

# Essays on Teaching Excellence

## *Toward the Best in the Academy*

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## Transitions: What's Love Got to Do with It?

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It was the second week of spring semester when a small Chinese woman entered my office. She had been actively recruited to teach Chinese culture in a special freshman learning community. Her English was very proficient, and I was surprised that she had only been in the United States for five months. What started as a conversation about her students' lack of civility slowly evolved into a conversation about her colleagues' lack of support. In her perception, not one person in her department expressed concern about her adjustment; not one person listened to her concerns about students and teaching; not one person extended help unless she requested it. True to her traditional heritage, she was ashamed of the tears; but her eyes would no longer contain them.

Do you think this story is fiction? I'm sad to say that it is not. This encounter happened to me this past year, at an institution that prides itself on being a "family." I spent over two hours that day with the woman I'll call "Li Chin," listening to her story and straining to sort out exactly how this could happen on my beloved campus.

### **Collegiality—Really?**

In his ground-breaking research on new faculty, Bob Boice (1992) concluded that new faculty must do three things in order to succeed in academe: they need to teach well, they need to do meaningful scholarship, and they need to build collegial relationships. However, Boice was surprised to find that the most important of these three

was not teaching or research—it was collegiality.

Since then, two larger national studies of new faculty (Menges & Associates, 1999; Rice, Sorcinelli, & Austin, 2000) confirmed the findings of Boice and others. The social context of the department plays a large role in new faculty success and satisfaction. Without the support of experienced faculty as friends, role models, and mentors, new faculty rarely succeed in teaching and scholarship. Without guidance, new faculty are unable to decipher the expectations of the institution, especially with regard to reappointment and tenure. Without community, newcomers find themselves overly anxious, stressed, lonely, competitive, and intellectually understimulated. (See also Boice, 1999; Sorcinelli, 2000.)

### **So What Happened to Li Chin?**

Is her department unusually dysfunctional? Are the faculty uncaring, or even nasty? Do the faculty dislike this woman and regret the hire? Sadly, the answers to these questions are "No." While the chair and faculty have their individual and collective foibles, it is a respected department full of excellent teachers, productive scholars, and fine people. My conclusion is that the chair and faculty in this department are not particularly mindful about the needs of someone transitioning into a new institution and new culture.

Li Chin is so disaffected with her departmental colleagues that she requested that I introduce her to as many people across campus as possible. She wants to build a social network outside the department. I want to prevent her resignation.

### **The Cost of Neglect**

Academe is currently experiencing unprecedented turnover in personnel. Thousands of senior faculty of the post-war generation are retiring; "rising stars" are being recruited by more prestigious institutions to fill these vacancies; "academic entrepreneurs" are moving within or outside academe in search of salary increases; and part-time faculty are increasingly filling the gaps. Thus we are conducting record amounts of faculty searches and are expending record amounts of resources in those searches. Last year my institution conducted 140 searches and spent approximately \$162,000 for travel, lodging, advertising, and moving expenses. This

figure does not include photocopying, local travel, meals for search committees, etc. And it certainly does not reflect faculty, staff, and administrators' time. Oh, to think of the incredible academic projects that could have been planned, implemented, and evaluated with that amount of funding, time, and energy!

Even with this sizeable expenditure of resources, many new hires leave an institution after only a few years—not for higher salaries or retirement, but because they have become baffled by and disillusioned with the system. Without collegial support, each day became a struggle to puzzle out policy and procedure, collective beliefs, departmental norms, and institutional assumptions. Left to their own devices, these new faculty gradually became disenchanted and often embittered when asked—either explicitly or implicitly—to leave. Anyone who has encountered a faculty member who was denied reappointment and/or tenure knows also the deep emotional toll—on both the one denied and the ones denying.

### **What Is Your Story?**

Do you remember when you were a newcomer? Do you remember the support that you received—or didn't receive? Are your memories pleasant or painful—or a mixture of the two?

Now let's focus on the present: How do you now support your new colleagues? How do you currently contribute to creating a supportive environment in your department? Check the spaces next to the items that you personally have undertaken for new faculty during the past 12 months:

- \_\_\_ I contacted new hires before they moved to the area to introduce myself.
- \_\_\_ I contacted new hires before they moved to the area to offer help with relocating, moving, and getting settled.
- \_\_\_ I asked about their professional interests (teaching, scholarship, and service).
- \_\_\_ I asked about their personal interests (family, hobbies, etc.).
- \_\_\_ I asked about the adequacy of their office space, equipment, technical support, etc.
- \_\_\_ I introduced them to others on campus.
- \_\_\_ I invited them for coffee, tea, or lunch.

- \_\_\_ I invited them to my home.
- \_\_\_ I provided information about campus resources (teaching and learning center, media services, computing services, counseling services, health promotion, etc.).
- \_\_\_ I provided information about community resources (recreation, farmer's market, school system, day care, senior center, etc.).
- \_\_\_ I invited them to campus and community cultural events (gallery openings, theatrical performances, musical recitals, etc.).
- \_\_\_ I inquired about their professional goals for teaching, scholarship, and service and gave them feedback on their plans.
- \_\_\_ I discussed my teaching with them.
- \_\_\_ I shared my syllabi and other course materials.
- \_\_\_ I invited a new faculty member to my classes as a guest speaker.
- \_\_\_ I invited a new faculty member to my classes as an observer to give me feedback on my teaching.
- \_\_\_ I offered to observe their classes and give feedback.
- \_\_\_ I offered to team teach with new faculty.
- \_\_\_ I offered to collaborate on disciplinary and/or classroom research.
- \_\_\_ I invited them to co-present at a professional conference.
- \_\_\_ I offered to review a new faculty member's manuscript for publication.
- \_\_\_ I discussed reappointment, promotion, and/or tenure policy and procedures with them.
- \_\_\_ I offered to review and give feedback about their reappointment, promotion, and/or tenure materials.
- \_\_\_ I offered to include them on grant proposals.
- \_\_\_ I informed them about learning opportunities on and off-campus.
- \_\_\_ I offered to mentor new faculty.
- \_\_\_ I ensured that they had input in curricular discussions and decisions.
- \_\_\_ I supported new ideas that they brought to the department/college.

Give yourself one point for each space checked. Give yourself 10 extra points if you did any of the above for part-time faculty. Subtract 5 points if you are a chair or other campus administrator; this is

already your job. Or subtract 5 points if you are not a chair or other campus administrator, and you think it's their job! If you scored 20+, you are a great friend to new faculty. If you scored 10 points or less, you probably can do more to help your new colleagues, both full-time and part-time.

