.

We know when we're having a good day in the classroom when everything seems to flow and come together. However, we may not know what causes us to be "on" during these good days. We might chalk these good days up to feeling inspired yet not know how to produce these same results in the classroom day after day. To achieve consistent success in the classroom, teachers can learn a lot from actors. Actors must learn to be "on" night after night regardless of outside pressures. They must learn to count on their skills, rather than on inspiration (which is never permanent), to get through a performance. Like good actors, teachers can learn what it takes to teach at a consistently high level. Teaching and acting both require we focus on the objectives fitting to the role.

Years ago, I discovered a text that helped me change how I thought about teaching. It's an engaging guidebook for performers titled *The Technique of Inner Action; The Soul of a Performer's Work*, by Bill Bruehl, an actor, author, and dramatist. In his book, Bruehl focuses on the tasks of the actor preparing for a role, yet the lessons he offers are applicable to teachers also since we perform the role of teacher in the classroom. Bruehl would say that with teaching, just like with acting, there is a relationship between our exterior actions—the things we say and do in the classroom—and our inner actions (such as objectives or intentions).

Bruehl writes: " . . . [T]he fundamental task for an actor preparing a piece for performance is to find and articulate the inner actions or objectives of the character. The ensuing flow of these inner actions defines the character externally for the audience." To bring our intentions—our inner actions—into focus and into alignment with our actions, we begin by noticing which intentions belong to teaching and which do not. "The only appropriate inner actions to take into performance are those that the character [in our case, teacher] is struggling to achieve." The actor's inner actions should be eliminated from the performance. For example, we may discuss aspects of our home life in class, but what are our intentions in doing so? Is it to illustrate a point related to the lesson? Such discussion may be appropriate to our role as teacher. Or are we disclosing about our home life in order to brag or complain, or to seek sympathy or approval? These intentions will hurt the teacher's performance. The teacher is responsible for knowing which objectives belong to the role of teaching and which ones do not.

Bruehl dispels several myths about acting. One such myth is that the actor becomes somebody else in the role. Actors don't become things; they do things. Likewise, teachers can make a profound improvement in their teaching by making a subtle yet powerful shift in our thinking from being to doing. For instance, we can shift from a desire to be a supportive teacher to a desire to support students. This psychic shift, from being to doing, enables us to take the next step—defining our sub-objectives, those secondary objectives that lead to the primary objective. Thus, in order to support students (the primary objective), a teacher may praise students (sub-objective). If praising doesn't work with some students, we don't give up on our primary intention, but rather we look for another way around the obstacle. Perhaps we demonstrate how other students have learned to master course materials. Sub-objectives are supported in turn by specific tactics; thus, a teacher who wants to praise students may write encouraging notes on their papers.

We may not entirely be aware of the intentions we bring to the classroom. To improve our teaching, we identify them, analyze them rigorously, and drop those that don't serve us. We then develop or refine our primary objectives, our sub-objectives and our tactics. And we practice living these objectives day-to-day until they are ingrained. At last, we can see our intentions through from syllabus design to lesson planning and to activities in the classroom. Our teaching now has a flow, a through-line that connects all our teaching activities.

When I began teaching in 1992, I had many conflicting intentions and no clear primary ones in my teaching. I was a mess. I have since learned to put much more time into planning. I look over my course materials before class and sort out my objectives for the day and try to relate them to the primary objectives for the semester. Sometimes I write out my sub-objectives and bring them to class with me. These objectives are best framed as verbs: to provide clear guidelines for assignments, to develop critical thinking skills, to encourage skepticism, etc. Throughout the class, I remind myself of my objectives and check to see if my teaching is in alignment with them.

One of the benefits of Bruehl's approach is that we can transfer this way of thinking to students. We can communicate to them more clearly what objectives we want them to have in the course (we sometimes refer to such course objectives as "learning outcomes"). We can help students set intentions for themselves. For instance, for those students who have trouble with their papers, I suggest they set an intention to have a draft completed a week before the due date, to have at least three people read it and offer feedback, and so on. The more we can show students how to set their own learning objectives, the more likely we are to reach our ultimate teaching goal: helping students become lifelong learners.

Technology Parlors and Technical Literacy

Martha Marinara

Martha Marinara is Associate Professor of English and the Director of the Quality Enhancement Plan and Information Fluency Initiative at UCF. She earned an MA in Creative Writing from Southern Connecticut State University and a Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition from Lehigh University.

