Campus Academy Hosts Forum on Teaching and Learning

By Denny Gulick and Frank Alt, Co-Chairs Academy for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Editors’ Note: The following report on AETL’s series of discussions during the 2006-2007 year exemplifies cross-disciplinary discussion of teaching and learning of the richest sort. We are convinced that these forums raised significant questions and issues, that the conversations they instigated were both reflective and productive, and that they are promising sites for local and institutional improvement. CTE appreciates these exchanges and seeks to sustain them for the benefit of teaching and learning across campus.

The Academy for Excellence in Teaching and Learning is a campus-wide organization of scholars whose mission is to interact with the campus and external communities on a broad range of issues pertaining to teaching and learning. During the academic year 2006-7 the Academy has organized a number of forums, several of which fostered discussion with CTE. Below we discuss the forums.

“Why Student Expectations Matter in Your Classroom,” led by Professor E. F. (Joe) Redish, Physics. October 9th...

According to Professor Redish, students come to classrooms with everyday knowledge. That sometimes makes it hard for them to make
Finding Space in the Hearts and Minds of Faculty and Students

In a recent meeting with administrators and faculty colleagues, I observed a rich discussion of the importance of connecting to the “hearts and minds” of faculty when we try to assess and improve student learning. Faculty who are not intellectually engaged in teaching often do a poor to mediocre job, as do faculty whose hearts are not in their teaching. In both cases faculty can go through the motions of teaching (e.g., cover the course materials, give the test and assign grades) but student learning is compromised and students are presented with a model that is counter to the richness of the intellectual existence that binds us to the academic world. When faculty feel teaching is a dull activity or a millstone, everyone loses. Fortunately, this rarely occurs. The vast majority of faculty I encounter on campus are busy, dedicated professionals who take their teaching and student learning seriously.

The critical word is busy. Faculty juggle the demands of teaching, research, publication, grant acquisition, service, and maintaining a life beyond the university. So what does this have to do with faculty hearts and minds? When, as a departmental, college, or university community, faculty work on issues related to teaching and student learning we begin to see, feel and understand the central importance of teaching and student learning to the mission of the university. When this work is recognized, rewarded, and made public everyone benefits and busy faculty find time to do the teaching work that is needed to bring about student learning. In contrast, when faculty sense that teaching is not intellectually challenging, and when their efforts are not recognized or rewarded, teaching takes a lower priority in their busy schedules, and – despite good intentions – student learning suffers. If we are to ensure that teaching and student learning is in the minds and hearts of faculty, we need to make sure that teaching is intellectually challenging and that we recognize and reward efforts.

The same is true for students. If we want our teaching to be in the minds and hearts of our students, we need to ensure our classes are engaging communities that recognize and reward the work of busy students. Students have equally busy lives; they try to balance the demands of class, work, and relationships, as they find their place in the world. So if a class is seen as disconnected, boring, busy work, or passive students will fail to give it the priority it needs or deserves.

There are no pat solutions for connecting class learning to the hearts and minds of students. However, there are some common guidelines and tools that can assist faculty in this regard. One easy tool is Chickering, Gamson and Barsi’s faculty inventory of “Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education.” This brief inventory provides faculty with an instrument for self-assessment in areas from student-faculty contact to active learning and expectations. It is just one of the easy methods of assessing how well faculty’s teaching is engaging their students. Chickering and Gamson have also written Applying the Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education, available at the university libraries. Copies of the inventory are available at CTE and adapted by the University of Toronto online (http://www.utoronto.ca/tatp/handouts/Seven_Principles_for_Good_Practice.pdf).
Give Your Course an Online Presence

Ellen Yu Borkowski, Deborah Mateik, and Sharon Roushdy
Office of Information Technology, Academic Support

Would you like your students to access their grades online? How about having them participate in an online discussion, answer a survey, or simply access the syllabus? ELMS (powered by Blackboard Academic Suite) can help you do that and more. Intrigued? Read on.

