

July - August 2001

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

From the Office of the Associate Dean Vol. 5 No. 6

Addressing Individual Differences

The ACES Fall Teaching Symposium is scheduled for Friday, August 17, 2001 at the Levis Faculty Center. The program begins with refreshments at 8:30 a.m. and will conclude by 1:00 p.m. The planning committee (Michael Plewa, Phil Buriak, Jeff Moss and Bob Skirvin) has selected Dr. Bryan Garton, University of Missouri-Columbia, to be the featured speaker and workshop leader. Dr. Garton teaches courses on teaching and learning and conducts research in the area of learning styles and individual differences.

The symposium will focus on identifying how people learn differently, and how instructors teach to their preferred way of learning. Participants will be able to identify alternative teaching strategies to help all students learn more by addressing the different ways in which people learn.

The ACES Academy of Teaching Excellence sponsors the annual symposium. Registration information is included in this newsletter. Don't miss this excellent opportunity to learn more about how students learn, how we teach, and how we can use that information to promote better learning.

ACES New Student Welcome

Please mark your calendars

August 30, 2001

Krannert Center

ACES Student Council Honors

The ACES Student Council presented several awards during the ACES Student Awards Banquet. Outstanding New Member for 2000-01 was **Beth Wilson**. Outstanding Student Award was presented to **Michael Gunderson**. The Outstanding ACES Club Award was presented to the **Illini Dairy Club**. And

the Outstanding Club Adviser was **Gene McCoy**, adviser to the Illini Dairy Club.

Congratulations to these students and adviser for their contributions to leadership development in the College of ACES.

College Awarded PITA Grant

ACES has been awarded another grant from the UIUC Teaching Advancement Board through the Provost's Initiative for Teaching Advancement. The grant will supplement the Fall 2001 Teaching College course with a new unit on problem-based teaching. In addition, "Spice Box Seminars" will be offered for all faculty in the College to learn problem-solving techniques and how they can be incorporated into existing courses.

Instruction will be provided on five problem-solving techniques and how they can be used to engage students in learning through practical experiences in the classroom and lab. Content is not altered; only the approach to teaching the content is adjusted so that students learn how to use the learned content to make judgments and decisions. As "the right answer" changes later in their careers, students should still be able to solve problems because they have learned how rather than simply learned current content. Teaching enhancement seminars will be offered during the next academic year. Be sure to watch for the announcements!

Quality of Life Issues for Faculty

The following summary is adapted from an article in the December 2000 *The Teaching Professor*, based on an article in *To Improve the Academy* (Anker Publishing).

Few would question that the quality of our classroom performance is related to, probably even results from, a larger set of feelings about our professional life and the work associated with it. What are those most important quality of life issues, and how do we feel about them?

A team of researchers interviewed 48 faculty members at Appalachian State University. Each interview last 90 minutes, and two faculty interviewers recorded faculty responses to questions in three areas (individual quality of life, organizational culture, and mission and vision). The team found that responses could be clustered into five themes.

The Centrality of Relationships

The faculty in this sample give relationships with students a very high priority. They find deep personal satisfaction in those relationships and create environments for learning out of them. The problem is that this faculty group felt they had less and less time to devote to these relationships. Also discussed in this theme were enduring positive (and sometimes negative) relationships with colleagues, as well as the tension between important relationships at work and those at home. Overall with this sample, quality of life is very much a function of quality relationships.

Commitment to Student Learning

Most faculty members are deeply committed to providing meaningful and life-changing learning experiences for students. They often see their work as a calling, requiring strong commitment and sense

of purpose. Faculty in this sample were troubled by shrinking resources and pressures for accountability, both of which they believe jeopardize their efforts to provide quality educational experiences to and for students.

Satisfaction with Academic Life

The theme here was the delight that faculty took in being in a profession where they really enjoy the work. These were faculty who liked to learn and share that learning with students. Quality of life certainly relates to job satisfaction, and most faculty find great satisfaction in what they do.

Personal Sacrifice

The issue here is workload and the fact that most faculty in this sample find it difficult, bordering on impossible. What ends up making it possible is that most faculty compensate by making personal sacrifices, such as spending less time with family. It's a constant juggling act, but the ball that gets dropped most often is life at home. If the academic life is to be a quality life, there must be better ways to balance the professional and the personal. It should not always be about tradeoffs.

Incongruity Between Rhetoric and Action

These faculty expressed concern about the disconnect between what institutional leaders say and what they do. The disconnect was illustrated with a mission statement that says teaching and learning are first priorities, but a set of institutional policies, practices, and budget allocations indicate that other goals are more important. There is also a disconnect between policy and practice, one where substance plays second fiddle to procedure. The net result was a lack of confidence in and trust of college administrators. We shouldn't take the quality of life on our own campuses for granted, and assume that it is as it has been and always will be. Because quality of life is such a key ingredient for effective teaching and learning, we must take it seriously and assume part of the responsibility for preserving, protecting and improving it.

