

# ACADEMIC PROGRAMS



College of Agricultural,  
Consumer and  
Environmental Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

From the Office of the Associate Dean

Vol. 7 No. 9

## Five Key Changes to Practice

In *Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice*, Maryellen Weimer identifies five aspects of current instructional practice that adversely affect learning, recommends and illustrates alternative approaches, and documents the positive impact of the approaches. Even a brief exploration of each illustrates how much changes when learning is the focus of all aspects of instruction.

### 1) The Balance of Power

*The problem: Faculty make too many decisions about learning for students.*

In college, students make few decisions about their own learning. To illustrate the pervasiveness of faculty control, consider these questions. Who decides what students learn? Who controls the pace at which the content is covered? Who determines the structures (for example, assignment and tests) through which the material will be mastered? Who sets the conditions for learning (things like attendance policies and assignment deadlines)? Who evaluates the quantity and quality of the learning? In the classroom itself, who controls the flow of communication, deciding who gets to speak, when and for how long? Teacher authority, in part defined as the right to make these decisions, is so taken for granted that most faculty members no longer recognize the extent to which they direct student learning.

*The solution: In responsible ways, faculty should share decision making with students.*

When teaching is learner-centered, power is shared, not transferred wholesale. Faculty members still make key decisions about learning—just not all of them and not always without student input. And

power is redistributed in amounts proportional to students' abilities to handle it.

*Examples:* In order to involve students legitimately in decision-making about their learning, I no longer require a whole set of assignments but only one or two. After that, students select from a cafeteria of differently structured options. In some cases they also decide how many and how much of a particular assignment they will complete. Moreover I let students make key decisions about the class's participation policy. They identify which behaviors (asking and answering questions, making comments, reacting to the comments of others, for example) will count and what classroom conditions will motivate those contributions.

*The result: Teachers control less but student are more involved.*

Most faculty respond viscerally to the idea of relinquishing control. Student will surely take advantage of the situation. What if they orchestrate a coup and overthrow the teacher? In my experience (and that of many others), students do just the opposite. They try to return the power to reclaim the comfort of a classroom that absolves them of decision-making responsibilities.

Redistributing power does not cause learning directly. But it does have dramatic effects on motivation - on how hard students are willing to work without complaint. Furthermore, the experience of power motivates learners to accept still more responsibility and builds a commitment to succeed. Educational research of various kinds has shown that empowerment significantly affects student performance, even the performance of marginal, poorly prepared students—the very ones faculty see as most in need of direction and control.

The remaining “five Key Changes” will be

presented in future issues.

## ACES Welcomes 551 Freshmen

Fall 2003 brought a new crop of freshmen to ACES-551 in all. From the new student questionnaires that they completed, we know that 60% are female and 40% are male. And 13% are ethnic minority and 84% are white. We know that they are from 67 of the 102 counties in Illinois, and 3 % are not from Illinois. ACES admitted 69% of the 1,158 applicants (campus average was 65%), and 69% of the admitted students actually enrolled (campus average was 46%). In addition, 78 junior transfer students began th studies in ACES this fall.

Total undergraduate enrollment for Fall 2003 is 2,185.

## Fall Teaching Symposium on Critical Thinking

Critical thinking was the theme for the annual ACES Fall Teaching Symposium in August. Dr. Rick Rudd, University of Florida, was the featured speaker and workshop leader. Dr. Rudd promotes critical thinking through his reaching and research. He is also Assistant Director of the Teaching Resource Center in the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences of Florida. The symposium focused on the importance of developing in our students the ability to think critically as they obtain and utilize information to learn and to solve problems.

The ACES Academy of Teaching, the Teaching Advancement Board and ACES Academic Programs sponsored the annual symposium.

## Teaching College #7

Twenty-one faculty and graduate students are completing their participation in the seventh ACES Teaching College. Participants include:

Brian Berg	Grad Student	NUT SCI
Andrea Bohn	Asst. Dean	Ac. Pro.

Dawn Bohn	Grad. Student	FSHN
Patricia Brandau	Teaching Assoc.	CR SCI
Nick Brozovic	Asst. Prof.	ACE
Lynda Cabrales	Grad. Student	ABE
Keith Cadwallader	Assoc. Prof.	FSHN
Gustavo Caetano-Anolles	Assoc. Prof.	CR SCI
Ignacio Colonna	Grad. Student	CR SCI
Faye Dong	Dept. Head	FSHN
Beth Flickinger	Vst. Asst. Prof.	FSHN
Jennifer Hardesty	Asst. Prof	HCD
Young Ju	Vst. Asst. Prof.	FSHN
Denise Kubose	Grad. Student	HCD
Mosbah Kushad	Assoc. Prof.	NRES
Catherine Miller	Grad. Student	FSHN
Brandon Mitchell	Grad. Student	HCD
Jill North	Vst. Teaching Assoc.	FSHN
Kim Ocfemia	Vst. Teaching Assoc.	ABE
Ken Salo	Asst. Prof	NRES
Zhongchao Tan	Grad Student	ABE

Instructors for the course are: Cleo D'Arcy, Phil Buriak, Shelly Schmidt, Bruce Litchfield, Kirby Barrick and graduate assistant, Brandon Mitchell. The course is funded by the Academy of Teaching Excellence, ACES Academic Programs, and the Warren K. Wessels Fund.

## ACES Honors Designation

To help ensure that the campus "Honors" designation reflects UIUC work as well transfer work, the following change in operating procedures has been adopted in ACES, with the approval of UEPC and the Executive Committee.