ELMS, which is short for “Enterprise Learning Management System,” is web-based software that is available for all University instructors, and is administered by the Office of Information Technology. It was rolled out for the Fall 2006 term as the single, campus-wide learning management system for the University.

What else can you do with ELMS? Additional capabilities allow you to post announcements, provide a list of web links, post assignments that can be submitted and graded online, and upload your PowerPoint presentations and other notes. An exciting new capability allows you and your students to participate in a “live” online classroom environment. In addition, all instructors are given their own personal file management area where files can be kept private or shared.

Whether you are new to course management systems or migrating to ELMS from WebCT, the learning curve can be eased through access to good documentation and training. The Office of Information Technology provides “Quick Start” and “How to” documents and workshop materials at the elms.umd.edu web site under the Faculty Resources and Training tabs.

In addition, this summer the Institute for Instructional Technology will provide several forms of ELMS training. The “Blackboard Bootcamp” will be a two-day event during which instructors will be introduced not only to tools for managing course content, collaboration and communication, assessment and evaluation, and gradebook administration, but also to strategies for constructing their courses based on effective pedagogical principles. Participants will develop their own course spaces during the workshop. Instructors who wish to concentrate on one or two toolsets during the summer will be able to participate in 1.5-2 hour task-oriented workshops. Registration for the following workshops is now available at the Training@Maryland web site (www.training.umd.edu) under IIT-ELMS.

OIT’s instructional designers are available to assist faculty as they strategize the integration of this technology into their teaching. Questions about the use of ELMS or requests for consultative support can be directed to elms@umd.edu. Visit the ELMS Web site at http://elms.umd.edu.

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**Blackboard Bootcamp**: June 6 and 8 OR June 13 and 14

**Assessment and Evaluation**: June 19, August 9, or August 17

**Collaboration and Communication**: June 18, August 2, or August 15

**Course Management**: June 20, August 1, or August 13

**Managing Course Content**: June 19, August 2, or August 15
An Interview with Sandhya Mohan  
Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of French

This is the ninth in a series of interviews with exemplary graduate student teachers at the University of Maryland. We hope to recognize and celebrate the significant contributions to undergraduate education made by our graduate students.

We are pleased to include this dialogue with Sandhya Mohan, who has taught in the Department of French and Italian, and lectured Hindi at University of Maryland. Sandhya has also taught languages in India and France, and last year directed the Maryland-in-Montpellier winter program. Sandhya is pursuing her PhD in French Sociopragmatics.

TLN: What are some of the techniques you have found to work best in the teaching of languages?

SM: I’m still learning, it’s a process, there is no magic answer.

What I’ve found to work best for me – and I’ve taught three different languages – is being aware of students’ needs first and foremost. Instead of going in with what I’m going to do and how I’m going to do it, if I’m aware of what it is that students really need I think that helps guide my teaching. What happens in most language classes, at least at our university, is we do an initial questionnaire – What have you done before? Why are you here? Why are you taking this class?

Being aware of the different proficiency levels is important. Just because they place at, say, French 203, which is an intermediate level, that doesn’t necessarily mean they all come in with perfect mastery of the previous levels.

In the classroom I use immersion. We speak only the language we’re learning. They have limited exposure to the language anyway, given that they’re in a foreign language learning environment. So I think we as teachers have an obligation to provide them with as many opportunities in the language as we can.

I think it’s also important to be as energetic as possible in your teaching. From what many students have said, grammar can be a very dull, boring experience so just being enthusiastic about what I’m teaching shows them that I’m interested and that I care about it and I believe that this in turn gets them interested.

Respect is very, very important to me. It works both ways. I respect the students and I expect them to respect me and each other in the classroom. I insist that students be respectful of each others’ opinions. Do not belittle what others have to say.

I also firmly believe in students being responsible for their own learning. Yes, I’m the teacher but there’s only so much I can do. The ultimate responsibility lies with the students. They have to be invested in what they’re doing, otherwise it’s useless.