About 35 years ago, when I started my tentative, first forays into the world of information gathering, I would walk into the library and up to what I thought was an overwhelming wall of wooden drawers. I would cup my fingers under the drawer pulls and open a world of information where everything was neatly packaged—even the "key words" I needed to find information were written on tabbed cards—Abraham Lincoln, his childhood in Illinois, his early years as a state senator, his campaign, his family, his presidency, the Civil War, even Mary Todd—all carefully organized for me. Most importantly, if the knowledge wasn't there, it didn't exist.

All the information in the world was pre-vetted, scholarly because it came from a library whose classical architecture gave the assurance of great knowledge, and felt solid in my hands with the heaviness of encyclopedias. At first I just had to accept, to drink in all that was there, savor the headiness of it; later I learned to read more carefully between the lines, to understand how metaphors and images create ideas and understandings, but honestly, I didn't have to think critically in the ways that I do now—certainly not in the ways that I expect students, fresh from the womb of high school, to think.

College students walk through a world that is full of textual, visual, and tactile information; they always have at least one ear bud in, a cell phone ready for any news from friends and family, Facebook at their fingertips—always already plugged into their technological grapevines. We often think today's millennial students aren't focusing because no one can listen to music with one ear and the biology lecture with another while surfing the Web and texting their friends. Remember the focus needed to write a dissertation? We had tunnel vision for months and months, the outside world didn't exist, blocked out completely so we could focus on research.

Students lead technology mediated lives where every moment is a learning moment—probably outside of class and inside cyberspace more than inside of the classroom. And then we want them to conduct academic research. We can teach them the skills of Boolean searches and how to access information, but no one ever did research because they liked filling out index cards and writing citations—and students won't enjoy or conduct research just because they can use RefWorks or some other software to manage secondary research and create their bibliographies. It would be easy to tell students that for scholarly research, they may only use information and tools available on university servers and then take blogs, Wikkis, ePortfolios, Facebook, MySpace, Google, Amazon's "Search inside this book feature," Twitter, Flickr, text messaging, IM... and just separate those from academic pursuits. However, that step would only tell us that we don't know everything about how and when people learn. And that we really do believe the university is separate from the rest of life. Technology on its own can't instill curiosity, excitement or a drive to know something.

What kinds of critical questions about technology do we ask students? Say about tagging—are there a limited number of tags, or can anyone create their own? What is the breadth of indexing in Google, Flickr, YouTube, and del.icio.us? Is what your peers find important and valuable always useful or relevant to your learning and research? How do you evaluate and then ethically and legally use this information? And how do we develop a common language so that when a student uses the term "article" as in "I found an article about nanobots" we both mean the same thing?

In the late 80s, Musad Zavarzedeh wrote an article in which he took to task those pedagogues who were teaching collaboratively, sitting in a circle with their students, facilitating knowledge, and teaching in a Frierian, democratic way, who thought they could make the classroom walls disappear. That wasn't possible, he amended, nor even desirable; we have an institution with traditions. Sitting in a circle will not make it disappear. What we do know about how knowledge and facts are proven and accepted in our disciplines is important, certainly a tradition we are obligated to pass on. We are faced with the same situation now in our virtual classrooms, in the spaces created by technology. What can the virtual walls of the classroom teach our students?

We need to teach them to evaluate the sources of information, how they can tell if a source is credible, timely, and useful—that virtual or physical—the library still has the most "street cred" when it comes to information. We need to teach students to think critically—not just problem solve by following formulas to a set solution—but to work with disparate pieces of information, and in their juxtaposition create new knowledge. And we have to accept the use of technologies we may not like and help them find more efficient and useful ways to search with Google and Ask.com, and to use Wikipedia, YouTube, blogs, and social networking sites to publish their research.

Reverie on Large Classes

Tace Crouse

Tace Crouse is the Interim Director for the Faculty Center. She served five years with the UCF Educational Studies, as both a faculty member and administrator. Prior to coming to UCF she had served on the math faculty for four years and in administration for eight years at the Brevard Community College.

As I approach the classroom door, it is opened for me by a smiling student who says, "Good Morning, Dr. Crouse." I enter an auditorium filled with 200 students, seated and ready to go as they all turn to me, eager to learn. I begin the class with a discussion of a complex problem posed during the previous class and the students are excited about how far they have come in solving… Wait, this isn't my class. This is the class from the movie *Good Will Hunting*. I'm having a great dream!!

