

CTL News

The Newsletter of the Center for Teaching & Learning

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Advising and the CTL

After almost a year in her job, Liz Regosin has begun to make a number of changes in the way the Office of Academic Advising functions. One of those changes has been a re-organization of the academic resources offices in Whitman Hall to bring Academic Support, Academic Achievement, Academic Services for Students with Special Needs, and Academic Advising under one name: the Office of Academic Planning, Advising, and Services (ACPAS). The integration enables Liz, Ginny Schwartz, Lorie MacKenzie, and John Meagher to coordinate better their services for students.

Rather than seeing advising as just one minor element of “service,” Liz views it as a critical endeavor that is an extension of our pedagogy.

Liz has also pursued a link between advising and the CTL. According to Liz, part of her mission is to raise the profile of the faculty’s work as advisors. Rather than seeing advising as just one minor element of “service,” Liz views it as a critical endeavor that is an extension of our pedagogy. She hopes to make advising a more visible part of our teaching and student learning.

Toward those ends, she is engaged in two new efforts in collaboration with the CTL. The first is to treat advising as a skill set like other elements of our teaching. If we do so, then the same sorts of faculty development efforts we put toward the classroom can be designed to improve our work as advisors. Liz will inaugurate this effort with a morning-long workshop on advising at the Center during the May Faculty College.

The second effort involves a group of faculty, with the support of the Center, exploring the use of electronic portfolios as a way to encourage our students to be more self-reflective and to provide a point of access for advisors to both see student work and to converse about short-run and long-run student academic planning. Laura Rediehs, Mike Temkin, Richard Jenseth, Steve Horwitz, Traci Fordham-Hernandez, Margaret Kent Bass, Ginny Schwartz, Rita Goldberg, Lorie MacKenzie, and John Meagher along with Liz, have been engaged in this project during this past academic year, and more piloting and experimenting will take place this fall. This collaboration has already produced some ideas for generating more student self-reflection that Liz has incorporated into presentations to first-year students.

As our work as advisors continues to be a point of focus in our dealings with students, this collaboration between Advising and CTL will continue to deepen.

News and Events

May Faculty College

As many of you are aware, several different programs on campus have historically offered faculty development opportunities each May in the period between graduation and summer term (e.g., FYP, the Writing Program and IT). This year, those three programs have coordinated their schedules and have brought in Community-Based Learning, Advising, and the Oral Communications Institute to offer a whole range of faculty development opportunities under the single umbrella of the *May Faculty College* between May 17-25.

What is unique about this collaboration is that not only will each program be offering “core” workshops for faculty who are either involved with specific programs or who wish to become involved, but we will also be offering faculty-wide “electives” that will be open to faculty who just wish to take advantage of one or two general sessions not necessarily connected with one or more of the specific programs. The hope of all of us involved is that we are offering a range of faculty development activities that will appeal to a diversity of faculty. In addition, members of each program will be involved in

presenting workshops for each other’s programs, which creates further productive synergies.

For more details please visit our website: <http://www.stlawu.edu/ctl/collegebrochure.pdf>

Teaching Circle Update

The Teaching Circle on Cultural Diversity has continued meeting throughout the 2003-04 academic year biweekly on Friday afternoon from 3:30-5:00 p.m. at the CTL to continue the discussion of diversity in the classroom. The members have begun working on a list of the courses that count at SLU toward the diversity requirement. The gathering of this information will help to identify the academic areas that address diversity issues through their course offerings, and others that could incorporate more courses toward the fulfillment of this requirement. Soon the group will start working on a grant proposal to seek funding to invite speakers to campus and organize activities that provide support to other faculty members interested in learning more about practical issues pertaining to teaching and learning across difference and diversity.



Workshop Reflections

TechFest 2004 Feedback

“I can see now how accessible the technology is, even if I don’t become an expert at it myself. I know now how to encourage my students to use this tool, especially for independent research. One student, for example, has a grant to conduct interviews abroad that he will be filming. With Pinnacle 8, he could put the results on a Web site of his own design. Thanks, IT, for helping us as faculty continue to learn!”