### **It Takes a Village**

There is an old axiom that it takes a village to raise a child. If you are a parent, you know how true this is. We parents rely daily on our extended families, neighbors, friends, day-care providers, schoolteachers, counselors, sports coaches, after-school staff, camp counselors, religious/spiritual teachers, and others to care for and guide our children.

In the same way, it takes a college or university to attract, support, guide, and retain our new faculty, especially our new women faculty and faculty of color. A strong sense of belonging is a powerful deterrent to leaving. And a strong sense of belonging is created by all of us—all of us in our academic village.

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# **Essays on Teaching Excellence**

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# **The Power of Student Stories: Connections that Enhance Learning**

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## **Starting with Student Stories**

"Tell a story about a (recent) moment in your life when race mattered." That's how I begin my course in African-American history. Students first write, then tell their stories in groups of three or four; and then we hear the "themes, issues, and patterns" that emerged from the groups. The themes from student stories predictably prefigure the enduring themes of the course. Follow-up reading or an assignment connects student themes to the substantive and theoretical material of the course. Thus, students' prior experiences are connected to the larger learning goals and key concepts, ideas, theories, and content of the course. Students become aware that their stories are part of a larger story and that White, Black, Latino, Asian, and racially mixed students all have a story to tell. Student and historical stories about race relations are interwoven throughout the course.

There is a reason for the order in the process of using student stories. By starting with their stories early in the course, or at the start of a new unit, we begin with where they are, with their prior experiences, identity questions, hopes, fears, and aspirations. By inviting students to look for common themes, patterns, and issues in their stories and to debrief them as "texts," we lift the discussion to a higher level of

analysis and synthesis and thereby begin to turn individual stories into a larger aggregate meaning. Joan Didion (1978) wrote that stories fill in the space between what happened and what it means to the individual. Making meaning from student stories is therefore crucial in connecting students with our learning goals.

### **A Little Theory behind the Power of Stories**

In his important article on "Taking Learning Seriously," Lee Shulman (1999) said, "we now understand that learning is a dual process in which, initially, the inside beliefs and understandings must come out, and only then can something outside get in. To prompt learning, you've got to begin with the process of going from inside out" (p. 12). Stories, therefore, are a way to access the learning that's already inside and then to make connections to larger themes and patterns. Using stories affirms the value of prior student experiences both emotionally and cognitively, helps students make their own meaning, and shows that we take learners seriously.

The use and power of stories is consistent with the growing body of literature on the role of emotions in learning and its inextricable connection with the intellect. James Zull (2002) showed how the synergistic interplay of affect and cognition depends on replacing prior embedded mental images or on unlearning prior misconceptions and errors (see also Lee, 2002). The unlearning happens by moving from "neuronal networks" in the inner emotional centers of the brain (i.e., limbic cortex) to the more cognitive, integrative reasoning centers in the outer cortex. Deep learning, therefore, depends on the brain processing first emotionally and then making reasoned connections. Far from "intruders in the bastion of reason," emotions and feelings are "enmeshed in its networks" and indispensable for deep learning. Emotional experiences enhance critical thinking; mind, body, and feelings are all involved in a holistic process of learning (Damasio, 1994).

Stories, along with music, metaphors and memory, best help us access emotions. Stories, Zull (2002) said, "engage all parts of the brain", which makes them key to where "learning is deepest" (p. 228). Stories "come from our experiences, our memories, our ideas, our actions, and our feelings." Therefore, he said, "you can see the

value of stories for the teacher. We should tell stories, create stories, and repeat stories; and we should ask our students to do the same."

### **Examples of Student Stories**

*Especially* we should ask our students to tell stories. But what kind of stories? In addition to stories about race, invite students to tell a story about a moment when gender, or class, or ethnicity mattered. Or about a moment when they felt marginal, discounted and/or when they felt affirmed, important. Or to tell a story about their names and where they came from. Other examples are stories of success: for example, "tell a story about a time when you were successful doing math [or art, a science experiment, or as a leader]." I know several mathematics and quantitative reasoning teachers who invite students to tell stories about moments in their life when they were good at "doing math" or to write quantitative autobiographies. These assignments reconnect students with positive earlier experiences before some insensitive teacher dampened their confidence.

What also happens when a teacher invites the success story is to acknowledge that s/he understands that the students are anxious about their current abilities to do well. The assignment takes an inner embedded mental image and belief that says, "I can't do this," and turns it into a "Yes, you can, because you've done it before." More importantly, the assignment shows that the teacher cares about students' learning by caring about their inner emotional state.

Stories can serve reflective activities as well as build self-confidence. Using a split page, as students on the left side solve the problem, work the experiment, analyze the reading, or interpret the visual, on the right have them reflect on their process by telling a story about what they thought—and felt!—during the assignment. To reflect on the connections between the two sides exemplifies learning from the inside out.

Any story about a developmental issue of autonomy, individuation, relationships, intimacy, identity, career aspirations, and spiritual or political values has the capacity to help students connect their inner selves to course concepts. For example, in teaching the American Revolution, I have often asked students to "tell a story about an experience you have had challenging, engaging, and struggling with

an authority figure in your life." And what 17-27 year old has *not* had such a struggle? In debriefing the stories, looking for common themes and patterns, invariably issues will arise of rights (curfews, clothes, cars), rebellions (fighting with Dad or a step-Mom or coach), and responsibilities (negotiating the responsible use of rights with these adults). By connecting contemporary mini-American revolutions with the historical American revolution, students identify larger themes and thereby make meaning.

Telling stories can also enhance faculty development work. For example, find one or more colleagues and have each of you tell a story about an important moment in teaching when you knew that learning was happening. Then help each other explore how that learning moment revealed fundamental pedagogical principles and style, and look for significant similarities and differences. Or you could each tell a story about a moment when you learned something that was important to you. What did you learn and how did you learn it? Be descriptive in telling your story. What was happening? Where? Who was there? When exactly did the learning happen? How did you feel? How has that learning mattered in your life?

Each of us will have his/her own examples of using stories depending on course content, faculty culture, and creative imagination. Given your current learning goals, what is the story you need to ask your students to tell in class tomorrow? Given faculty needs, what is the story they need to tell in a workshop, brownbag luncheon or other format?

### **Summary of the Purposes of Stories**

Telling stories is sacred work and also multicultural work. Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore (1988) wrote that stories are an invitation to cross the boundaries of our worlds into the worlds of others including their cultural and religious traditions. Stories are also an invitation to cross the boundaries into our own depths and lived mystery.

