

February 2002

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

From the Office of the Associate Dean Vol. 6 No. 2

PITA Grants Funded

The Teaching Advancement Board has announced the funding of grants through the Provosts Initiative for Teaching Advancement. Faculty in ACES will receive two grants. Guillermo Mendoza, NRES, received a grant to develop additional course materials and revise an NRES course that addresses geographic information systems. Kirby Barrick, Academic Programs, Cleo Darcy, Crop Sciences and Academic Programs, and Tim Garrow, FSHN, received a grant for addition work in annual teaching performance assessment and teaching improvement.

Enhancing Learning with Technology

2001-2002

The goal of the ACES WebCT project is to make it as easy as possible for ACES faculty to create and maintain class web sites. To this end the College has created a web site for each Spring 2002 ACES class using WebCT software. Up-to-date class rosters are pre-loaded for your class. Summer and Fall classes will have sites ready in April. Web sites will remain active from semester to semester to allow modification.

The choice of WebCT reflects trends in the college (where it is the most heavily used software) and at most of our peer institutions in the Midwest. We also had the opportunity to expand an existing and successful WebCT server in the College maintained by the ACE department.

As always faculty are free to continue using other software such as Blackboard, Mallard and WebBoard. For those already using the campus WebCT server, you can move it now or wait till summer.

You also have the choice of how to use the sites. Some faculty may only post a syllabus and occasional handouts, others may also take advantage of on-line discussion, quizzing and other features. Faculty, TA's and departments have primary responsibility for maintaining WebCT sites. The AIM Lab in ITCS will provide free start-up support and coordinate faculty training.

For more information on training and support, contact John Schmitz at jschmitz@uiuc.edu or 244-2291. Visit the ACES WebCT Web site at <http://web.aces.uiuc.edu/aim/e-learning>

This project is sponsored by Academic Programs, ACES.

Call for Abstracts

The 2002 Annual Conference hosted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln will be held in Lincoln, Nebraska, June 19-22. The theme for this years conference will be: The Impact of

Student Advising: Assessing and Rewarding

Presentations may address: 1) advising students regarding academic or non-academic issues, 2) advising and rewarding of advising, 3) innovative advising models, 4) or any other issue concerning teaching and learning.

Abstract Submission:

Submit a 3.5" disk (MS Word format) and two hard copies of an abstract limited to 200 words (not including title and by-lines). Abstracts should have 1" margins, single-spaced text, and include title, name of author(s), institutional affiliation, and complete mailing address, including phone number and e-mail. Indicated in your cover letter whether the abstract will be an oral or poster presentation. Abstracts are subject to editing before publication in the NACTA Journal and may be returned to the authors for revisions. Those considered inappropriate for the journal will be declined for publication. Deadline: postmarked March 4. For more information, visit the NACTA website: <http://nacta.cses.vt.edu>

Some Tools for Teachers

The following items appeared in the January 2002 issue of *Syllabus* magazine.

The availability of term papers from Web sites, and the ease of using them, causes some instructors to consider ways to recognize a downloaded paper. Here are some web sites that are designed to help locate lifted material.

www.plagiarism.org

www.turnitin.com

www.plagiarized.com

www.paperbin.com

www.howoriginal.com

www.canexus.com

www.plagiserve.com

Another anti-plagiarism tactic? Rebecca Howard Moore, Syracuse University, wrote: We deprive our students of an authentic audience if we assign papers that are due at the end of the term and that the students never see again. We deprive them of an interested audience if we scrawl a grade and a good work on a paper and nothing else. We deprive them of a respectful audience if we tear apart the style, grammar, and mechanics of their papers, marking every error and accusing them of illiteracy with split infinitives, without ever talking with them about what they were trying to accomplish, how they might achieve their goals, and why all the style, grammar, and mechanics matter anyhow.

And for some great audio clips to add to your classroom lecture or Web site, check out the Speech and Transcript Center at gwis2.circ.gwu.edu/~gprice/speech.htm. I listened to my favorite oration of modern times, the I Have a Dream speech by the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther

King, Jr. What a speech and what a speaker!

Professors Evolving?

From *The Teaching Professor*, December 2001

Are professors evolving, as in growing, changing, and getting better? Or is evolving professor an oxymoron? We start out being novice, inexperienced teachers and end as pedagogical experts. The metamorphosis is not inevitable, not all teachers reach the final stage and occasionally some regress. Hebert and Loy identify four evolutionary archetypes that represent four stages of growth.

The Sage - No longer a particularly popular stage of development, most of us started here, and we all have colleagues who continue here. The sage walks into class, proceeds to the front of the room, finds a comfortable position, and begins to disseminate information. As many have observed, this is the easiest and least threatening form of teaching. In this very teacher-centered instructional mode, the learner is not given much consideration.

The Thinker - This is not to intimate that faculty members employing the lecture mode of teaching are nonthinkers; rather, it implies they are failing to think of the learning experience from the students point of view. As faculty become aware of issues related to student learning, they frequently start to question the merits of the lecture method. But the method is comfortable and fits what the instructor believes about roles and responsibility in the educational process. Faculty at this stage discuss alternatives, sometimes debate them and occasionally even start fussing around the edges with change.