First Day of Class

The Fall Semester schedule is the same as last fall. The first day of class is Wednesday, August 22. However, students should attend classes according to their *Monday* schedule. Be sure that your class syllabus reflects this schedule.

The UIUC Senate Policy requires all class days to meet a minimum of fourteen times during a semester. The Labor Day holiday, along with the full week fall break in November, reduces the number of Monday class meeting days to thirteen, necessitating the schedule change. So remember the first Wednesday is Monday!

Course Activity and Assignments: Let Students Make Decisions

Adapted from an article in *The Teaching Professor*, January 2001.

Obviously you can't let beginning students design their own assignments, but what if you designed a set

of assignments, more than you would normally use in a course, and then let students choose which of the set they will complete? You can encourage them to make those decisions based on what they know about themselves as learners, previous experiences, or assignment structures that most intrigue them. Don't be offended when students seek to choose "easy" assignments -- if you don't have any like that, then that won't be a relevant criterion.

Or consider giving students a role in setting up some of the logistics or parameters of an assignment. How about letting them set the assignment deadlines? You could have them do this for individual or group work. You could have them establish a whole timeline for a group project, saying when each step will be completed and submitted, and even saying what the penalties will be if those deadlines are not met. Does it matter if you don't get all the assignments at the same time? You'll have to decide that, but an argument could be made that spreading the grading tasks out makes your workload more manageable.

Standards for the Scholarship of Teaching

Kreber and Cranton (Journal of Higher Education, 71 (4), 476-495) addressed standards for the scholarship of teaching. *The Teaching Professor*, February 2001.

If the process of learning about teaching and the resulting knowledge is to count as scholarship, it has to meet the same standards as are expected of other kinds of scholarly work. The authors advocate: the work requires a high level of discipline-related expertise, it breaks new ground or is innovative, it can be replicated or elaborated, it can be documented, it can be peer reviewed, and it has significant impact. The scholarship of teaching includes both learning about teaching and demonstration of that knowledge. The question remains: How committed is the profession to rewarding teaching that is scholarly and dealing with the rest that is not?

Student Ratings -- Guidelines for Improvement? What role does the student play? Part 4

In the past, the instructor and student roles in student ratings have been addressed. This month, studies concerning outside observers in the classroom will be discussed. Overall, it is important to note that peers and colleagues tend to rate instructional effectiveness essentially the same as students in a classroom. This means that peer/colleague evaluation is merely another way to confirm student ratings and allow an instructor more well-rounded feedback.

With a correlation of .54, administrator and student ratings are related (Kulik and McKeachie). In fact, it does not even matter what time of year or part of the semester ratings are completed.

Student ratings correlate with colleague's ratings, .48 to .69 (Kulik and McKeachie). Colleague ratings, done by trained observers, can also be used to determine ratings. A study by Feldman reviewed five studies on trained observers and found a .5 correlation between the trained observer rating and global student ratings. Thus, peer ratings based on classroom observation are somewhat reliable if the observers are trained and strive to maintain consistency. Then, the only problem becomes funding and availability of trained observers for faculty.

In conclusion, feel free to consult administrators and/or colleagues/peers to improve your teaching. And,

be ready to address some possible biases in student ratings and variables that might need a little control in the next issue of *Academic Programs*.

-- By Annie Hernandez, graduate assistant in Academic Programs.

From *Syllabus*, February 2001.

UIUC New Student Convocation

August 20, 2001

4:30 p.m.

Assembly Hall

Distance Learning Research and Practice

Much of the work in traditional distance learning has its origins in the more than 30 years of work at the Open University in the United Kingdom. Many other countries with geographically dispersed populations such as Canada and Australia are also rich sources of research and practice.

The books by Bates and Daniel are excellent starting points for learning about well-designed and cost-effective distance education programs and experiences. Bates's book provides a summary of the media and technologies used in distance education and discusses the design and applications of each of these media formats. Daniel's book analyzes the Internet and the array of tools for supporting flexible, asynchronous learning, and the role and management of mega-universities. The book by Moore and Kearsley provides a solid introduction to the field of traditional distance education. The monograph by Sherron and Boettcher describes some of the foundational ideas supporting the development of interactive distance learning programs at Florida State, combining synchronous video conferencing, Web, and traditional print resources.

References for additional reading.

Bates, A.W. (Tony). *Technology, Open Learning and Distance Education*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Boettcher, Judith V. "Distance Learning: Another Look at the Tower of WWWebble." *Syllabus*, October 1999, pp. 50-52.

Daniel, John S. *Mega-Universities and Knowledge Media: Technology Strategies for Higher Education*. London: Kogan Page, 1997.

Moore, Michael G., and Kearsley, Greg. *Distance Education: A Systems View*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1996.

Sherron, Gene T. and Boettcher, Judith V. *Distance Learning: The Shift to Interactivity*. Vol. 17, CAUSE Professional Paper Series. Boulder, CO: CAUSE, 1997. www.educause.edu

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