Stories take students deeper into themselves. Stories affirm the value of prior experiences. Stories connect student lives, issues, hopes, and fears with key course concepts and content. Stories honor and empower student voices, especially different student voices. Stories

show the value of diversity and build learning communities. Stories connect students and teachers together in learning about each other. Stories help students replace embedded images in the brain with new ones. Stories encode and structure memory for deep learning and making meaning. Stories, in sum, become "texts," pedagogical representations that make connections visible and concrete. For all these reasons telling stories enhances learning.

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## **PowerPoint: What is the Point**

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PowerPoint presentation software has been aggressively marketed to business and academic audiences with the promise that it will enable users to "work smarter" and make more "professional" presentations. Many teachers, from elementary school through college, have enthusiastically embraced PowerPoint as an instructional tool, claiming, for example, that it "enhances instruction and motivates students to learn" (Harrison, 1998, p.9). Critics, however, contend that the software's rigid format "usually weaken[s] verbal and spatial reasoning, and almost always corrupt[s] statistical analysis" (Tufte, 2003, p.3). Teachers thus face a dilemma. Powerful cultural and institutional forces promote the use of PowerPoint, but the software itself may actually undermine and distort student learning. The question is: how can a teacher use PowerPoint thoughtfully and effectively?

### **The Literature on PowerPoint**

The literature on PowerPoint and teaching falls into three categories. Articles in the first category offer ideas for creating and delivering more effective presentations. These pointers are almost always technical or aesthetic and avoid larger questions about PowerPoint as a teaching tool. Articles in the second category range from general accolades to specific teaching ideas. Literature in both categories is generally uncritical and takes PowerPoint presentations as given, rather than investigating when, how, and why they could be appropriately used. Even articles in publications devoted to teaching

do too little to place PowerPoint in the context of learning. For example, Buchholz and Ullman's "12 Commandments for PowerPoint" (2004) are really only tips that have to do with technical issues, the creation of slides, and presentation style. With the exception of the suggestion that presenters "use interactive exercises to address other learning styles," the "12 Commandments" imply that teaching is a one-way transfer of data rather than an interactive process. For all of its bells and whistles, PowerPoint in itself is static and does not necessarily promote the dynamics of effective teaching and learning.

The third category of writings attempts serious engagement with the use of PowerPoint in teaching. While noting both the plusses and minuses of PowerPoint, these articles frequently criticize its rigid structure that both cuts off dialogue and oversimplifies complex ideas. General complaints include presenting in the dark, which diminishes teacher and student interaction; lack of flexibility (Sequential presentation of slides can inhibit productive digressions and extended discussions.); and lack of creativity (A focus on the presentation of information can exclude attention to problem-solving.). Mason and Hlynka (1998), for example, argued that "PowerPoint's design and expected use adds to classrooms what there is too much of: teacher-centered, pre-planned, lockstep delivery of information, primarily through words" (p.43). PowerPoint focuses the classroom on the material, not on the learners; it distracts or mutes the complex interaction among teacher, learners, and ideas. MIT Professor Sherry Turkle asserted that PowerPoint is part of a general trend that "keep[s] us from complexity" and that "we should be quite skeptical about [it] as a pedagogical tool" (in Keller, 2003, p. 8).

### **Connecting Technology to Learning**

PowerPoint is not inherently capable of engaging students, despite enthusiastic claims by its promoters. By investing too much faith that the software itself will "transform a routine lesson into a lively, even memorable session" (Alster, 2002), teachers abdicate their own responsibilities. Such unfounded faith is best represented by those presenters who project PowerPoint slides on a screen and then simply read the contents of each slide, one after another, until the presentation is finished. Implicit in such behavior is the assumption

that teaching is simply the delivery of content and that PowerPoint delivers content in a format that naturally attracts students' attention. But, as Garmston (2000) argued, "the audience interaction with the content—if learning is the goal—is always more important than the content itself" (p.76).

Basically teaching with electronic technology is no different than teaching with chalk and a blackboard. Chickering and Ehrmann's observation (1996) that "for any given instructional strategy, some technologies are better than others" points the discussion of appropriate uses of PowerPoint in the right direction. The decision to use any form of technology in teaching should be made only in the latter stages of course design, when course goals, structure, and assignments have already been devised. Technology should not be an add-on or an imposition but rather a means for achieving the goals of the course. Consequently, as Garmston (2000) cautioned, PowerPoint "must be used flexibly and sparingly to provide audience interaction with its content" (p. 77) just like writing on a blackboard, printed handouts, videos or films, or any other teaching tool.

If PowerPoint cannot by itself turn a dull class into a lively one, it may still have effective uses in teaching. Tufte (2003) is correct to assert that "the core ideas of teaching—explanation, reasoning, finding things out, questions, content, evidence, credible authority not patronizing authoritarianism—are contrary to the hierarchical market-pitch" (p.11) of the PowerPoint templates. But the crucial question for teachers is always: why and how am I using this activity to promote the goals of my course? Tools in themselves accomplish nothing, unless they are employed for the appropriate tasks and wielded with skill and precision.

The key to using any technology effectively is to keep in mind what the course is really about.

### **How to Use PowerPoint Effectively**

Used in support of clearly articulated pedagogical goals, PowerPoint can enhance student learning in several ways. First, it can substitute for more cumbersome technologies like the overhead projector or a slide projector. A CD ROM loaded with images is a lot simpler and

more portable than a collection of slide trays—even if the picture resolution is considerably diminished. Similarly, complex mathematical and scientific drawings or formulas can be clearly and simply presented. PowerPoint can also vividly show processes: animated slides, for example can illustrate a chemical reaction, or reveal how a poet edited and changed a poem. Still the effective presentation of information does not ensure that learning has actually taken place.

PowerPoint slides can provide starting points for interactive processes that promote learning, but they are only a small part of that process. For example, prompts for writing or discussion, instructions for in-class activities, lists of talking points, or student comments can be clearly displayed to an entire class in large and easily legible type. In addition PowerPoint can enhance a discussion or lecture by providing supplemental materials for a variety of learning styles, including photographs, illustrations and graphs in color, and charts that reveal relationships.

Many teachers believe that students using PowerPoint presentations is a productive learning activity (Alster, 2002; Mason & Hynka, 1998); yet detractors believe that its rigid format stifles not only students' creativity, but also their ability to understand and convey information (Tufte, 2003; Keller, 2003). Consequently, teachers need to make as clear as possible what the use of a tool like PowerPoint is supposed to accomplish, both in terms of skills and learning.

Outside of the classroom PowerPoint can be used to provide review and supplementary materials to students: for example, notes with references to important passages discussed in class can be posted to a website and downloaded by students after class. For the disorganized teacher or student, PowerPoint can support preliminary organization of data. However, it does not support the processes of analysis and interpretation of data equally well, especially the complicated and extensive interrelationships among them.