“The step-by-step sequences and comparisons between different pixel qualities in the presentation

and handouts were really helpful. Thank you.”

“This presentation, on using Netscape e-mail was extremely helpful. I went home right after it and set up my wife’s e-mail this way, and it works well. It was especially nice to have in the workshop two attendees who were both at an intermediate level. This way we got a lot covered...I always learn a lot from your workshops, and I liked that both of those I attended today moved at a brisk pace and got right down to useful issues. Thanks!”

Teaching Insights

Flexibility, Transparency and Chaos in Small Group Discussions

Anne Csete, History Department

Although for half of my sabbatical I was in the classroom—I taught one course at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in Spring '03—my experiences in the classroom this past year left me wondering if I had forgotten how to teach. In one class, over half the students had that maddening “I am sooo uninterested” slouch and expression, and nothing I tried seemed to change it. In another, my usual discussion techniques often failed for reasons I could not quite pin down. It affected my own morale: in the slouchy class evaluations several students commented that I was “irritable”—and they were right. Mysteriously, another class reported me as “cheerful” and “unfailingly upbeat”. I wondered if somehow the evaluations had been switched by accident at the dean’s office. Or maybe they took grim determination as good cheer.

My usual group discussion method was to bring a short primary document such as a government document, diary entry, cartoon or poem and hand it out along with some questions. I’d divide the class into groups of four or five, have them assign a note-taker and reporter, discuss their question, and report at the end. The first time I did this in my class this semester it was a disaster. It took too long to get set up—it was like herding turtles to get them just to move into groups. Then some groups talked forever and others got “done” in two minutes. The worst was yet to come. As each group’s representative walked up to the front they transformed from the animated, confident students I knew into mumbling, slouching robots with faces obscured by baseball caps. It was painful to sit through, for all of us. To make matters worse, we ran out of time, and instead of cutting my losses and canceling the remainder of the reports, feeling compelled to stick with the plan, I announced that the other groups would report on the following class, which they did, in exactly the same uninspired way. We did talk afterward about the uniformly miserable oral reporting, (and agreed that baseball caps had to be doffed for oral reports). I asked them whether they like group discussions, and they almost all said yes, but they didn’t have too many ideas to offer on how it could be done better.

In subsequent discussions I avoided the oral reports, since an hour was not long enough, and substituted general discussion as a whole class. This worked better, but in general the problem remained—most groups never got into the discussions very deeply. Even using a controversial topic such as the obvious racism of a campaign speech by a US imperialist in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War was not successful.

At this point I was so frustrated I decided to go to talk to someone at the CTL for more input. As Steve and I talked I mentioned that I had what I thought was a great idea, but was afraid to bring it into class because of the past “great ideas” I’d had which had flopped. I had found two short articles from the [South China Morning Post](#), one on North Korea and one on Taiwan. Steve and I kicked around various ways I might introduce these articles as discussion pieces in the class. He also recommended Donald L. Finkel’s book [Teaching with Your Mouth Shut](#), and I decided to try to keep to a small group format but to be flexible in how the discussion might unfold.

So, when I went to class with the articles, I didn’t give the students any questions. I simply handed them the articles, and told them to read and discuss them. After most of them had read and talked awhile, I stopped the small group discussions and asked for comments or questions. In this class of thirty students, about ten are always talkative, fifteen are occasional contributors, and five will only say something (maybe) if I call on them by name. Because of that dynamic, I stood at the front and sometimes intervened by calling on some of the quieter ones and asking the talkative ones to hold off for a minute, and answered questions on points of information. But if they asked me an interpretive or opinion question, I turned it back to the class. They got into serious debates and discussion about both articles. When after 20 minutes of this I tried to stop them, something happened I’ve never experienced before--one student said (shouted almost) “You keep saying you want us to discuss, and now that we are you’re stopping us!” A chorus of others agreed. They basically refused to stop the discussion. This was not about avoiding work—they were having substantive discussion and bringing in class material as well as material from their other classes. What could I do? I threw out the rest of the class plan for the day and they were still going at it when the hour was up.

