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 insulited. 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 “Bs” 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. None 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...
In a different time teachers were given the authority and autonomy to design a course of study which would prove worthy of the training they received. A challenge, by its very nature, is difficult, and in the end, the instructor assesses the application or output. 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 lack thereof. A success, however, transforms a person's notion of self and makes an impression. Such events stay with a person and form another important piece of the puzzle. This is the challenge 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 teaching me with the same standards which he himself had 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 too rusty 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. Upon reading the syllabus, I hadn't prepared my presentation. I had thought it was due a week later.
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.

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 how an internship fits in with a student's overall academic experience. For internships, it is important to see how an internship fits in with a student's overall academic experience. For example, did students perform better in their classes before or after they completed the internship?

Yet there is a third perspective that we found worth pursuing, 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, employers seeking employment opportunities and professional school will find that evaluators look favorably on this experience.

Our results showed differences between the intern and non-intern group. First, GPA at graduation was somewhat higher among intern students 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 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 an internship, it is important to see how an internship fits in with a student's overall academic experience.

Teaching-Related Conferences

- **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.aah.org/conferences.htm

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

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

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

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

- **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/
I tell the students we will change our pace. I tell them that I an unexpected classroom atmosphere, and to foster relation-ships beyond subject matter, I have instituted the ... boredom are aggressiveenemies to learning, especially after the first series of mid-terms has flowed across the campus.

To combat this and the mid-semester monotony, to establish T

As a professor who subscribes to the view that teachinginvolves drawing information out of students as well as giv-ing ... truths from the stu-dents, or to share with them certain truths about me. This isparticularly true with larger classes.

there is always that time in the semester when there is stu-dent fatigue or monotony and something new is needed. 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:

(related to class...)

Do you allow any type of extra credit?

Would you explain problem 9, number 4 again?

This award recognizes excellence in thedoctoral dissertation. It focuses on the quality and contribution of the completed dissertation.

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 dissertation 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 expe-rience 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 con-duct 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 oncampus; 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 serve students by identifying specific opportunities for personal growth in order to make their time at UCF "a posi-tive 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 popular area of scholarship. Faculty and students today are able to 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 sen-iors will be conducted online in February 2004 and then fol-low up surveys will be conducted in certain classrooms. Faculty who have taught undergraduates will also be sur-veyed 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, and how often they are asked, 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 sur-prising, but like so much of the information gleaned from the NSSE, it may also help us to better focus our efforts to max-imize student engagement and improve student learning.

The “Unplugged Day”

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 service, 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.

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FACULTY FOCUS

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

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 college and university professors is to break their self-imposed silence about teaching.”

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 list of informational resources 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. I will evaluate my rubric to make it clear the 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.

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 departmental leadership. The Committee on Instructional Development at your institution, NSI, NSF, 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 on relevant preparation 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 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, they will interact more with their peers and will value and take pride in their contributions to a successfully completed project.

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 think and discuss each other’s responses and will be given some class time to do so. Students will be given a writing team checklist at the outset of the project, which will sign and hand in with their finished thirteenth-page paper.

Class collaborative writing 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.

The third, 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 think and discuss each other’s responses and will be given some class time to do so. Students will be given a writing team checklist at the outset of the project, which will sign and hand in with their finished thirteenth-page paper.

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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 learning. In Stage I, students will be asked to identify individual primary sources (e.g. articles) or pairs of ideas formulated during FCTL’s Winter Faculty Development Conference and be 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.

The team writing assignment will consist of the following steps. In Stage I, students will be asked to identify key questions (from the text) that they find the most interesting and relevant to their own thinking.

The team will then divide these key questions up among the group and each student will select one question to work on. Students will be divided into teams (e.g., friendship ties) or forming teams at random (e.g., uninterested team members).

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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 learning as well as limit significantly the chance of plagiarism such as that found in traditional discussion boards. 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 WebCT shell) 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 done exclusively online. The discussion boards will be chat rooms.

Second, the body of the paper will consist of each team member’s 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 think and discuss each other’s responses and will be given some class time to do so. Students will be given a writing team checklist at the outset of the project, which will sign and hand in with their finished thirteenth-page paper.

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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 the class. I decided that I should use 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 product of the group. By bringing in social workers and encouraging 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, as 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 product of the group. Second, every student gains valuable experience in working collaboratively with others. Third, students engage in critical reading and writing, and are 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. And finally, students have 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 reading and writing, and are 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. And finally, students have the opportunity to delve deeply into the particular topic about which they are most interested.

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 product of the group.

Y ou should have seen the delight on the faces of my ESL students when Tina Turner came to campus last year. Tina was performing 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.