## **Conclusion**

Despite outside pressures, using PowerPoint—either in the classroom or outside of the classroom—needs to be a sound pedagogical decision. It can support, but never substitute for,

carefully thought-out learning activities. Teachers need to be clear about what their use of PowerPoint is designed to achieve, for themselves, their students, and their courses. The primary goal should always be the promotion of deep, long-lasting learning by fostering students' interaction with the material, the teacher, and each other.

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For more resources on PowerPoint, visit <http://CTL.conncoll.edu/PP>

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# **Teaching Bioethics through Participation and Policy-Making**

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The teaching of bioethics is a dynamic balance between conceptual analysis and the concrete engagement of cases. Providing groups of students with the opportunity to research, analyze, discuss, and propose public policy on emerging topics in bioethics simulates the work of a "bioethics commission" and develops the traits of an engaged citizen. Because these activities are highly participatory and inquiry-guided, students are encouraged to integrate abstract concepts with concrete reality and to develop essential skills in critical reasoning.

## **Why Teach Bioethics to Undergraduates**

Teaching bioethics to undergraduate students in the humanities and social sciences differs from teaching ethics to medical students or residents. One primary difference is that undergraduates are removed from the clinical setting, where a clinically-based case method of teaching is widely practiced and where students can develop their decision-making skills "at the bedside" through the mentoring of more senior physicians. Another difference is that undergraduates are not in training to join a profession, in this case a profession that has developed a fairly stable body of principles that are "applied" to real-life moral dilemmas (Jonsen, Siegler, & Winslade, 2002; Wear, 2002). Instead, as part of a liberal arts education, an undergraduate

course in bioethics should aim to prepare students for life as an engaged citizen in a democratic society (Callahan & Bok, 1980; Kohlberg, 1981) by developing skills in critical thinking and encouraging active engagement in the deliberation of issues in the areas of medicine and biotechnology.

Critical thinking, most plainly, is the ability to make well-considered judgments. Critical thinking involves the analysis of concepts and arguments and the interpretation of concrete data or evidence (APA, 1990); but it also requires capacities for self-criticism, moral imagination, and empathy (Momeyer, 2002). It enables the discernment of better and worse arguments or better and worse courses of action, and thus rests on the premise that such judgments of value are possible. It is an essential set of skills, not because it is immediately applicable to a chosen career, but because "wide-awake, careful, thorough habits of thinking" (Dewey, 1933, p. 274) are important in all areas of human life, both individual and social.

### **How to Teach Bioethics**

One way to foster the development of critical reasoning skills in the undergraduate setting is to provide groups of students with the opportunity to research, analyze, discuss, and propose public policy on emerging topics in bioethics. This type of activity simulates the work of a national bioethics commission and encourages students to view themselves as participants in a significant public debate. For example, a group of students might study stem cell research or international research on AIDS, acquiring enough scientific, medical, and historical background on these topics to be able to identify potential ethical questions. Some questions that might be considered include: Do the benefits of stem cell research justify the use of human embryos? Are all sources of human stem cells morally equivalent? Are the existing safeguards to protect human subjects adequate for international research on AIDS? Should developing countries be able to benefit from AIDS research when their citizens serve as research subjects?

Without necessarily working to achieve complete agreement, students try to reach enough of a consensus to propose a policy or regulation. A group might decide that allowing stem cell research from "leftover" embryos created in the context of in vitro fertilization

is acceptable, for example, but that creating embryos for the sole purpose of research is not. Students must give reasons for their regulations; and, in searching for and articulating these reasons, students are encouraged to examine the moral values and commitments that underlie their positions. An in-class presentation of the group's work serves as the culminating exercise, and other students are invited to challenge and contribute to the debate about what ought to be done. Students typically relish this opportunity, seeing themselves not as a passive audience to be fed neutral information but as participants in a debate that matters. In other words, they exhibit the traits of engaged citizens.

These activities are highly participatory and inquiry-guided, which means the learning is driven by the task of solving a problem: devising a public policy. Students are invested in and motivated by the group's task and discover together what they need to learn about their topic. Included in this learning process is the integration of abstract ethical theories and concepts — ideally studied throughout the entirety of the course — into the concrete details of the case at hand. It is not a matter of simply "applying" the principle of justice to the topic of international research on AIDS, for example, just for the sake of getting something done (Evans, 2000). Students must ask: what does justice look like in this case? Does conducting an experiment to see how cheaply an individual in a developing country can be treated for AIDS promote justice, as we understand it? In asking these substantive questions, students in an undergraduate bioethics course are engaged in what Callahan calls "foundational" bioethics (Callahan, 1999). They are not merely engaged in means-end reasoning: how best to achieve an already settled goal (Wear, 2002). They are examining the goals themselves, and thus considering "a multiplicity of ultimate values" (Momeyer, 2002).

### **Developing a Wide-awake Citizenry**

As any teacher of undergraduate ethics can attest, this kind of substantive discussion of "ultimate values" or "the good" can be murky territory. The allure of moral relativism is strong and the resources for challenging it seem limited. As Momeyer observed, "Students frequently arrive in our classrooms with very limited ways of morally engaging problematic situations, by, for instance, appealing to religious dogmas or a relentless subjectivism and/or

relativism, or by privileging – as well enculturated Americans seemingly must, – the exercise of individual autonomy over all other values" (p. 412). Regardless of how one explains the allure of relativism, what is clear is that undergraduates need to develop skills in critical thinking if they are to be able to make the well-considered judgments that are inevitable and necessary in life.

One benefit of a simulated bioethics commission is that it directs students' attention toward a problem of public policy, which is to say a problem of societal significance. Discussing classic cases in medical ethics that focus on an individual patient's dilemma, such as, famously, whether Dax Cowart's requests to die after suffering severe burns over most of his body should have been honored by his physicians, provide essential occasions to learn about important concepts like informed consent, competence, and respect for autonomy. Indeed, effective teaching of ethics in any setting arguably requires a dynamic balance between conceptual analysis and concrete engagement of cases. But undergraduates also need opportunities to learn that their critical thinking skills will be needed in shaping the social policies of the future.

Why is critical thinking a legitimate and valuable goal? And why is active engagement or participation in shaping social policies important? As Dewey once argued, the point of education is to teach students to think on their own because conscious thinking and participation are the hallmarks of democratic citizenship. Others have followed Dewey's pragmatic sensibilities, including the developmental psychologist, Lawrence Kohlberg, whose "just community" schools were an outgrowth of his belief that democratic participation in the making of rules for everyone in a community fosters students' moral development. The writings of Jürgen Habermas (1995) on discourse ethics have also influenced legions of teachers to examine anew the value of a consensus-seeking dialogue that is widely inclusive and highly participatory.