TLN: What are some of the principals that inform your teaching?

SM: I have learned things along the way. Primarily, being respectful of the students’ needs, and not thinking, “I’m the teacher, so I know what you need, so this is what I’m going to do.” I’ve been trained in the East, in India, where the approach usually tends to be very traditional, teacher-oriented, and I’ve also been trained here, where its focus on the learner, the student-centered classroom. So I’ve had a combination of both and I do use both in the classroom. Students’ don’t always know what they need and if what they know is right. So that’s where my role as a teacher comes in and I say “this is right, this is wrong, and this is what you should be doing.” I do both.

“Mohan...” continued on page 6
Notes from the CTE Library

Donald Finkel’s Teaching with Your Mouth Shut, a Review by Anna Bedford

In Teaching with Your Mouth Shut, Donald Finkel makes a strong case for open-ended seminars and collaborative inquiry as an effective model for teaching and learning.

As suggested by the title, Finkel’s premise is that the most effective teaching is done without “telling.” How much of what we “tell” our students do they remember five years after the class? Could they pass the same exams months or years later?

Informed by Socrates’ example of learning and teaching, Finkel challenges the very model of knowledge acquisition that is implicit in traditional classrooms. Knowledge does not come from an authority, of whom we can ask questions, for where did that authority acquire her knowledge, and that source his? asks Finkel. According to Socrates, as Finkel explains, knowledge is not grounded in transfer, as we can deduce from following the links in the chain of Authorities to the beginning. “It is the process of attaining knowledge and not the person who acquired it, that makes knowledge legitimate,” surmises Finkel, appealing to the form of inquiry and process in the “scientific method” (35).

Finkel asserts that “Teachers can develop the discipline of careful reading by organizing their classrooms as seminars where students struggle to understand a book through mutual discussion – without an Expert’s telling them what it means” (31).

Finkel proposes a model to facilitate significant and lasting learning. Memorable learning experiences, he believes, occur when students discover knowledge for themselves. Finkel’s model includes first letting the books do the talking, and then letting the students do the talking, genuine group inquiry, and writing.

Throughout the book, Finkel proposes novel strategies such as “using” subjects instead of “covering” them, group inquiry, collegial teaching, interdisciplinary “problem centered” inquiry and methods to make learning personal. In his model, the teacher does not do the telling, but is active in the selection and sequence of books, mapping class activities, organizing study groups, planning writing assignments and other aspects of facilitating the students’ learning experience.

Finkel writes passionately and persuasively in support of experiential leaning. Reading with Your Mouth Shut is a unique combination of idealism and pragmatism. From his laudable and implausible ideals, Finkel dispels skepticism through detailed explanations, examples from real and imagined classes, and suggestions for implementing the model that includes potential books and topics.

This book is recommended summer reading for anyone planning a seminar-based course or looking to experiment with a new model for classroom organization. It is also worth reading for the enthusiasm and playfulness, and ultimately its reassertion of student potential.

It can be especially challenging in the foreign language situation, particularly with the beginning levels – 101, 102. Sometimes students come to me and say, “I’m taking this class because it’s required.” So the challenge for me is to tell them, “I understand that you are not really interested in this, but I’m going to teach it as if you are going on and major in French. That will be one hundred percent on my side – you have to give me one hundred percent from your side as well. What you choose to do with the language later on is up to you but as long as you’re in this class you will give me one hundred percent.”

TLN: You directed the Maryland-in-Montpellier program last winter. Can you tell us a little about the program and the teaching and learning experience it provides?

SM: It was a fantastic challenge and I am very grateful that the department chose me as the director for that three week winter session.

It involved leading a group of undergraduate students selected for this study abroad culture immersion program. We spent three weeks in Montpellier. It also came with a lot of responsibility. I was in charge of their safety over there, their welfare, and all of the other things directors of study abroad are responsible for. The students all stayed with host families so I had to make sure that their relationships were smooth.