As I begin class, 50 of the 200 students are texting and/or have ipod buds in their ears or are playing games on their laptops. Students continue to trickle in, some sauntering down near the front rows, uncaring that they are disrupting class. Fifteen minutes in, the guy in the back reading a newspaper starts to talk out loud to the girl next to him about an upcoming concert. Three or four students join in the conversation that can be heard several rows away. Halfway through the class, two people get up from the third row and head for the back doors. Chaos. Wait, this is MY class! It is my responsibility to re-establish order for the sake of those who are here to learn and for me to teach to. Unfortunately, I am not asleep. This is real.

Teaching a large class can be the most wonderful experience or the most dreadful—all in the same week. While that can be true of any size class, large classes make every success and every failure exponentially larger. Inspiring 200-500 students at one time with a great lecture or activity can keep you walking on air for the rest of the day. When a student who has been struggling is able to present an argument or solve a difficult problem to the applause of their 200+ classmates, life is good. And then there are the other days when you crash and burn either because you did not manage the class as you know you should have or maybe what you thought would engage them, just did not. When 200 become restless or rebellious, it can be deadly.

Structure! Establishing consistent and meaningful structure from the first day can provide a firm platform for great learning activities. Do you want students to come to class on time? Raise the probability with an engaging opening activity; a graded opening activity is highly motivating. Do you want to have students work in groups? Organize learning communities in the class early in the first week and use them frequently to work on a complex problem. Do you want frequent feedback on student understanding for you and them? Use clickers to engage students in the discussion and provide the feedback. Make these activities do double duty as attendance-taking processes. Do you want students to do all class activities? Take grades on everything. You can always loosen up later, but students will take exercises more seriously when they know a grade is at stake. What about testing? Testing can be one of your worst nightmares if you don't have a system established before the semester starts. Decide and arrange for either online or face-to-face procedures. Be sure the tests are designed for all of the issues of the platform you choose. What is the best communication system to use with your students? More detailed answers to these and all your questions about large classes are the focus of a Teaching Circle on Large Classes that meets each week in the Faculty Center. Join the group to share ideas. See our Web site <www. fctl.ucf.edu> for the days/times in the calendar and to view other resources for large classes at <http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/ TeachingAndLearningResources/LearningEnvironments/> .

The auditorium is dark; every word of the two paragraphs on each of the 42 PowerPoint slides is being read. The students take no notes on the copies of the slides downloaded before class because the instructor is not adding anything… definitely NOT my class.

Announcement

The SoTL Faculty Showcase returns this year on April 7, 2010, when we welcome Dr. Kay Gillespie (Associate Editor of the journal *Innovative Higher Education*). Her talk is entitled "Closing the Loop on SoTL: Moving to Publication." This year at the Showcase, we are switching from a poster format to a pre-printed anthology of faculty SoTL and creative teaching projects to facilitate roundtable discussions. To be printed in our anthology, faculty must submit their materials by Friday, March 19. We request the following format for your submissions: Problem statement (75 words max); Question, hypothesis, or intervention (75 words max); Methods (200 words max); Results and discussion (400 words max); and 2-3 sentence biography

If your project or creative teaching practice is just beginning, it is acceptable to supply information about your next steps rather than findings so far for the Methods and Results sections. We anticipate color printing, so graphs and charts may be formatted in color. Additionally, we will include photographs of the authors and will arrange for your photo to be taken at the Faculty Center if we do not yet have one for you on file. In addition to distributing the anthology at the Showcase, we will also make it available on our Web site and as a sample of faculty projects at other venues. Submission of your "project overview" gives us permission to use your information in these other formats. We look forward to this exciting event. Remember to submit your materials by March 19 as an email attachment to fctl@mail.ucf.edu.

Best Practices for Teaching Large Classes

Pam Thomas and Alisha Janowsky

Pam Thomas is an Instructor of Biology. She has taught at UCF for the past 10 years. During this time she has worked in the extreme large class environment with multiple sections of up to 1,400 students. Her interests include student engagement in large classes, critical thinking pedagogies, adaptations for learning-challenged students in large classes, and learning technologies.

Alisha Janowsky is a Lecturer of Psychology. She received her Ph.D. in social and personality psychology from Florida Atlantic University in 2004. Since then she has held lecturer positions at both Missouri State University and Florida Atlantic University before coming to UCF in the Summer of 2006. Alisha typically teaches four classes each term with sizes ranging from 75 to 456.