## **Conclusion**

If we are to avoid living in an "administered society," where we passively receive what is handed down to us from others, it is important to develop a sense of engagement in the social policies that are made and to practice the critical reasoning skills necessary to

make well-considered judgments (Bellah, et al., 1991). Fortunately, continuing developments in medicine and biotechnology offer an abundance of ethical issues to debate. Teaching bioethics in the undergraduate setting is about paying attention to these debates and having a stake in their outcome.

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# Essays on Teaching Excellence

## *Toward the Best in the Academy*

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# Validity, Research, and Reality: Student Ratings of Instruction at the Crossroads

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Many faculty use student ratings of instruction to get feedback to assess their teaching practices and course designs. Over the last decade, however, faculty have become increasingly aware of new ways to understand and practice teaching. As a result, the teaching that student ratings seek to evaluate itself has become a moving and changing target. While acknowledging that there are other useful ways to gather feedback, I am writing to raise this question: *Since the research that supports the use of student ratings of instruction was conducted during a time when most courses were given using conventional, face-to-face teaching methods, how can we use ratings to get feedback when we adopt new teaching methods and/or technologies unexamined by ratings research?*

### **What has changed, and why should it matter?**

One striking change is an emerging shift in roles and responsibilities from the teacher as presenter of content to a facilitator of learning, where focus moves away from what the teacher does with course content to what the learner needs and can do. Certainly, the lecture is alive and well, but such slogans as "Sage on the stage versus guide on the side" and the emergence of a learner-centered education movement signal a sea change. New methods often include an emphasis on collaborative and cooperative instructional strategies in which student-to-student interaction works as an arena within which students construct meaning and develop skills; strategies in which students must discover for themselves the content they would have been given to memorize in past years; a stronger emphasis on problem solving; and strategies taking students beyond the acquisition of concepts to analysis of the structure of an underlying knowledge domain.

Add to the mix the growing use of computer-based instructional technologies that offer whole new ways to communicate instructional content and mediate communication with and among students in our classes. For example, we have web-based systems such as Blackboard, WebCT, Weblogs (blogs), as well as instant messaging and conferencing systems (e.g., WebMeeting and Breeze) and mobile computing using PDAs. These tools will offer ways to teach that we could not have imagined before their advent.

What should we ask students that will provide unambiguous indicators of how well these strategies and technologies work? First, looking at established collections of questions, some universities are updating their forms to include collaborative instructional methods (see University of Washington's IAS system ( <http://www.washington.edu/oea/iasforms.htm> ), but there are few published item collections such as The Flashlight Student Inventory ( <http://www.tltgroup.org/programs/flashcsi.html> ) that aim to assess salient aspects of new teaching modalities. The overall quality of collections so far appears uneven. Insufficient formal investigation of item or instrument validity or reliability has been conducted. As a result, the ratings research literature will offer little direct guidance. Faculty should be prepared to further assess the validity and reliability of adopted or adapted items.

### **A problem with ratings research: "shelf life"**

The body of research that guided the development of ratings questionnaires and the types of items in current use was largely conducted during a forty-five-year period (roughly 1955-2000) in settings where teaching practices (lecture, seminar, lab, and discussion) that most faculty would recognize from their own experience as students ruled. Thus, arguments for the validity and reliability of rating data and methods for constructing items are predicated on data mostly collected before current innovations took hold.

That same research revealed stable dimensions of teaching in conventional face-to-face courses, e.g., presentation, rapport, feedback, interaction, workload and difficulty (see, for example, Marsh & Dunkin, 1977). Do such dimensions translate to fully distance internet courses or courses that blend face-to-face meetings and online activities? Are there new, important dimensions of teaching effectiveness that we have not yet recognized? How do things like web design factor in? Unlike passive textbooks, interactive websites actually have "behavior."

Hundreds of respectable studies have examined the association of teacher, student, and course variables, e.g., gender, age, personality, grade point average, class size, academic discipline, and course level, with ratings and found significant associations among some, but in other cases did not show associations where popular opinion held they existed. Could new and unanticipated sources of systematic variation or bias in students' responses

appear when ratings are used in new settings? Many of us launching into constructivist pedagogies have heard students waxing nostalgic for the days when they were told "what to learn". Do students' expectations and orientations to one kind of teaching methodology dispose them to prefer certain methods regardless of how effective the instruction? From my own teaching practice I know not all students adapt equally well to fully distance courses.

I speculate that much of this work will generalize to new settings, but there is no way to prove that assertion until the research is updated to reflect changes in teaching practices and philosophies (and implied values). It will take time for scholarship in the field to catch up. Studies of these issues are on the rise, but the quality of the studies is highly variable. Meanwhile, we should assume that instructional innovation can pose real threats to both the validity and the reliability of diagnostic ratings items predicated on research conducted in conventional courses and proceed with due caution.

### **What faculty can do until the researcher arrives**

So, should faculty embarking on instructional innovation avoid the use of ratings altogether until another twenty years of research accumulates? Of course not. Well-crafted ratings items remain an efficient way to get crucial timely and anonymous feedback for improving teaching. However, the emphasis in that sentence is on "well-crafted." Good diagnostic items are informed by careful analysis of how a teaching method is supposed to work and are constructed with respect for established practices for developing survey type items.

A starting point for faculty who need to develop their own diagnostic items can be found in the work of Murray (1997), who first described the use of "low inference" items which describe specific and observable teaching behaviors that also point to broader, more abstract dimensions of teaching such as clarity, enthusiasm, organization, interaction, pace, and rapport. In Murray's Teaching Behavior Inventory (TBI), students respond on a scale ranging from "almost always" to "never" to the frequency of those behaviors. Although Murray's work was done during a time when lecture, lab, and discussion were the rule (and the TBI remains excellent for assessing conventional classroom teaching), it is the "low inference" measurement approach that I am advocating.

If your students tell you that you are not communicating clearly, you will need more information to remedy the problem. Asking whether you are enunciating intelligibly, presenting information at an appropriate pace, signaling transitions between topics, repeating explanations of difficult concepts, or using clarifying examples will yield action items for you to improve. Getting at those more specific teaching behaviors is the goal of

writing "low inference" items. Let's say I want to get feedback to improve the way I set up my threaded discussion assignments. If I only wanted an overall assessment, I might ask, "How effective were the discussions in facilitating your learning?" But if I wanted feedback for improvement, I would ask things such as "Did you know what you were supposed to do?," "Was there sufficient time to complete the assignment?," "Did the rules of the road for discussion allow everyone a chance to participate?," which taken together would tell me how well the activity was working. In the interest of keeping the questionnaire short, I would reserve this detailed view for a few facets of the course and use more general questions for aspects I am not likely to be working on soon.