The Builder - At this stage the thinkers take action, and they usually take it in the direction of creating more learner-centered classrooms. Builders accept that their approach to teaching will become more student-centered which may lead to less personal control. The move simultaneously results in fear and excitement. Builders may still lecture, but some will speak much less often. At this stage faculty embrace both content and students.

The Master - Masters are long-time builders who sometimes have those days when everything clicks [and] there is an almost magical feel present in students and teachers... . These are the moments that make teaching memorable. But even the masters have days when things do not go as well. It may be the fault of the students who are now an intrinsic part of success and failure in the classroom.

We can let evolution take its course or we can use theories like these to intervene constructively in the process.

Assessing Faculty Performance

During the 2000-01 academic year, faculty in ACES participated in a comprehensive survey

addressing faculty performance assessment. This is the seventh and final article intended to provide discussion and thought on how faculty in each of the seven ACES departments might consider improvements in the annual performance systems currently utilized. This article is based only on aggregate data of the College, not individual department ratings.

Faculty responded to five statements related to how the results of the annual performance assessment should be reported to them. On the seven-point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, all five items were rated 4.4 or above: department head should meet with each faculty member to discuss results of annual assessment (6.0); feedback regarding performance should be provided prior to reporting of annual salary for the next year (5.7); faculty should receive a written summary of their performance assessment (5.5); department head should meet with faculty who request it to discuss performance results (5.4); and faculty should receive a written indication of their relative ranking within the department or peer group (4.4).

What suggestions can be derived from these results? Department heads should meet annually with each faculty member to discuss the faculty performance assessment results. Faculty should receive written feedback of their performance assessment prior to receiving a notice of salary for the next year, and faculty have some preference for knowing their relative performance ranking within the department or peer group.

ACES Student Awards Banquet

Sunday, April 28, 2002

Park Inn, Urbana, IL

Norms for Improving Undergrad Education

From *The Teaching Professor*, December 2001.

Based on a review of literature, researchers have identified six recommendations for improving undergraduate education. They found these recommendations repeatedly in the literature, advocated by a variety of different sources and authors. The recommendations are:

- encouragement of faculty and student contact
- systematic program of advisement
- feedback on student performance
- learning about students
- fostering egalitarianism and tolerance in the classroom
- demonstration of a concern for improving college teaching

In earlier work, the researchers surveyed faculty at research institutions to ascertain whether or not faculty norms were present that supported any or all of these six recommendations. Among

the population, they found support for three of the recommendations: systematic program of advisement, providing students with feedback, and fostering an egalitarian classroom climate. At research universities norms were not in place that supported: encouragement of faculty-student contact, learning about students, or the improvement of teaching.

In a recent study, the researchers decided to repeat the survey only this time to focus on norms supporting improved education at teaching-oriented colleges. Surprisingly, they found exactly the same result. Among faculty at teaching-oriented colleges, norms supported the same three improvement recommendations: systematic advising, prompt feedback, and egalitarian classrooms. These researchers assume that if norms in support of a recommendation do not exist, that makes its implementation much more difficult and much less likely. This recent study further documents that norms supporting some very important kinds of improvements in undergraduate education are missing, even at places where we might expect the norms to be present.

Advising Colleagues on Their Teaching

If you've been around for any time at all and garnered even a modest reputation as somebody who cares about teaching, chances are good that you'll be asked to offer some collegial advice on teaching. The informal consultant to a teaching colleague may find some tips more relevant than others, but consider these from Jensens list.

- Learn what to observe in class and how to take consultant notes. This view of what happens in the classroom is considerably different from what you look for when you have been asked to make a summative judgment. The consultant perspective involves wanting to experience the class in much the same way the students experience it. When you give the instructor feedback, you need lots of specific and concrete examples to support whatever conclusions or judgments you offer.
- Celebrate successes, however small they may be. Frequently colleagues (and their administrators) don't ask for help until it's needed. Yes, the instruction may well need to be improved in some pretty significant ways, but always be sure to include feedback about what worked well in the course. All teachers need encouragement and positive feedback. Your feedback always includes a blend of positive and negative assessments.
- Let your colleague tell you what needs to be improved, rather than vice versa. After only an hour in the classroom, we can usually create a lengthy list of what can and should be done differently. Instead, use probing questions that lead the instructor to an understanding of where instructional strengths and weaknesses may lie.
 - It's not about you. We tend to propose to colleagues what works right for us, for our content, students, and instructional settings. But this relationship is not about you. It's about using you. It's about using your insight, experience, and understanding of

instructional options, to help a colleague figure out what's right and works for him or her, given all the variables of their instructional situation.

- Build a relationship, not a case. You are not a detective gathering evidence to convict a person of having poor teaching practices. Your job is to motivate and empower the colleague to improve. You don't do that well if you see your job as correcting and judging the colleague.

What your role should be: not to torture, but to nurture; not to disparage, but to encourage; not to command, but to coach; not to correct, but to suggest; and not to clone, but to hone.

From: Jensen, Jill D. If I Knew Then What I Know Now: A First Year Faculty Consultants Top Ten List. In Gillespie, Kay Herr, ed., *A Guide to Faculty Development: Practical Advice, Examples and Resources*, Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company, 2001.

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