We are privileged to work at the 3rd largest university in the U.S. (and counting), but with ever-increasing enrollments comes the new challenge of increased teaching loads and class sizes. Each semester more and more of us are confronted with teaching assignments that require entry into the large class environment. Individual face-to-face large class sizes at UCF range from 100 to 456 students and individual faculty members may teach between 300 to 1,400 students in one class through some combination of face-to-face, mixed-mode, or online courses. Although large classes have been traditionally confined to lower division subjects and GEP courses, upper-division classes in the 300–400 size ranges are currently a reality and higher numbers are being considered.

When faced with these new "supersized classes" many faculty feel, at a minimum, unprepared and, at a maximum, completely overwhelmed. One reason for these gut reactions is that we are facing new challenges across the board. Even those who were accustomed to teaching one large course a semester may now be teaching three or four large courses a term. When looking at these class rosters, is it any wonder that some may feel that they are literally drowning in a sea of e-mails, papers, and Scantrons? But rest assured that there is hope! The life raft comes from new research in teaching effectiveness to a new generation of students who are also adjusting to these new educational environments. We also find help from each other as we learn to formulate new pedagogies and create new axioms.

And we, your "Large Class" Faculty Fellows, are here to help as we set off on these new, let's call them, "adventures." As a start, please consider the following strategies which can help reduce DWF rates from 40%– 50% to 10–16 %. We will start by discussing issues to consider with lower-division courses (1000 to 2000 level) versus upper-division courses (3000 to 4000 level) and finish with some advice that works for all large classes.

When teaching lower-level courses, remember that you are teaching in the modern version of the one-room schoolhouse. Your large class is a multi-tier, heterogeneous group all in one room. As such, your roster is filled with gifted students, slower students, average students, national merit scholars, students with learning challenges, students with inadequate preparation, students who have been accepted into your major, and students that never even wanted to take the class at all but needed an elective. With such diversity, you may feel you need to teach to the median and you are right! The question becomes, "What is the median?" We suggest using automated quizzes to determine the skill range of your students and then select in-class and homework examples from basic to complex to unify the skill levels. On-line help sessions, automated practice problems, and Webcourses surveys are tools you may want to provide to those having continuing difficulties. (As we all know, students LOVE practice items.)

We also suggest that you consider implementing clickers in your classroom or some other automated surveys system which can provide instantaneous snap shots of where the class "is" academically. Used throughout any one lecture, you can gain insight into what your students are retaining and what material they may be struggling with. They can also be used to create smaller breakout groups and create a sense of community in your large lecture hall. We would strongly encourage you to consider the role you want such technology to play in your students' overall grades. Some students love their clickers and are grateful for having a participation grade to take the heat off paper and exam performance. Other students may be resentful of the cost of purchasing and registering the clickers in addition to feeling like they have to come to class.

When teaching upper-level courses, you eliminate some of the problems outlined above but inherit a distinct new set of challenges. You trade the diversity of backgrounds (most of your students are in the major or minor and those "just visiting" have an interest in the topic) for the issue of how to create a challenging course that prepares students for graduate school or their careers *without* creating more work than you can handle. Most faculty find this particularly problematic when it comes to writing. While believing it to be pedagogically important, many faculty are reducing or eliminating the number of writing assignments simply because they do not have the resources to grade them efficiently and effectively. We suggest that you design your class to hold true to your pedagogical beliefs while holding a realistic expectation of your own time restrictions. Instead of eliminating writing, perhaps assign smaller one- to two-page assignments or group projects that are faster to grade but still engage your students in critical thinking skills. You might also consider using Turnitin.com to help find plagiarism and avoid the time it would take you to seek out the copied source. Lastly, create detailed rubrics so students understand what they are responsible for and cut out the subjective nature of such assignments. Remember, though, that no matter how detailed the rubric, students will want specific feedback on their work.

More generally, make sure you consider how your class is organized from your students' perspective. In any one classroom, no matter the course level, you likely have students straight out of high school, transfer students accustomed to small community college classes, and a group of students who have more experience in these large auditoriums. Many are very apprehensive about the large class environment. They find it confusing, frustrating and sometimes feel just plain lost. A great deal of student apprehension can be alleviated simply by setting the stage on the first day of class for what students should expect, and most of this can be accomplished before you ever set foot in the classroom.