This approach can be applied to observable characteristics of any instructional interaction, including new teaching methods and applies whether you are adopting, adapting, or writing your own ratings items. At the same time, do not assume because you are experienced at writing quizzes or because you've taken a lot of surveys that you know everything you need to know about writing ratings items. Get an orientation to the unique characteristics of ratings starting with the sources I mentioned earlier. With such focused information and some basic skills in item writing, you can dramatically increase the value of student ratings feedback and more effectively assess the impact of your instructional innovations.

### **And back to research: a parting thought**

It was that forty-year span of ratings research that helped us discover stable dimensions of teaching in the world of teaching as we knew it and gave us new instruments to help us understand students' perceptions and attitudes toward our work. As we find new ways to ask our students questions about how we are teaching, making a commitment to share what we have learned with each other and the research community makes us active participants in a learning community instead of consumers of ratings research factoids.

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# Essays on Teaching Excellence

## *Toward the Best in the Academy*

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## Why Knowing About Disciplinary Differences Can Mean More Effective Teaching

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Most faculty members are probably comfortable with the notion that their disciplinary background deeply influences not only what they teach but how they teach. And, indeed, a growing body of literature suggests that there is a host of effects--including level of commitment to teaching, views of students, and even teaching evaluation ratings--associated with disciplinary differences. This essay draws on that growing body of research to suggest ways of becoming more conscious of the way disciplinary training and orientation influence teaching.

### **Disciplinary Clusters and Views of Teaching**

One particularly interesting line of research, summarized by Braxton and Hargens (1996), concentrates on dividing the disciplines into meaningful clusters and comparing these clusters in terms of faculty's various academic roles and behaviors, including teaching. Very roughly speaking, the analyses by Anthony Biglan (1973a and b), David Kolb (1981), and Tony Becher (Becher & Trowler, 2001) have suggested that fields can be meaningfully classified by degree of scholarly consensus (with the highest consensus considered "hard" and lower consensus "soft") and their orientation to pure or applied research. This results in a useful four-fold clustering:

hard/pure (e.g., physics, biology, mathematics, chemistry), soft/pure (e.g., psychology, history, philosophy, anthropology), hard/applied (e.g., engineering, agriculture, computer science), and soft/applied (e.g., education, accounting, journalism, nursing). Use of these clusters allows researchers to explore how faculty in different disciplines display differences in their behaviors and attitudes.

Some of the insights gleaned from this approach seem obvious, a reflection of the objective reality of the disciplines. For example, "Faculty in high-consensus fields were more likely to use teaching assistants than those in low-consensus fields" (Braxton & Hargens, 1996, p. 33). (Because introductory science and mathematics courses usually draw larger numbers of students than introductory history or philosophy courses, there's a greater need for TAs in those courses.) But other findings are more interesting and likely to be useful to young faculty in the process of developing their careers or even experienced faculty attempting to be more reflective about their teaching. For example, Braxton and Hargens (1996) cited the research of Kenneth Feldman reporting that the relationship between teaching and research in low-consensus fields is at least moderate while in high-consensus fields it is insignificant. A young university teacher in physics or chemistry may benefit from knowing that she may have to work hard to make her teaching and research responsibilities mesh. Similarly, faculty members from a low-consensus field may put a high value on contributing to students' overall intellectual development. They should know, however, that if they are team-teaching with someone from a high-consensus field, that colleague is much more likely to concentrate on teaching content.

But interesting as some of these studies have been, will they in fact contribute to better teaching? Perhaps their strongest merit is that so many choices faculty make about the design of courses, assumptions about students, and selection of teaching methods are unexamined, not poor or wrong, but simply unexamined. These studies might encourage faculty members to reconsider some of what their disciplinary training makes them take for granted.

## **The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning**

What would it look like if the disciplinary context were the subject of careful reflection rather than the assumed background of one's pedagogical efforts? In its broadest sense, it would mean becoming a practitioner of what the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching--and many others--refer to as the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL). It would entail bringing to teaching the same rigor of inquiry and the same commitment to public sharing, critique, and evaluation of pedagogical practice as to research. The Carnegie web site (see especially <http://gallery.carnegiefoundation.org/>) and its publications (Huber & Morreale, 2002; Hutchings, 2000; Shulman, 2004a and b) provide many examples of the exciting materials emerging from the careful nurturing of the scholarship of teaching and learning.

## **Examining Unexamined Assumptions about Teaching**

But for faculty worried about the time and effort that a serious commitment to SOTL entails, are there faster and easier ways to use the disciplinary lens to strengthen one's teaching? We draw here from the work on pedagogical content knowledge, i.e., the knowledge of how to teach a particular field, (see, for example, Lee Shulman, 2004a and b, and Lisa Lenze ,1995) to guide us in questioning our assumptions about our usual discipline-based approach to teaching.

Perhaps one of the most dangerous assumptions is that students may have needs, interests, or abilities similar to those we had when we were studying the field. In private consultations faculty often tell us that they design lectures with themselves as a student in mind. For the few faculty who really struggled in their chosen discipline, such an approach can work. But for the vast majority of faculty to teach with themselves in mind is to imagine their least likely audience. Far better is assuming that students have quite different interests and abilities and providing them the opportunity to tell about themselves. A classroom assessment technique called the background probe (Angelo & Cross, 1993) is especially handy for this purpose.

A safer assumption about students is that any discipline has certain key ideas that are difficult to master; faculty need to pay particular attention to these concepts as they plan their courses. Here the SOTL

can make a particularly useful contribution to better teaching by encouraging faculty to share their strategies for making difficult concepts--such as Fourier transform in engineering, comparative advantage in economics, and thesis statement in English--understandable. In addition to identifying such concepts and focusing on the development of materials to elucidate them, faculty could also make a particular effort to give students early opportunities to test their mastery of these ideas, whether through classroom assessment techniques, assignments, quizzes, or other means.

Another assumption is that students enter courses already convinced of the importance of the subject area. Many faculty forget that in many cases students take courses mainly to fulfill general education or major requirements, to test their potential interest in the subject or, simply, because they think it will help them get a job later. In all these cases, instructors need to help students understand why a given field deserves their attention. Once faculty accept this attitude, they develop some of their most interesting and satisfying teaching materials. For one faculty member, it meant telling the fascinating stories of blind alleys in the field; for another it meant the construction of complicated 3-D models; and for the third it meant setting up elaborate simulations of real world diplomatic negotiations.