I co-taught with the teacher at the institute where the students were taking classes. That institute was dealing with the language aspect of the program, the grammar and vocabulary. Twice a week we met for discussions – this part of class that had to do with students’ impressions and what they learned about the culture in Montpellier. They wrote weekly journals, and we took field trips.

It was a fantastic 3 weeks and definitely adds to one’s teaching experience.

TLN: What do you find important about study abroad from a pedagogical perspective?

SM: I’ve had great opportunity to travel extensively, so I learned many languages because of, or thanks to, these experiences.

A foreign language classroom can be a highly productive learning environment, fun and useful, but it’s also inherently artificial in the sense that we are trying to recreate something authentic for the students but there’s only so much we can do as language instructors. Granted that with modern technology there’s no limit to what we can do – we can bring the target country into the classroom; it’s definitely possible – but students’ contact with native speakers is next to impossible for some languages. Of course in America we’re fortunate with Spanish, for example, because it’s almost a second language situation rather than a foreign language situation. It’s not the case with French

I think that this contact students get with native speakers is invaluable. Something as simple as buying bread in France - it’s an education and experience in French culture that they will not get no matter how much we try over here. I think that’s truly the main value of a study abroad. I don’t think that can be replaced. The wealth of experience students get in study abroad is truly remarkable.

TLN: Do you make connections between your teaching and your own research and learning?

I’m in the French program, in the language track. My research is in French sociopragmatics. A lot of people have made the case – I’m not first to say – that language learning cannot be devoid of culture, so we have to use and incorporate culture in the language classroom. Especially with French in the United States, students have very limited opportunity for contact with the culture outside of the language classroom. Often, although we do use the communicative approach in the classroom, with real-life language teaching, there’s still very minimal culture. Given the pressures of testing and evaluations, culture takes a second seat; grammar and vocabulary become the focus. What my study aims to do is talk about how very important it is that we make sociopragmatics part of the language curriculum,
not relegate it to the backburner, but make it an integral component of the language curriculum.

I'm looking specifically at apology strategies, and miscommunication caused by learners of the language not respecting the social norms that guide the use of that language. This could result in stereotypes. Apologies are particularly important; they give the opportunity to excuse oneself and offer repair. Different cultures apologize differently. The idea is not to give the students a laundry list of the numerous apology strategies – there can be endless strategies for apologizing in France and we’re not here to teach students every single one of them – but just to show them the trends, to show them what is usually done, considered appropriate and the language forms one would use to realize the apology. I make a conscious effort to include appropriate discourse strategies in my classes, so yes, what I practice as a language teacher in fact did influence my choice of dissertation topic.

Subscribe to Teaching & Learning News ~ http://www.cte.umd.edu/TLNMailingList/

For more than fifteen years TLN has included articles, notes, and schedules to keep the campus informed about new technologies, available grants, fellowship notices, workshops and roundtables, distinguished lectures, assessment, learning outcomes, classroom management strategies, consultation programs, new conferences, established programs, award winners, grant recipients, University policies on teaching, and other valuable information for faculty and graduate teaching assistants. Most important, it always suggests ways to enhance teaching for better learning. Subscribing to the TLN listserv list takes about twenty seconds and means that you will receive approximately five emails a year, notifying you that a new issue of the only regular campus-wide publication on teaching and learning has arrived.

University Teaching and Learning Program

The University Teaching and Learning Program (UTLP) is an elite cohort of graduate teaching assistants who come together informally to discuss aspects of teaching and learning, engage in mentoring relationships, and create their teaching portfolios. UTLPers have a common commitment to improving undergraduate education and an eagerness to make their classes the best that they can be.

Supported by the Office of the Provost, UTLP is administered by the Center for Teaching Excellence and coordinated by Henrike Lehnguth, CTE’s Coordinator of Graduate Programs and a doctoral student in American Studies. For more information about the UTLP, contact her at lehnguth@umd.edu.