Honors are awarded to academically superior students, with an Honors designation appearing on the diploma. Students must meet the cumulative grade point average minimum for all work taken for the respective Honors Designation: Highest Honors, 3.8; High Honors, 3.5; Honors 3.2. Transfer students must meet minimum for both the UIUC hours and for cumulative hours.

This change in Honors designation policy is effective for graduates beginning Fall 2003.

## Graduate Fellows Recognition

Friday, November 7, 2003

3:30 p.m.

149 National Soybean  
Research Center

## Council Resolution

The ACES Student Council adopted a resolution regarding undergraduate student involvement in the faculty selection process. The resolution was submitted to the ACES Executive Committee and each Department Head. The students received favorable and supportive responses from several Department Heads. Some have already adopted procedures to include undergraduates in the process, and others are considering how students can best be involved. The resolution, as adopted and transmitted, is as follows.

### Resolution

**Whereas** the Vision of the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences affirms that the College is committed to “always deliver[ing] superior undergraduate education”; and

**Whereas** the Values of the College indicate that “ACES creates an environment that is student friendly and conducive to learning and educational growth”; and

**Whereas** the ACES Strategic Plan proposes that the College “support ACES instructors’ effort to strengthen their teaching skills”; and

**Whereas** the faculty are the key factor other than the students themselves in ensuring a high quality education; and

**Whereas** undergraduate students are the primary benefactors of excellent teaching and primary victims of poor teaching; and

**Whereas** the selection of faculty is central to the Vision, Values and Strategic Agenda of the College; and

**Whereas** undergraduate students have first-hand experience in assessing teaching performance; therefore be it

**Resolved**, that the ACES Student Council requests that undergraduate students be involved in the screening and interview process for faculty and other instructional positions; and be it further

**Resolved**, that candidates for faculty and other instructional positions present a lecture to a class or present a seminar on a topic related to teaching and learning process; and be it further

**Resolved**, that the Dean and Department Heads of the College adopt the above procedures in all searches for faculty and other instructional staff.

Adopted this seventh day of April, 2003, by a unanimous vote of the College of ACES Student Council for forwarding by the Secretary of the Council to the Dean and Department Heads of the College of ACES.

## Student Club Support

The ACES Development Fund in Academic Programs supports a variety of programs including leadership development activities. Funds are made possible through annual donations from ACES alumni. ACES undergraduate student clubs that are Registered Student Organizations and members of ACES Student Council submitted proposals for funding which were reviewed by a committee of undergraduate students. Nearly \$12,000 is being awarded to 11 ACES clubs this year. Many of the funded proposals will support student participation in regional and national events. Other funded activities include speakers for club meetings, club field trips, and student exchange programs. Clubs that received funding this year include:

Association of Food Technologists

Field & Furrow Club

Hoof-N-Horn Club

Horticulture Club

Illini Ag Mech Club

Illini Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow

Illini Dairy Club

Illini Pullers

MANRRS

Rodeo Club

Student Advancement Committee

## ACES Dean’s List Minimum GPA

With the implementation of Banner in Fall 2004, the campus is revising the method by which the Dean’s List is determined. The following procedure will be used in ACES beginning in Fall 2004. In accordance with Rule 86 of the UIUC Code of Policies and Regulations Applying to all Students, the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) will determine the minimum grade point average (GPA) that allows approximately 20% of the students in the college to be named to the Dean’s List. The minimum GPA will be reviewed annually and adjusted as needed to maintain the 20% guideline.

Beginning Fall 2004, the Minimum GPA to be eligible for the ACES Dean’s List is 3.500.

## Lecture Breaks That Involve Students

Lectures promote more and better learning when they include breaks that involve students. Here are eight strategies you can use to make that happen. Use strictly enforced time limits, circulate around class

listening to what students are saying, and encourage student to exchange quietly with each other to keep the noise level reasonable.

**Pair and compare** - Students pair with a person sitting nearby and compare the notes they've taken so far. They should be encouraged to expand their notes during the process.

**Pair, compare, and ask** - Students do the above but conclude by jotting down a question they may have about the material. You might field a few of these questions before moving in to new material.

**Periodic free recall, with pair-and-compare option** - Students stop taking notes, close their notebooks, and on a clean piece of paper they write down the two or three most important points made in the lecture so far. Student may do this individually, then compare and discuss what they've written.

**Listen, recall, and ask; then pair, compare, and answer** - You deliver a short (emphasis on the short) lecturette during which student only listen. They do not take notes. When you're done, they write down the major points they've heard and any questions they have about them. Students should be encouraged to leave

case with specific questions. They might address those questions individually before they are discussed with a partner or in groups.

**Pair/group and discuss**- Students work together to discuss an open-ended question that involves the application, analysis, or evaluation of material just presented in lecture. Having students write something as part of this activity solidifies insights offered in discussion.

Adapted from *The Teaching Professor*, October 2003.

JBT 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Banquet  
Friday, December 12, 2003

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space between the major points so that when they partner and compare points, they can add material they may have missed. They might also be able to answer some of the questions noted.

**Solve a problem** - This may be an actual problem or it might be a test question. You might have students compare answers with a neighbor. Or you might have students vote for an option and then discuss the various possibilities with a partner.

**Quick case study** - Students work with a brief (one- to four-paragraph) case applying the content just presented in class. You might focus discussion of the