Thinking more consciously about the disciplines will also mean taking a fresh look at teaching methods. Humanists take discussions for granted; for scientists it is generally lectures and laboratories. But what happens when faculty are willing to look beyond their discipline for models that engage and stimulate students? One of the young humanists on the Stanford campus, an amazingly successful teacher already, launched a discussion with his fellow humanists by telling them ten things he had learned from scientists, engineers, and social scientists, such as the importance of frequent assignments, email office hours, having students do concept maps at the beginning and end of the course to help them realize how much they'd learned, required office visits, and on and on. He hadn't adopted any of these techniques whole cloth, but he'd adapted each successfully to enrich his own teaching of music. Had he insisted on staying within disciplinary borders, neither he nor his students would have benefited

from any of these successful learning experiments.

## **Conclusion**

Let us end with a plea to respect the importance of the disciplines and to continue to learn about them and accommodate them fully in our work with and as faculty. But let us also realize their limitations and their role in the assumptions that keep us from the fullest engagement of our students as learners.

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# Essays on Teaching Excellence

## *Toward the Best in the Academy*

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# Teaching for Diversity and Inlusiveness in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)

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Faculty and TAs in STEM disciplines have long recognized that the students in their classrooms generally do not reflect the diversity of the broader general and student populations. A central question is "What can any one individual instructor do?". In this essay, we propose that STEM instructors use a model adapted from research on problem solving (Bransford et al., 1999; Physics Education Research & Development, online) to explore the lack of diversity in the STEM student population. As expert problem solvers, STEM instructors are well-prepared to begin addressing this issue in their own courses and programs.

### **Comprehend the problem**

Getting started is often the most difficult step. Expert problem solvers begin by assessing the situation, then identifying and comprehending the problem. This step makes it possible to decide what data are important, what can be ignored, and what additional information is needed.

Many STEM faculty see their fields of study as broadly relevant to a wide range of people, independent of their social and ethnic identity. Yet participation and retention patterns show that non-majority students are much more likely to conclude that they do not belong in these disciplines. For example, participation rates for women and students of color in STEM disciplines are far from parity with their proportions in the student and "college age" populations. In 2000, the proportion of underrepresented minorities in the college age population was 34% (National Science Board, 2002a; U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Yet STEM bachelor's degrees earned by students of color ranged from a low of 12% in engineering and the natural sciences, to 15% in math and computer science, and a high of only 17% in the social and behavioral sciences (National Science Board, 2002b).

### **Represent the problem in formal terms**

Instructors who apply the expert problem-solving model to their own teaching may find themselves identifying and challenging assumptions deeply embedded in disciplinary culture. For example, some STEM faculty have suggested that low participation rates for women and minorities result from lack of interest or an inability to do the work required in STEM courses. However, minority and white 12th grade students express similar levels of interest in science and engineering (National Science Foundation, 2003), and a variety of studies have documented that "switchers" or those who leave these fields have academic abilities equal to or more advanced than those who stay (Seymour & Hewitt, 1997; Tobias, 1990; Widnall, 1988).

Could other factors be affecting why interested and capable students choose to graduate with other majors, and how can faculty influence their choices? Research shows that faculty play significant roles in the two most important factors affecting student learning in college, student interactions with faculty and interactions with other students (Astin, 1993). Research examining student attrition in STEM (Seymour & Hewitt, 1997) indicates that faculty actions impact student decisions in a variety of ways, including practices that encourage competition over collaboration, courses that seem uninteresting or irrelevant, negative perceptions of STEM careers, and poor teaching quality. This research also indicates that other students are a source of discrimination but that faculty may not

recognize inappropriate behavior or do nothing to prevent it (Seymour, 1995).

### **Plan a solution**

Expert problem solvers outline a solution to the problem to see if it will yield a reasonable result before going through the effort of implementing specific changes. Given new knowledge of the reasons that students opt out of STEM fields, instructors might plan to examine the classroom climate in their own courses. Instructors can observe or gather data on classroom interactions to address questions such as the following, adapted from Lattuca & Strauss (2003): What are my patterns of interaction with male and female students? What are my patterns of interaction with minority and majority students? What characterizes the interactions between male students, between female students, or between male and female students? What characterizes the interactions between students from majority and minority groups? What are the characteristics of students' interactions when they work in teams?

A plan for gathering data might include a faculty self-assessment and/or observations by an independent observer (e.g. a colleague, instructional consultant, educational researcher). The latter permit systematic data collection without requiring an instructor to simultaneously act as the observer and the subject of observation. Additional data about student perceptions of the classroom or program climate can be gathered from anonymous surveys or interviews conducted by an independent researcher, which can increase the rigor of the study and the likelihood that students will provide candid responses. Former students might also be willing to participate in surveys and interviews about their past experiences in a course or program.

Another solution plan might involve implementing strategies previously identified as successful for creating learning environments that make all students feel welcomed to the discipline (Chu Clewell & Campbell, 2002; Johnson et al., 1991; Schibeci & Riley, 1986). For example, do you ask students to make connections between course content and their own lives? Do you create opportunities for group or team learning, as well as independent or competitive learning? Instructors can design assignments and courses to evaluate

the effectiveness of different strategies.

### **Execute the plan**

At this stage in the problem-solving sequence, experts implement their plans methodically, in a way that makes it possible to isolate the effects of particular variables. The same methodological rigor STEM faculty bring to their research and design protocols can also serve them as they examine the impacts of different teaching methods and classroom environments on diverse students.

If one's plan is to help all students see the relevance of course content, particularly to students' socio-political and cultural lives, begin by gathering observations about whether students find the examples helpful. Ask students to gather "real world" examples of concepts from reading assignments, class material, or other sources. Ask students to explain how the examples contributed to development of thinking skills or helped connect class content with their lives. These kinds of activities can provide documentation of students' learning of course content through the examples and also help instructors see how effectively they are reaching all students.

### **Evaluate and interpret the solution.**

This final step is one of the most critical and helps differentiate novice from expert problem solvers. Experts check to see that the question is properly stated, data are valid, and solutions are reasonable. Guiding questions for this critical step might include the following: What were the intended results, and what were the unintended consequences of the experimental strategy? Were there any interaction effects or other variables that might have affected the outcome? What are the limitations and what can be generalized to other settings? How do these findings compare to the findings of others who have examined similar questions ?

While these questions do not necessarily yield conclusive answers, they do prepare problem-solvers to better address subsequent questions in the next iteration. As with most complex problems that engage STEM faculty, the challenge of increasing student diversity will not have a single, simple solution. Thus, as they do with other problem solutions, we suggest that STEM faculty consider this problem-solving approach to be only part of their investigatory

process.