Start by creating a very specific syllabus. Large student enrollments take some of the flexibility out of teaching. While you might extend a deadline for a person here or there in your 25 student class, think about the floodgate that would open in your 300 person class. Creating a tight syllabus takes a good deal of forethought about possible scenarios you might face throughout the semester. For example, how do you want to handle make-up testing during a semester with a 400-student class size while accommodating issues like H1N1? How do you plan to release online test results and still maintain the integrity of your test banks? Your syllabus should also set your boundaries; doing so simplifies your life and theirs. Tell students how you expect them to interact with you both in office hours and in class. Tell them how to contact you (e.g., via your Groupwise account or Webcourses). If you only want to check one e-mail account, then set up your classes that way. If you know you don't want to check your e-mail over the weekend, tell students that any e-mails received after your office hours end for the week will be addressed the next business day. It is much easier to establish the ground rules on day one and become more flexible than to try to be stricter halfway through the term. Having said that, be sure you stick to the same plan. If you tell students that you won't be checking your e-mail over the weekend but typically respond to their e-mails on Saturday and Sunday, they will expect you to do that all the time.

Also consider what you want your classroom "persona" to be. A firm yet approachable persona is essential to maintaining a constructive classroom environment. You want to foster an environment where students are comfortable asking questions and participating while staying on schedule, yet where you control the overall tenor of the room. As an example, one of our colleagues tells students that if a cell phone rings during class, the student will dance to the ring tone at the front of the auditorium. In a similar manner, development of "affect control" is helpful. You may have one or two students that "push your buttons" or irritate the class. You don't want any student to feel alienated and you definitely don't want to allow 500 people to even know you have buttons to push. Try to maintain control of hostile students while remaining matter-of-fact with calm detachment.

Once the semester starts, keep in mind that students are seeking your feedback and they want it immediately. Despite the large number of classmates they see each day, students may feel that they are entitled to your exclusive attention and seek continuous feedback. When such feedback is withheld, you may find yourself facing some very angry students. To avoid this, try to automate your grading as much as possible (e.g., calculating grade grids, using automated test banks, etc.). Not only does this decrease your response time to students, it can free you up to work on other classes or projects. Also, simply keeping students informed of your process and when they can anticipate feedback makes a huge difference. If it is taking you longer than usual to get grades posted, let students know what the hold-up is and when they can anticipate feedback. Just keeping them updated alleviates some of this stress.

You might also want to provide a suggestion box online or hand out mini-evaluations throughout the semester. While they have the opportunity to evaluate you at the end of the term, their feedback at that point is not helping improve their experience in your class. Offering them an opportunity to (anonymously) speak their minds and really listening to what they think can open your eyes to issues you were not aware of and can improve your teaching and class design right then and in the future. It is equally important to try to implement one small suggestion when you do this. While we do not recommend taking grading/point suggestions from students (you don't want to violate your syllabus), making small concessions will make your class feel that they have been heard and that you care.

Lastly, and most importantly, remember that teaching large classes can be fun! It offers you an opportunity for creativity and showmanship that may not go over well in smaller classrooms. You are the "star" of your own show (in some rooms you even get a stage!) and, in an age where students expect some form of edu-tainment, you are expected to deliver, so have fun with it. Use humor, multimedia (videos, YouTube clips, pop culture references students can get on board with), Internet activities, clickers, and anything else you think will reach students. Ask for student involvement and opinions—you don't need to give up class discussion time just because there are more of them. You can even take the microphone out to them so that everyone can hear the student who's speaking, making the room more like a studio-audience of a talk show than a classroom. If you make use of your resources and stay organized and motivated, you'll have a great semester. We, as your "Large Class" Faculty Fellows, are excited to discuss any issues of interest regarding large classes. We hold teaching circles in the FCTL office on select Wednesdays (from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM) and Thursdays (4:30 – 5:30 PM). If you cannot meet during those times or wish to discuss issues specific to your course, we are happy to meet one-on-one or with a small group of interested colleagues.

The Teacher is Dead... Long Live the Teacher!

Bill Morton

Bill Morton is an Instructor in the English Department and has taught writing at UCF for 14 years. He has received an Individual Artist Grant from the Fine Arts Council of Florida (in writing), two grants from the Florida Endowment for the Humanities (writing), a TIPS award from UCF, and an Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award in 2008 from UCF. Currently, he teaches four web-based, upper-division, writing classes each semester.

Once upon a time, in a distant world far, far, far away, I stood before a podium, lectured my writing class, and even wrote on something called a blackboard (Google it). I wore a coat made of wool (check Wikipedia) that had leather patches on the elbows.

Dear friends, though we in these forward-trenches of teaching be not well, we are intact.

AB= the ~ of the square of x – y except when y < 90 degrees.