WORK WITH A CTE FACULTY TEACHING CONSULTANT

The Faculty Teaching Consultation Division is designed to help provide support for campus instructors who would like to improve their teaching. Teachers work one-on-one with a Faculty Teaching Consultant, based on their own goals. The requesting teacher determines the issues to be explored, and the consultant provides an outside perspective, peer support for a plan of action, and suggestions for additional resources.

Consultations can address any number of areas, including, among other issues, assessment, active learning, collaborative learning, lecturing, instructional technology, syllabus construction, rubrics for grading, and scholarship in teaching and learning.

Any faculty member who teaches for the University of Maryland at College Park can request a teaching consultation, and they are completely confidential. For more information, contact the Center for Teaching Excellence at 301-405-9356 or via email at cte@umd.edu.
For two days earlier this month the University of Delaware was abuzz with discussions of teaching and learning, during the annual Lilly-East Conference on College and University Teaching. Lilly conferences are considered premier forums for demonstrating, modeling and discussing innovative teaching and learning. This year scholars, educators, and administrators converged upon the Newark campus to share in the conversation; among them a record forty-strong group of faculty, staff, and graduate students from College Park.

At any given time during the two day retreat six workshops or presentations on diverse aspects of teaching and learning were operating concurrently. The sessions included presentations and debate in the area of emerging technologies - how to incorporate clickers in the humanities, utilizing wikis for collaborative undergraduate research, and standards for assessing the credibility of internet sources, for example. Yet there were also dialogues on well-seasoned areas of pedagogical concern such as motivating students, improving participation, and fostering critical thinking. Neil Davidson, Professor Emeritus in the College of Education, offered his “12-Step Recovery Program for Professors Addicted to Lecturing (Lectureholics).”

This year, for the first time, a graduate reception and an academic career panel, moderated by CTE Director Spenser Benson, were incorporated into the pre-conference activities.

The days were punctuated by the communal sharing of food and thought between sessions, and discussions continued even after the end of the conference, as participants returned to their home campuses with fresh ideas and renewed enthusiasm.

“The level of attendance and nature of informal conversations were most encouraging, and they confirm the value of sharing best practices and insights with colleagues across disciplines and institutions,” asserted Gabriele Bauer, Assistant Director for the Center for Teaching Effectiveness at the University of Delaware.

This year the Lilly-East Conference was co-sponsored by the University of Maryland, College Park, and the University of Delaware’s Institute for Transforming Undergraduate Education. Participants from College Park were sponsored by CTE, with support from Undergraduate Studies. This is the second year Undergraduate Studies has generously underwritten graduate student participation at Lilly-East.
sense of what we are trying to teach them, especially in science and mathematics. Students at the university also bring expectations about the nature of the knowledge they are learning and what they think they have to do to learn it. Often these expectations are quite robust due to their decade of schooling. And often these expectations are quite wrong, and prevent our students from understanding our teaching goals. In the behavioral sciences, the activation of expectations in response to a situation is called framing -- the answer to the question, ‘What’s going on here?’” Professor Redish gave a brief introduction to student expectations and to framing, and led a discussion on helping students to reframe so that they can learn more effectively.

“The implications of a Flat World (a la Thomas Friedman) on Higher Education,” led by Professor Jo Paoletti, American Studies. October 26th...

In The World is Flat, A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century, Friedman argues that individuals and organizations become empowered by a process called flattening, whereby products are increasingly leveraged through competitive commoditization and the use of labor and services in emerging markets. The inevitability of global change forces societies and organizations to adapt or be left behind. Professor Paoletti then led a discussion on Friedman’s thesis as it pertains to higher education.

“International Education: What is it and why does it Matter?” led by Professor Cynthia Martin, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures. November 16th...

According to Professor Martin, there is a need to articulate better the value of international education for the university community and for society in general. Participating in international education is most often profoundly transformative, and a key component is knowledge of language and culture other than one’s own. The General Education Requirement at UMCP once included foreign languages for all students, whereas presently only 3 out of 13 colleges have such a requirement. President Mote has placed a high priority on promoting international study for UMCP students.