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# **Essays on Teaching Excellence**

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## **A Roadmap to Part-Time Faculty Success**

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Part-time faculty often come to their teaching roles with strong content knowledge, but less knowledge of effective teaching practices. However, with proper orientation and support, part-time faculty can make valuable contributions to the academic community and find teaching to be a personally rewarding experience (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). This essay will give an overview of how to prepare for a part-time faculty teaching role.

### **Orientation to Part-Time Teaching**

How much orientation institutions provide new part-time faculty varies. In the best case scenario, you will be given a thorough orientation to the institution, department, and the course you are teaching. You will have a chance to meet colleagues and learn about available resources. In other situations resources may be more limited, and you might just be given a copy of the textbook and told to have a good year. If orientation is minimal, you will have a better chance of being successful if you proactively seek information and colleagues to help you prepare.

*Learn as much as you can about the course you will be teaching.* Ask about course goals and objectives. Request a copy of a syllabus that's been used in the past. Make an appointment to talk with a faculty member who has previously taught the course. Look through course catalogs and semester schedule bulletins for information about course descriptions, prerequisites, exam schedules, the names of other faculty teaching the course, and other useful information.

*Find out as soon as possible the type of online course management system (e.g., Web CT, Blackboard, Angel) used at your institution.* If you're not familiar with it, determine where you can get assistance in learning how to use it. Many of today's students are accustomed to having online access to course materials, so you will want to learn how to navigate the system prior to the beginning of the semester.

*Become familiar with relevant institutional policies and procedures.* Find out how to handle administrative matters such as students adding and withdrawing from classes and more challenging issues such as dealing with student academic misconduct. Most institutions have a faculty handbook that contains this information, as well as information about pertinent employment policies. Your department may have a similar handbook with information about department-specific policies. If you're not given a faculty handbook, find out whether you can access one online, or ask your department how to get a copy.

*Find out how you will be evaluated as a part-time faculty member.* Although full-time faculty members often have to provide extensive documentation for an annual review, part-time faculty are usually evaluated in a much less in-depth manner. Your evaluation may be based solely on student evaluations at the end of the semester, but it might involve classroom observations or other forms of feedback about your

teaching, too. Consider requesting a copy of the student evaluation form that will be used so you know in advance the questions students will be asked to evaluate your teaching.

## **Teaching Practices**

Stay informed about best practices, trends in education, and your own institution's mission, values, and strategic priorities. Consider how you might adopt best practices and advance your institution's and department's priorities.

*Plan thoughtfully for the first day of class.* The first day of class is especially important because it sets the tone for the semester. The McKeachie (2002) and Davis (1997) teaching handbooks have excellent chapters related to preparing for the first day of class.

*Develop your repertoire of active learning instructional strategies.* In recent years, there has been a de-emphasis on lecturing as education has moved from a teaching to a learning paradigm (Barr & Tagg, 1995). The teacher's role has been changing from being a transmitter of knowledge to being a facilitator of student learning. To learn more about active learning strategies, consult Bean's (1996) *Engaging Ideas* or Silberman's (1996) *Active Learning: 101 Strategies to Teach Any Subject*.

*Meet the needs of students with different cultural backgrounds.* Being clear about your expectations for students, encouraging students to express a variety of perspectives, and maintaining an atmosphere of respect for diversity in your classroom are a few of the strategies you can adopt to better meet the needs of all students. To learn more on this topic, see Nancy Chism's chapter about "Valuing Student Differences" in McKeachie (2002).

*Gather formative feedback from your students to find out what*

*they are learning and how you can better meet their needs.* Consider asking them on the first day of class about their reasons for taking the class and what they hope to get out of it. At the end of a class period, have them do a minute paper - ask them what the most important thing is that they learned in class and one question they still have. Details about the minute paper and other quick and easy techniques for obtaining feedback can be found in Angelo and Cross's (1993) *Classroom Assessment Techniques*.

*Connect course content with real-world experiences.* If you are working in a field related to the course you are teaching, sharing real-life applications of course concepts based on your experiences can be very enriching and interesting for students.

*Collect mid-semester feedback from your students about how the course is going.* If your institution has a teaching and learning center or an instructional consultant available, they may be willing to do a focus group with your students mid-semester to find out what's working well and what's not working well in class. Or you could simply ask students to complete an anonymous survey asking them to identify aspects of the course that are helping them learn and to suggest improvements in the course to help them learn better. This will enable you to make mid-course adjustments to make it a better learning experience for your students, and it might enhance your end-of-semester teaching evaluations.

*Work on strengthening your connections to your department and institution.* Be responsive to contacts and requests from your department and school. If you would like to become more involved, be sure to let your department know. Administrators often are reluctant to expect part-time faculty to do anything beyond teaching. Also look outside your department for campus activities and events that you might attend. Get on campus news listservs, read the campus newspaper, and

delve into the campus website to find out more about campus opportunities. The stronger your connections with the institution, the better equipped you'll be to enhance your students' experiences.

## **Teaching Resources**

*Seek out campus resources related to teaching. Many institutions offer workshops or events focused on teaching.* These are excellent opportunities to hear from experts and share experiences with colleagues. Try asking experienced faculty members if you could observe their classes. If you have a campus teaching center, that's an excellent place to find out about the availability of teaching resources.

*Purchase a general teaching handbook.* McKeachie and Davis are excellent basic handbooks for all faculty. If you are interested in a handbook specifically for part-time faculty, Bianco-Mathis and Chalofsky's (1996) *The Adjunct Faculty Handbook*, Grieve's (1995) *A Handbook for Adjunct/part-time Faculty and Teachers of Adults*, or Lyons' (2004) *Success Strategies for Adjunct Faculty* would be appropriate.

*Search the web for information related to teaching.* One place to start your online search is the website for the University of Kansas' Center for Teaching Excellence (<http://www.ku.edu/~cte/resources/websites.html>), where they have a comprehensive list of links to teaching centers in North America, Asia, Australia, and Europe. Many of these centers have extensive online resources related to teaching, including topics such as course planning, active learning, assessment, inclusive teaching, grading rubrics, classroom management, online teaching, and more.

## **Career Considerations**

*Reflect on how a part-time faculty role fits with your career goals and professional development.* Part-time faculty positions can be good career moves, but the outcomes associated with working as a part-time faculty member do not always fit with career aspirations. Satisfaction with the role is likely to be greater when you have realistic expectations of the role and how it can help you reach your career goals. For information on career strategies, see Lyons or Jill Carroll's (2001) *How to Survive as an Adjunct Lecturer: An Entrepreneurial Strategy Manual*.

## **Conclusion**

You may find that your greatest rewards from part-time teaching come from the enjoyment of teaching. By seeking the resources you need for a thorough orientation to teaching, establishing a strong connection with your institution, and locating sources of help and inspiration, you will be setting yourself up for success in your teaching.

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