Now that I have your attention, you may wonder what the above formula means; I have no idea. My sole purpose in including it was to get you to read this, which demonstrates one of the main problems writing teachers face today.

There are so many other activities competing for our students' attention. Given the number of things our students would rather be doing, learning to write well seems like a waste of time to many of them. If reading and writing are dead, then the writer and the writer's purpose cannot be far behind. (This is where I insert various pictures of attractive movie stars and pop singers. I have found that it makes students want to continue listening.)

My short reply is that writing well is about precision. If they cannot write well, then they cannot be precise and understood by their readers. Since many of my students are interested in money, this example usually gets their attention.

Your money is worth less.
Your money is worthless.

How could one space make such a difference they ask? I suggest moving decimal points in paychecks to illustrate even greater pitfalls (in terms of precision).

I tell them that we just have not invented anything that is better and more precise than writing and reading well, and that mastering these skills is worth all the time it takes. The Space Shuttle is a success, and one of the reasons is that NASA writers and readers have the right stuff, too.

Imagine Shakespeare as a software-code writer (I suggest to my Computer Science Majors). Then consider that his code is still the best we have for the application—even after five-hundred years! Who among you, I ask them, wouldn't you rather build your computer using a set of instructions written by a competent writer? This is why we want our students to master reading and writing. (I have found that pictures of fast-food work well at this point.)

The Computer Age has and will make all of us change our teaching techniques (and everything else too) in ways we have not even dreamed. Keep trying new teaching solutions, learning new techniques, talking to your colleagues, and having fun with it. Re-invent yourself as a teacher every chance you get. Take every opportunity to try something new that you believe might work because, if you are not making mistakes, you probably are not moving forward—the teacher is dead!... long live the teacher!

Students evolve—teachers adapt. **Peace**.

Announcement: Library Transformation

University Libraries is planning to transform the main floor of the Orlando campus Library into an exciting technology-filled environment for learning, study, collaboration, research and consultation. Library collections are now being shifted to create space. Work is scheduled to begin May 4th with completion in mid-August. Most main floor seating and computers will be unavailable for the summer semester.
Librarians will be able to retrieve materials from the Reference Collection. Contact Ask A Librarian at <http://library.ucf.edu/Ask/> or 407-823-2562 or 1-866-271-7589 (toll free) to request that reference materials be pulled before you—or your class—come to the library. Library instruction classes will continue to be taught in the library classrooms. Schedule a class at <http://library.ucf.edu/Reference/Instruction/LIRequest.asp>, or call 407-823-5880. When they are not in use, computers in those classrooms will be made available to students.

Teaching Excellence: The Useful, Sensible, No-Frills Departmental Assessment Plan

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Academic departments from physics to philosophy to physical therapy face new demands for "assessment of student learning." It's hard to argue against the basic idea of assessment: when a department invests time and resources trying to nurture student learning, it should ask itself: Are they learning? Yet departments may also fear that assessment will require them to dumb-down their teaching; use standardized tests; teach alike; or compromise academic freedom. Every department wonders how it will find the time and resources for one more thing.

This essay suggests a simple, sustainable, and useful departmental assessment plan that capitalizes on what departments are already doing or should be doing, that can help improve student learning, and that can meet the requirements of accreditors. The basic plan includes three elements that are common to the requirements of virtually all accreditors, both regional and disciplinary:

1. Written learning goals (sometimes called objectives or outcomes) phrased: "When students complete this program of study, we want them to be able to…."

2. Measures that indicate how well the learning goals are being met (These measures need not dumb-down learning or use standardized tests. They can be based on classroom assignments and exams. They can seek indications about students' achievement of ineffable goals like creativity, ethical sensibility, or ability to work well in diverse groups.)

3. Ways of using the information for improvement ("closing the feedback loop")

First, the department should construct written learning goals for each of its distinct courses of study, e.g., certificate program, major, master's, and doctorate. Different tracks (e.g., music history and music performance) may require somewhat different goals. It is important that these goals include the department's highest aspirations. For example, a swine management department listed a number of very practical learning goals such as identifying and treating common swine diseases, developing a financial plan for a swine operation, and so on. But its ultimate goal was "appreciate the pig!" Departments in a religiously-affiliated institution wanted students to develop "sensitivity to injustice." You can't "prove" learning in these areas, but you can get indications about whether students are developing in the ways you wish, and if you don't articulate and share your highest goals, you risk undermining your most important mission.

