

# ACADEMIC PROGRAMS



College of Agricultural,  
Consumer and  
Environmental Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

From the Office of the Associate Dean

Vol. 5 No. 7

## Summer Orientation 2001

More than 600 entering freshmen and transfer students participated in Summer Orientation this past June. ACES orientation was a success, due mainly to the efforts of faculty and staff in the College. In addition to Academic Programs staff, the following people helped welcome our new students and ensure a successful start to their UIUC experiences. Thanks to all! ACE: Lyle Fettig, Hilda Lakner, Michael Mazzocco and Yupin Patarapongsant; AG ENG: Diane Reid, Randy Fonner, Alan Hansen and Michael Hirschi; AN SCI: Tom Carr, Gennifer Hartschuh and Roger Shanks; CP SCI: Fred Kolb; FSHN: Meredith Agle, Tim Garrow, Karen Plawecki and Beth Reutter; HCD: Gerry Walter; NRES: Bruce Branham, Jeff Dawson, John Edgington, Gary Kling, Mary Lowry, Tim Marty and Karyn McDermaid.

## Course Policy Decisions: Let Students Make Decisions

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

You might be able to get students involved in setting up or offering input on one or more course policies --- say the participation policy, for example. Students could work in groups, generating lists of behaviors that should count for participation credit and those that don't (or detract). You can integrate those behaviors into a draft policy that the class then reviews and votes to accept or reject. The same approach might be used with the attendance policy. Leave this (and other policies) blank on the "draft" syllabus you distribute on day one. Do students need an attendance policy in this class? If so, what should the parameters be? What penalties and rewards should be established? They might propose a policy that you implement for the first month of the course or until the first exam, and then use various measures to ascertain the effectiveness of the policy, revising as the results warrant.

## Grades: What Students Expect and What They Get

From *The Teaching College*, June/July 2001.

Most of us know there's a serious disconnect between our goals and expectations for grades and those of our students. But we might be surprised to learn just how far apart we are. Researchers surveyed 220 students enrolled in large introductory psychology classes to discover their motivations and goals regarding preferences for course requirements and evaluation methods. The results are not cause for celebration.

Here are some highlights:

- When asked what they hoped to accomplish by taking the course, 61% said good grades; 22% hoped to learn new information that they could apply in life.
- 44% prefer fun or interesting academic tasks, followed by 20% who prefer ones on which they'll get a good grade as compared with 15% who prefer ones that let them learn something new.
- 53% prefer multiple-choice tests, 10% essay tests.
- 83% think grades should be determined by a curve or modified curve, leaving the remaining 17% in favor of preset cutoffs.
- Students thought that A's, B's, and C's should each make up a bit less than one-third of the grades in a class.
- Mastery of the material should count the most, followed by effort, attendance, participation, and extra credit.
- 71% reported that they generally did get the grade they expected, but when they were surprised, for 58% it was because the grade was lower. And when the grade was lower, 74% believed it was because the professor failed to take into account the effort they had expended.
- When asked how accurately they thought faculty could assess effort, out of a possible 8 points, the mean was 3.68, below the midpoint.

The researchers conclude: "Overall, these students' preferences describe a set of conditions almost guaranteed to create high levels of dissatisfaction with the outcomes of instruction."

## The Power of E-mail

By David Brown, in *Syllabus*, July 2001

The creative use of e-mail is an excellent starting point for using technology in teaching. By supporting prompt feedback, collaboration, interactive learning, preview and review, and customization, e-mail can capture the educational advantages inherent in the Internet.

The benefits are substantial. Feedback can be timely and frequent. Messages can be customized. Shy students can be empowered. Professors and students can compose and read messages at convenient times. Student team projects can be facilitated. Communication can start before the class first convenes and continue long after the final exam. Archived conversations can be indexed, searched, and recalled for review. Course related e-mails can be "pushed" to e-mail boxes, eliminating the need to rely on a person going to the course site.

Here are a few e-mailing tips.

1. Collect the addresses of the e-mail boxes most used by each student and share the list with the entire class. Show students how to create an e-mail group. Add your own address to the list. Keep the list up-to-date.
2. State an expectation that each member of the class will consult e-mail at least once a day.
3. Train students to use short and specific e-mail subject lines.
4. Use e-mail for good news. Deliver bad news face-to-face. Anticipate the reaction of copy recipients, not only primary addressees.
5. Use e-mail for routine class management, including the distribution of class materials. When using a course management system, post an announcement on the course Web site and send that same announcement as a group e-mail to the class.
6. Before an important assignment, e-mail tips for success to the entire class.
7. In smaller classes, send a specific and personal note of encouragement or direction to each member of the class every several weeks.
8. In larger classes, assign several "students of the week" to monitor and consolidate e-mail questions from identified sub-groups of all students.
9. At the end of a class session, encourage students to e-mail you about what is still unclear, or to demonstrate their understanding of the concept of the day.
10. After a particularly important class, send an e-mail summarizing the major points made in class. Or, ask students to collaborate on answering a question related to the lecture and e-mail their response.
11. Use selected comments made during e-mail exchanges as discussion starters in a later classroom session.
12. Encourage students to be in e-mail contact with each other.

## GREAT IDEAS for Recruiting Graduate Students

Wednesday, September 26, 2001

8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

149 National Soybean Research Center  
(NSRC)

The College of ACES is pleased to be hosting a one-day on-campus seminar entitled: "GREAT IDEAS for Recruiting Graduate Students." The Colleges of Applied Life Studies and Engineering will co-sponsor this seminar which will focus on helping you to learn how to:

- recruit more graduate students
- attract the brightest and best graduate students
- enroll a more diverse group of graduate students
- gain a real advantage in recruiting graduate students

Tom Jackson, President and Senior Consultant of the Graduate and Professional School Enrollment Management Corporation (GAPSEMC), will conduct the workshop.