“Our Future in Higher Education: The View from Inside the Beltway,” led by Professor Donald Langenberg, Chancellor Emeritus and Physics. December 5th...

Professor Langenberg noted the recent Spellings Commission Report on the Future of Higher Education has mapped the higher education “future.” In response, six leading higher education associations have described the following seven se-
rious challenges to higher education:

1. Expanding college access to low-income and minority students
2. Keeping college affordable
3. Improving learning by utilizing new knowledge and instructional techniques
4. Preparing secondary students for higher education
5. Increasing accountability for educational outcomes
6. Internationalizing the student experience
7. Increasing opportunities for lifelong education and workforce training

The forum discussion centered on what should or could be done by UMCP concerning the challenges, especially challenges 3-5.

“Are Institutions of Higher Education Uni- or Multi-versities?” panel discussion moderated by Professor Charles Butterworth (Government and Politics), with panelists Professors Arjang Assad (Business and Management), James Greenberg (College of Education), Donald Langenberg (Physics), and Marla McIntosh (Agriculture and Natural Resources), February 7th...

The panel began by asking whether there is any common denominator to what we do as university teachers, even as we utilize diverse approaches to teaching and learning. This issue led to a host of pertinent points: the university is about learning, about teaching critical thinking and creative thinking, and about students “owning” their knowledge. The focus of a university education should be for students not only to learn how to become life-learners, but also to learn how to be civil. Essential to this enterprise is the engagement of the student and the engagement of the teacher.

“Rewarding Faculty for a Focus on Teaching and Learning – a New Policy at the University System of Georgia,” presented by Dr. Dorothy Zinsmeister (University System of Georgia) and Dr. Charles Katal (University of Georgia). February 22nd...

Drs. Zinsmeister and Katal were invited to discuss a new Board of Regents’ policy at the University System of Georgia (USG) relating to the reward structure for faculty engaged in college activities not included in the realm of discipline research. In particular, the new (2006) policy states USG institutions “that prepare teachers will support and reward all faculty who participate significantly in approved efforts in teacher preparation and in school improvement efforts through decisions in promotion and tenure, pre-tenure and post-tenure review, annual review and merit pay, workload, recognition, allocation of resources, and other rewards.” Drs. Zinsmeister and Katal gave examples of what would merit support and reward, and led a discussion of implications of the new policy. Resources for the policy appear in the website http://www.usg.edu/academics/handbook/section4/4.03.02.phtml

Combined session, April 9th...

(b) “Civic Engagement in Research Universities: What’s New and Exciting,” led by Dr. Barbara Jacoby (Senior Scholar, Stamp Student Union, Campus Programs and Multicultural Involvement & Community Advocacy)

“Civic engagement” is acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one’s communities (including campus, local area, state, nation, and world). For research universities, it refers to addressing needs of society on all levels. Dr. Jacoby, who is chair of the Coalition for Civic Engagement and Leadership at UMD, gave an update on civic engagement at UMD. She also led a discussion of the four main areas addressed at a recent meeting of research universities on civic engagement: assessing the quality of engaged scholarship for the purpose of tenure and promotion, the current state of the scholarship on civic engagement, educating students for civic engagement, and institutionalizing civic engagement at research universities.

The authors would like to thank the presenters, from whose forum abstracts they borrowed liberally for this article.
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1:00 ~ Resource Fair - information on study abroad and identifying international experiences in your major
2:00 ~ Featured Guest Presentation: Bruce La Brack, University of the Pacific’s School of International Studies ~ “Danger! Look Both Ways When Crossing Cultural Boundaries!”
3:00 ~ Panel of Students discuss study abroad
4:00 ~ Panel discusses career value of international experiences in business, industry, nonprofits, professional school

Complimentary Refreshments

April 26 - 6137 McKeldin Library

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