Next, the department should institute an annual meeting of at least two hours, in which it reviews one of its programs (for example, the undergraduate major). Hold the meeting even if you think you have no measurements or evidence, and even if you have only a partial or imperfect list of learning goals.

The purposes of the meeting are (1) to consider whatever evidence you have about how well students are meeting the learning goals; and (2) to generate one action item, for which you assign responsibility and a timeline. You should allow no other concerns on the agenda. This is the time when the department sets aside all the other concerns that crowd its time, and steps back from the daily race to ask, "How well are we doing?" and "Within our limits of time and resources, is there one action we could take that might improve student learning?"

Once the meeting is established, what are the minimum types of evidence that might be most helpful in defining an action item? The basic no-frills plan might have two types of evidence:

1. An evaluation of the quality of student work as students complete the program. This can be a sample of student classroom work in course(s) taken by students at their end of their course of study; an evaluation of an ultimate clinical or internship experience; a standardized exam if relevant; a licensure exam; or a qualifying exam and theses for graduate degrees. In programs with many students, a sample of student work can be used.

2. Response from students about what they thought they learned and about their perception of the program's effectiveness for their learning.

Additional types of evidence might include alumni surveys, employer/industry feedback, students' job or graduate school placement rates, or, especially in graduate programs, awards and/or publications by students. But in most cases, it is better to have the first two types of evidence working well than to proliferate assessment measures beyond what the department can fund, sustain, or effectively use.

The most basic assessment plan can be illustrated by a political science department that was highly successful: it was rapidly increasing its number of majors; it was known throughout the university for the high quality of its teaching; and it maintained a high rate of publication and professional activity. The smart, effective faculty members of this department hated "assessment." They viewed it as an attempt to diminish the high goals they held for their students, as an attack upon their autonomy, and as a foolish waste of time. They did agree, however, that despite demanding schedules, it would be helpful to sit down for two hours once a year and examine evidence of student learning in one of their programs.

For the first year, they chose the undergraduate major. During the meeting, they brought no rubric scores (most of them hated rubrics) and no written preparation. Instead, each faculty member who taught a senior capstone course briefly spoke about two strengths and two weaknesses that she or he had observed in senior student research projects. These were listed on the board. One weakness that a number of faculty mentioned was that as students began their senior research projects, they did not know well enough how to frame a question for inquiry in the discipline. The department decided to work on that item. They discussed where in the curriculum students were taught to frame research questions and given practice and feedback in doing so. A committee was designated to suggest where and how this aspect could be strengthened in the curriculum. Changes to the earlier courses then provided more instruction and practice in constructing research questions. Now the department waits to see whether future cohorts of students seem to be better prepared.

At the end of the annual meeting, the department should ask itself what additional or better information it might want to collect in future years. The political science faculty noted the lack of student input for their data, and they wanted to know whether students experienced disjuncture between their earlier training and their senior research and if so, what students might suggest as remedies. It was proposed that each teacher of a capstone course, during the first week in May, would administer a 3-question survey to seniors enrolled in the course. The survey would ask students: (1) what aspects of the senior research project they had found most difficult; (2) what earlier training in the department had best prepared them for these difficult areas; and (3) what their suggestions were about how earlier work might better have prepared them. Several faculty were concerned that the survey would take more time and effort than it was worth, so it was decided to administer the survey only in the classes of a few volunteer faculty, as a pilot, to determine whether reliable and useful information could be gathered. The department assigned responsibility for constructing, administering, and analyzing results of this pilot survey.

As this story suggests, an action item chosen in one year may take more than a year to fully implement. In that case, the annual meeting is devoted to tracking progress and planning further steps on a continuing action item. As it feels ready, the department may also begin work on another program. For example, the political science department might gather its graduate faculty for a review of its Ph.D. program. Some departments may prefer to do part of their review of learning through a committee structure and bring reports and recommendations to the department as a whole.

At the assessment meetings, the department should take written minutes, which can serve as a reference for their own future actions, and which, as needed, can be the basis of reports to the university's assessment committee and accrediting bodies. The minutes provide the data to demonstrate that effective assessment is taking place.

The key is to institute the annual assessment meeting immediately, no matter how incomplete or inadequate the assessment data are. Use the data available to generate an action item, and also discuss how you want to improve the quality of the data. The annual meeting provides an ongoing structure that most departments can manage, and that helps the department step back, consider the big picture, bring in evidence of student learning, and make good decisions about how to help their students learn more effectively. Assessment Clear and Simple (Walvoord, 2004) gives more detail and shows how to write up such plans for accreditation.