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. 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, we can only vitalize this critical pre-service training period to make it more relevant, more preparatory for teachers? My quest began, because what I could 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, 40% of what we watch, and 80% of what we do, and 90% of what we teach. Second, engaging all students in the tasks we set out for them was essential. They may work hard knowing their grade depends on it, but they can’t always “pass it off” and be “A” students. Third, the collaborative spirit of working and learning together that students experience in building computers into our public schools, 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 of ESL students in middle and high school. I believed that I could create a model for use in educational settings that was perfect to encourage imagination. 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 utilize it in their own classroom. I taught it to teachers in a way that they could understand it and apply it to their students and use it in their classrooms. Because Webquests are a method of teaching that engages students in asking questions and finding solutions, involves a process of learning, and provides students 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 utilizing what you learn about teaching can make learning all have serious consequences—they nag at your psyche constantly to review, revise and improve your teaching. I believe that Conference provided me with the extra time and training I needed to instigate this process, starting one task at a time.
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 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.

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In total, the final collaborative research paper, preliminary 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.

The goal of collaborative writing and research is at least fourfold. First, students pay more attention to what your colleagues are doing, and attend 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. I think Webquests 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. 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 classroom, we must value this critical pre-service training period to make it more relevant, more preparatory for teachers? My quest began, because what I could 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 in research today, but that we retain 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 40% 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 was not what I meant. I was asking students to use Webquests to retrieve real-world information (data-mining), and promote sharing findings with others in an organized way, and is a formative practice in preK-12 classrooms.
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. The 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. I will evaluate my rubric on a scale of one to five to make improvements to the content and the criteria 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 tak- ing. In Stage I of this plan, for their first group Webquest, the students will each take a role in order to complete their given task of creating an ESOL-infused (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Webquest. They will have to teach this lesson plan to the other students in the class and (judge) 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.arrowsstudio.com/webquest.

What is the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is educational research that informs our teaching and give evidence of student learning in the classroom environment we create. Research will include the rigorous assessment of student learning, and engagement with students in controversial and difficult tasks. The University of California at Berkeley’s Center for the Study of Teaching and Learning (CSTL) provides workshops on many of these strategies with hands-on activities and research evidence of their effectiveness.

Collaborative Writing Nancy Stanlick & Michael Strawser

T

teed 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” proj-

tect 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 antholo-

gy of primary sources) students will be asked to select five questions to answer. Each student will write an answer containing two hundred words or fewer. A writing checklist will be provided 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, while they value and take pride in their contributions to a successfully completed project.

The second collaborative writing strategy is an on-line discussion forum that students may use to interact with each other and with the instructor. This approach allows the instructor to moderate the discussion and provide feedback to the students.

Second, the body 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 they will be given some class time to do so. Students will be given a 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, while they 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 stu- dent writing as well as limit significantly the chance of plagiari-

sion as found in traditional research papers. The assignment as a manner similar to that expressed above for Introduction to Philosophy, students will submit an individual assessment form listing the four term paper topics (available in the course WebCT) 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 done in discussed online. The discussion boards are open to 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 of the members of the group.
The “Unplugged Day”
Denver Severt

Dr. Denver Severt, Associate Professor in the Rosen School of Hospitality Management, has had 25 years of experience in all phases of the restaurant industry from front-line service positions to general manager positions. Denver teaches guest service, 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." I believe this day slightly positions 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 don’t have to be 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:

- 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?

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 class and I would recommend it to anyone. For additional information about this activity, feel free to e-mail me at Dsevert@mail.ucf.edu.

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 mission by improving the 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 distinct 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 Ettelson, Office of Operational Excellence and Assessment Support; Patrice Laney; and Julia Pet-Armacost, Assistant Vice President for Information, Planning and Assessment, have worked together to identify how the university can better prepare students for 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 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 quality of learning faculty find essential to their teaching activity, 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.

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.
We started by identifying all students who had graduated the previous year (Fall 2001-Spring 2002) with a PoliticalScience degree. We then used academic audits to identify those who decided to take an empirical look at student performance. Dr. Aubrey Jewett is the permanent internship coordinator. This research experience provided excellent preparation for me to take on the internship program this year.

About one and one-half years ago, Dr. Aubrey Jewett and I started by identifying all students who had graduated the previous year (Fall 2001-Spring 2002) with a PoliticalScience degree. We then used academic audits to identify those who decided to take an empirical look at student performance. Dr. Aubrey Jewett is the permanent internship coordinator. This research experience provided excellent preparation for me to take on the internship program this year.

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 how an internship fits in with a student’s overall academic 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 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 an internship, it is important to see how an internship fits in with a student’s overall academic experience.

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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 student learning and 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, those 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?

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

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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 workload of 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 workload 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 inadequate, as I was less clear or less concise. Was I expecting too much? Was I not teaching the content sufficiently? The result of my self-reflection, not surprising, I suppose, is that I was teaching with 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 a sub-texture 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 or the inclination to hold the line on value-added 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 unyielding 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
Value Systems and Ivory Tower Cowardice
John Bell

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 insulated. 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 expectations 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 desire 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 "As" and "Bs." 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...continued on page 2