Since then I’ve brought in a few follow-up articles for them to read and discuss or simply summarized news reports. The students and I tend to read different news sources, so they’ve started (on their own initiative) to follow the news about Korea, Vietnam, China and Taiwan in what they read/watch/listen to, and report in class as I do. All of this is not in the syllabus, and I didn’t plan it. In this case, not giving up on group discussion, being flexible, and keeping the structure/instructions to a minimum worked well. This happened partly because of my habit of transparency. I tell students about my goals, methods and thoughts about how class is going. The students were thus well aware that I believe that group discussion is pedagogically valuable and that I was dissatisfied with how discussions had been going. Lastly, I think that tolerance for a certain level of chaos also helps. Sometimes the class plan just has to be thrown out the window.

Faculty Spotlight on CTL Funding Opportunities

For this month's Faculty Spotlight, we decided to ask a number of recipients of CTL funding, for both pedagogy travel and the use of technology in teaching, to tell us about the grant they received, what activities it allowed them to pursue, and what the effects on their teaching were as a result. We hope this can be a regular feature of the CTL Newsletter, and we thank the contributors below.

Bob Cowser, English Department

I attended the Associated Writing Program's annual conference March 24-27, 2004 at the Palmer House Hilton in Chicago. More than 5,000 writing program faculty and students were on hand, including current English major Laura Woltag and alumni Jay Duda (MFA Candidate, George Mason University) and Tessa Mellas (PhD student, Bowling Green State). We enjoyed a keynote reading by SLU alum Lorrie Moore, who'll receive an honorary degree at next month's Commencement, and I bumped into former SLU Viebranz Writing Professors Heather Sellers and Robin Hemley, new director of the MFA program in nonfiction at the University of Iowa. Panels covered everything from manuscript submissions to pedagogy to the business of literary magazines, but most pedagogically useful to me was a panel on the art of reflection in literary nonfiction, offered by a group of teacher/writers connected to Michigan State's magazine *Fourth Genre* and pitched at those who teach and write in the form.

J. Jockel, Canadian Studies

Thanks to a grant from the CTL I have been using this semester a Toshiba 3500 tablet pc to correct papers in my FY seminar. The students email me their essays. The tablet then allows me to annotate their work in my own handwriting. I can make all the cross-outs, circles, lines, exclamation points, question marks, margin notations, and other markings right on the screen using a special stylus. I email the annotated papers back and the students can read them, either on their computer screens or printed out, annotations still intact.

The annotation technology works splendidly and the students seem to appreciate the convenience of paperless submissions. So do I. But I find file management very awkward and miss being able to compare printed versions of student work. These will be things to work on this fall with my FYP seminar when I give the Toshiba another go.

Ning Gao, Chemistry Department

In June 2003, supported by a travel grant from the SLU Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), I attended the NSF sponsored workshop on "Teaching Forensic Chemistry" at Williams College, MA. The workshop provided a combination of pedagogy, scientific theories, laboratory technique, and interesting tales about forensic chemistry and its applications in criminal investigation and courtroom trials. The instructor surprised us with a staged crime in our dormitory the first evening we got there so we immediately got to work on the crime scene. For the next few days, we used the various forensic techniques that Dr. Kaplan had demonstrated to analyze the collected "crime scene" evidence. The workshop ended with a field trip to the New York Crime Lab in Albany, NY.

After the workshop, I decided to apply what I had learned to practice so I developed a new FYS course entitled "Crime and Justice." Besides their semester long library research based projects, each of which revolved around a real crime case, my students got to practice many forensic analysis techniques such as latent finger print development, blood typing, and ink analysis. They also used modern instruments such as electron microscope for glass fragment analysis, Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) for hair analysis, and Gas Chromatograph/Mass Spectrometer for drug analysis. I also staged a "crime" for the students so they had the opportunity to process the crime scene, analyzed the collected evidence, and wrote scientific reports.

In summary, the great teaching training opportunity provided by the CTL has helped me a great deal in developing new ideas for a new course. Even though as an analytical chemist I had known many of the scientific theories and techniques before I attended the workshop, the workshop did show me creative ways to apply such knowledge in teaching.