Resources

Banta, T. W., ed. *Assessment Update Collections*. Series of booklets containing articles compiled from the journal *Assessment Update.* Jossey-Bass, various dates. Practical, short, on-the-ground descriptions of assessment practices and principles.

Banta, T. W., Lund, J. P., Black, K. E., and Oblander, F. W. (1996). *Assessment in Practice: Putting Principles to Work on College Campuses*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Contains 82 case studies of best practice, each in 2-3 pages. Though now more than ten years old, still a wealth of practical ideas. 350 pages.

Palomba, C. A., and Banta, T.W., eds. (2001). *Assessing Student Competence in Accredited Disciplines: Pioneering Approaches to Assessment in Higher Education*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC. At 350 pages, it gives more extensive details on many of the subjects covered in this volume, and it is organized as a manual of advice to practitioners. The single most useful reference as an accompaniment to Walvoord's short guide.

Suskie, L. (2007). *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*. Jossey-Bass, 2007. A 300-page guide with many good ideas and illustrations.

Walvoord, B. E. (2004). *Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education.* Jossey-Bass. In 79 pages plus appendices, I try to give institutions, departments, and gen ed programs all the basics they will need.

Walvoord, B. E., and Anderson, V. J. (1998). *Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Shows how the classroom grading process can be enhanced and how it can be used for assessment. Helps classroom teachers make the grading process fair, time-efficient, and conducive to learning. Contains a case study of how a community college used the grading process for general-education assessment.

FCTL Lending Library: New Acquisitions

The Faculty Center library has a variety of resources on instructional and professional development available for check-out by UCF faculty. The collection is dedicated to supporting the many roles faculty play at the university and assisting them in achieving their goals for teaching and learning. The following books are some of our new acquisitions with descriptions provided by the publishers. You are welcome to come enjoy a cup of tea and review our material.

Shaping the College Curriculum: Academic Plans in Context. Lisa R. Lattuca and Joan S. Stark. Jossey-Bass, 2009. Second Edition.

"This revised edition continues to stress research-based educational practices. The new edition consolidates and focuses discussion of institutional and sociocultural factors that influence curricular decisions. All chapters have been updated with recent research findings relevant to curriculum leadership, accreditation, assessment, and the influence of academic fields, while two new chapters focus directly on learning research and its implications for instructional practice."

Creating a Mentoring Culture: The Organization's Guide. Lois J. Zachary. Jossey-Bass, 2005.

"In order to succeed in today's competitive environment, corporate and nonprofit institutions must create a workplace climate that encourages employees to continue to learn and grow. From the author of the best-selling The Mentor's Guide comes the next-step mentoring resource to ensure personnel at all levels of an organization will teach and learn from each other. Written for anyone who wants to embed mentoring within their organization, Creating a Mentoring Culture is filled with step-by-step guidance, practical advice, engaging stories, and includes a wealth of reproducible forms and tools."

Student Engagement Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty. Elizabeth F. Barkley. Jossey-Bass, 2010.

"Keeping students involved, motivated, and actively learning is challenging educators across the country, yet good advice on how to accomplish this has not been readily available. Student Engagement Techniques is a comprehensive resource that offers college teachers a dynamic model for engaging students and includes over one hundred tips, strategies, and techniques that have been proven to help teachers from a wide variety of disciplines and institutions motivate and connect with their students. The ready-to-use format shows how to apply each of the book's techniques in the classroom and includes purpose, preparation, procedures, examples, online implementation, variations and extensions, observations and advice, and key resources."

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The UCF Libraries is pleased to announce the purchase of the Complete Springer eBook Collection 2005-2009. This collection was made possible through an award from the Technology Fee committee. Springer is a major publisher of academic and professional books and series. The e-books are suitable for research, study, and course projects, and can be assigned as textbooks. With the purchase of this Collection, UCF has perpetual rights and online access to Springer books published in English between 2005 and 2009 comprising of over 16,000 volumes. In addition, UCF users now have access from 1997 to 2009 to all of Springer's major book series, including the well known Lecture Notes Series.

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<http://libguides.libucf.edu/textbooks>

Springer continues to add titles for 2009, and 2010 titles are being added as well. <http://tinyurl.com/yc34jp2>

Question or comments can be directed to Michael A. Arthur, Head of Acquisitions & Collection Services at 882-0143 or marthur@mail.ucf.edu

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.

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