Graduate Advisors and other faculty involved with graduate programming are invited to attend.

If you are interested in participating, please register by email or telephone at: [acespd@uiuc.edu](mailto:acespd@uiuc.edu) or 333-2404.

Long-term ties to college placement offices are key to success. Businesses with best results take the time to participate in internships, resume and interview workshops, career fairs and career counseling. Especially important for companies that need to build up brand awareness.

The Kiplinger Letter, January 22, 2001.

# Assessing Faculty Performance: Documentation

During the 2000-01 academic year, faculty in the College participated in a comprehensive survey addressing faculty performance assessment. The summary data were shared with all faculty in ACES, and a discussion was held with department heads and deans. This is the first of several articles that are intended to provide discussion and thought on how the faculty in each of the seven ACES departments might consider improvements in the annual performance systems currently utilized. While there were some differences in mean scores across departments, the general trends were similar. These articles will use only aggregate data of the College, not individual department means.

Faculty responded to eight statements related to how performance should be documented. On the seven-point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, respondents indicated (5.9) that a meeting with the department head should be held to discuss the performance report. There was some preference given for including an update vita in addition to the annual report (4.7), but *not* using only the vita (3.6) as the annual report. There was also slight preference for using a two-year rolling average for documentation (4.5), departments creating their own format (4.4), basing documentation on the previous calendar year (4.4) as opposed to previous academic year (4.0), and using P&T guidelines for the reporting format (4.4).

What suggestions could be derived from these results? The strongest message was that faculty believe a meeting with the department head should occur to discuss the annual report. Also, the reporting formats could be reviewed, but there is no clear signal across the College for any particular format, except that a curriculum vita alone should not be used.

## Peer Observation Workshop

Who should attend? Faculty who teach. Faculty who serve as mentors. Faculty who serve on P & T committees. Department Heads and deans. Anyone interested in improving teaching through peer observation.

Friday, October 5, 2001  
350b ERML, 2:00-5:00 p.m.  
Watch for registration form!

## Student ratings--guidelines for improvement? What role does bias and other variables play?

Part 5

This article is the last in the series that has presented the paper "Student Ratings of Teaching: the Research Revisited" by William E. Cashin. Over the months, the role of the instructor, student, and outside observant have been addressed. Lastly, bias and other variables related to student ratings will be examined.

Bias is a factor many faculty worry about when handed student ratings, especially if the ratings were not exactly what they wanted to see. According to Marsh, bias in student ratings should be restricted to variables NOT related to teaching effectiveness. For example, the correlation between student ratings and class size is not a bias because it is known that students in a small class actually learn more. Instead of looking at variables as biased, they should be looked at as those that require control. Most of these variables have been mentioned in prior articles and include: faculty rank, instructor expressiveness, student motivation, expected grades, level of the course, the academic field, the workload/difficulty, etc.

There are also some variables that do not require control because they have little or no relationship to student ratings. These include age and teaching experience, the gender of the instructor, race, personality, and research productivity. Even though these variables do not require control, it is important to know about them because they are often thought to be sources of bias in student ratings.

In general, student ratings tend to be statistically reliable, valid, and relatively free from bias or the need for control. On the other hand, they are merely one source of data. This series has provided some guidelines for determining how student ratings can lead to improvement of teaching in your classroom. It is now up to you...

-- By Annie Hernandez, graduate assistant in Academic Programs

## Electronic Journal

*The Journal on Excellence in College Teaching* is available electronically. The Journal also welcomes manuscripts to be reviewed for possible publication. Abstracts of articles are available on the web site, but a paid subscription is required for full access. For more information, consult <http://ject.lib.muohio.edu>

## RAP Works

The Research Apprentice Program (RAP) is designed to provide research experiences for potential students who may not be aware of the excellent career opportunities in the agricultural, consumer and environmental sciences. The summer program is only as successful as the faculty make it, and ACES faculty have done well! Thanks to the following individuals for sharing their time and expertise with the 33 RAP participants. ACE: Michael Mazzocco, Paul McNamara, Paul Ellinger and Bruce Sherrick; AG ENG: Richard Cooke, Prasanta Kalita, Alan Hansen, and Steve Eckhoff; AN SCI: George Fahey, Darrel Kesler, Janeen Johnson, and Mike Murphy; CR SCI: Fred Below and Michael Plewa; FSHN: Jim Painter, Elizabeth Jeffrey, Keith Cadwallader, and Tim Garrow; HCD: Joe Harper, Geraldine Peeples, Angela Wiley, Kelly Bost, and Laurie Kramer; NRES: Gerald Sims, Bob Skirvin, John Masiunas, and Dan Warnock; VET MED: Barbara Kitchell and Karen Campbell

# Fall Spice Box Seminars

Four UIUC Distinguished Teacher/Scholars will lead fall semester “Spice Box Seminars” for teaching enhancement. Watch for reservation forms.

## **Sharing Best Practices**

11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Bevier Hall Spice Box

9/20/01 Practicing Pedagogy in the Digital Domain

**Shelly Schmidt, ACES**

10/11/01 Learning from Exemplary Teachers

**Jim Gentry, CBA**

11/05/01 Successful Groups and Teams

**Michael Loui, ENG**

12/05/01 Using the Classroom as a Laboratory

**Phil Buriak, ACES**

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