In The Journals and On The Shelves

(Literature Around Pedagogy)

The Learning Portfolio: Reflective Practice for Improving Student Learning

By John Zubizarreta
Anker Publishing, 2004.

Excerpted from a review written for *The Department Chair: A Resource for Academic Administrators*.

Review by Kim Mooney
Psychology Department

In this book, John Zubizarreta provides faculty members and curriculum coordinators with sound pedagogical and practical guidance for the use of student learning portfolios. He makes a compelling case for learning portfolio protocols to move beyond the mere accumulation of student work gathered to demonstrate content mastery or skill development. Thoughtfully designed portfolio assignments create opportunities for individualized and integrative experiences leading to sustained reflection and deep learning on academic, professional, and personal levels.

At the heart of portfolios are student reflections about *how* and *why* they have learned from the material they select for inclusion. Pedagogical strategies that invite higher-order thinking and critically reflective practice enhance student learning by “providing a structure for students to reflect systematically over time on the learning process and to develop aptitudes, skills, and habits that come from critical reflection.” Throughout Part I are excellent suggestions for questions to include in learning portfolio assignments in order to promote students’ sustained inquiry and reflection about their own work.

Part II of the book contains 17 portfolio models from the highly detailed to the briefly outlined, from a broad range of institutional types and academic disciplines. A close reading of Part II enhances appreciation for Part III *Sample Learning Portfolio Selections* and for Part IV *Practical Materials*. This clearly written book affords an array of approaches and materials to adopt without deviating from its focus on the enormous pedagogical and learning potential offered by portfolios.

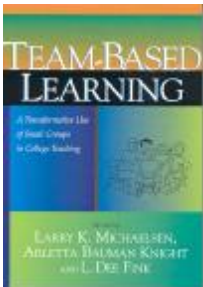
New Additions to the CTL Shelves

For information on borrowing a book, please call the Center at x5981.

Team-Based Learning

Larry K. Michaelsen, Arletta Bauman Knight, and L. Dee Fink
(2002)

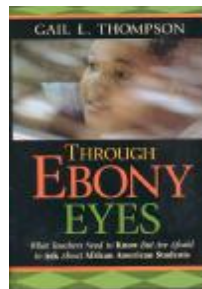
This is a complete guide to implementing TBL in a way that will promote the deep learning all teachers strive for: critical thinking, collaboration, mastery of discipline knowledge, and the ability to apply it.



Through Ebony Eyes

Gail L. Thompson (2004)

This important resource offers teachers, administrators, and student-teachers much needed guidance for closing the cultural gap and providing sensitive but rigorous and effective educational experiences for their African American students.



Advisory Board Center for Teaching and Learning 2003-2004

The Center for Teaching and Learning voluntary advisory board is comprised of faculty and staff members representing a variety of disciplines and participating based on their enthusiasm and interest in the Center's purpose and programming. This year's board members are listed below.

I lia Casanova-Marengo

Bart Harloe

Steve Horwitz

Erin McCarthy

Artur Poczwardowski

Sondra Smith

Kim Mooney

Ron Flores

Randy Hill

Carolyn Johns

Esther Oey

Liz Regosin

Bob Torres





IT Liaison Hours

Tuesday: 1:00-3:00 p.m.
Wednesday: 1:00-3:00 p.m.
Thursday: 8:30-11:30 a.m.

CTL Hours

MWF: 8:00-4:30 p.m.



May Faculty College will be held May 17-25, 2004
Look for details online:

[http://www.stlawu.edu/ctl/
collegebrochure.pdf](http://www.stlawu.edu/ctl/collegebrochure.pdf)



Mission Statement

The St. Lawrence University Center for Teaching and Learning promotes improved student learning through facilitating excellence in teaching practices and supporting a wide range of faculty professional development activities. The Center aims to further the creativity, risk-taking, collaboration, and professional renewal among faculty members at all stages in their teaching careers. Specifically, the goals of the Center are to expose faculty to current knowledge and practice regarding teaching and learning; provide a forum for formal and informal exchanges of ideas and expertise; and stimulate, support, and reinforce pedagogies that optimize student learning.