When talk of student assessment and learning outcomes came up for serious discussion at the Philip Merrill College of Journalism in fall 2005, the reaction was a familiar refrain heard elsewhere on campus – professors expressed concerns about unnecessary mandates impinging on classroom freedom and professorial creativity. Some asked how to quantify something so subjective as a news lead or a feature story. Others wanted to know why students’ grades or our national reputation as a top-tier journalism school wasn’t enough to show how well we taught our students.

Disgruntled reactions aside, assessment was coming. Not only mandated by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, but the College’s own accrediting board, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, began enforcing assessment standards in 2004. The College, up for re-accreditation in 2009, would need an assessment program in place long before then. Sensitive to faculty concerns, Dean Thomas Kunkel promised they would be
What Constitutes Understanding? How Might We Measure It?

How do we know when our students understand and have become knowledgeable about the materials we have taught? In other words, how do we know that they mastered the material? The easy answer might be that they did well and received an A for the course. However, numerous studies and accounts show that receiving high course grades and understanding the material are not necessarily linked. It is indeed possible for students to obtain high grades on a test or in a course and not understand or be knowledgeable about the subject material. Certainly if a student has deep understanding of the material she/he would be expected to receive high course grades. However, the converse does not necessarily hold. I am using understanding and knowledge to mean more than memorization and surface understanding. One often cited example is Matthew H. Schneps’s graduation-day collection of interviews with Harvard seniors who received high grades in science courses but are unable to explain simple science concepts such as the seasons or the source of plant growth.

So, if course grades as not necessarily an accurate measure what might be? Two instruments we commonly use are quizzes and tests; the underlying assumption is that if students do well on a quiz or test they must know (they must have learned) the material. But is this the case? It is possible that what the student learned was how to do well on the test or quiz without necessarily understanding the material. Many of our students are excellent at taking tests—after all they have had many years of practice. Unfortunately, test taking skills are of limited use in the non-academic world; with the exception of occasional special license exams most people do not take formal written tests once they graduate. A second common means for assessing understanding is the written assignment. Unlike tests the ability to write clearly and lucidly about a subject is a skill that will be used in many if not all professions once a student graduates. But does producing a well written paper mean that the author has a solid understanding of the subject? It is certainly possible to write about a subject that one does not know well and to do so without necessarily becoming knowledgeable about the subject. So, papers help students develop a necessary life skill but do not necessarily ensure the student is knowledgeable about the subject. The issue is the degree to which understanding is essential.

A third means we sometimes use to assess student understanding is discussion. If a student can communicate accurately and effectively at length about a topic must he/she necessarily understand the material? It is difficult to imagine how a student could engage in informed discourse about a topic in the absence of understanding. Unfortunately, this mode of assessment is seldom used, for a variety of reasons, the main one being its time intensive nature and the presumptively subjective nature of the grading. Imagine having to do individual oral sessions with a class of more than 100 students. Often in lieu of individual student-teacher conversations teachers assign individual or group project presentations. When well designed, this type of assessment can be an effective measure of students’ understanding. However, accurately assessing individual student understanding by way of a group project or presentation can be problematic. The use of embedded individual products within the group product can help to overcome this limitation.

To teach is to learn, and it may be our best assessment of understanding and knowledge.

A final means for assessing understanding is to have students teach the topic. When I teach something, I have to actually know and understand the material, either from previous learning or in preparation for the teaching. The experiences of colleagues and students support this premise. A former student once confided to me that although she had

“Understanding...” continued on following page
Notes from CTE’s Teaching Portfolio Retreat

Dave Eubanks, Assistant Director of CTE

CTE hosted two teaching portfolio retreats for graduate students during this winter break. While it’s too early to claim that the current series of these two-and-a-half day retreats satisfy all of their objectives, they have certainly exemplified the sort of encouraging work borne of informed discussion among university instructors from a wide range of disciplines. During these retreats, graduate students with at least a few semesters’ teaching experience behind them gather to discuss, plan, draft, and revise their teaching portfolios. Each participant’s portfolio articulates and documents a teaching philosophy, a record of experience as an instructor, and some evidence that her students have learned. These will be used—by search committees, tenure review committees, grant readers, and peers—as records of their authors’ identities as teachers.

These portfolios accomplish other ends, as well. The labor of putting it all to words, as with teaching, requires arresting thoughts, concepts, experience, perception, and sensibility in a way that will make sense to the aforementioned readers. This is nearly always an exercise in improvement for the teacher, who will perhaps never previously had to articulate all of this so thoroughly.

The portfolio’s preliminary work involves determining why you think your students ought to be in your class, why they ought to be undergraduates at all, why your teaching methods are what they are, and why you believe your students will be more likely to understand your course’s material on the last day of class than on the first. Our retreat is a rare chance to devote just a few days of a winter break to those questions among colleagues and as individuals typing away in near silence. We get to argue over what student evaluations say about our teaching. We address the common problem of resolving differences between what we profess about teaching and learning and what our syllabi demonstrate that we actually do. We think about the ways teaching assistants run labs and discussion sections, and then we think about the ways graduate students who are instructors of record design and teach their own courses. We pick up promising ideas from peers and we refine our own sense of teaching and learning.

Occasionally, someone sighs at the difficulty of this simultaneously archaeological and constructive work. Everyone keeps on typing, reading each others’ summaries of contributions to the profession, advising a peer from one side of campus to bolster the section on collaborating with students and asking another whether that’s the best way to contextualize a student evaluation. The work, protected from the other noises of graduate life for a few days, gives us a chance to argue for our kinds of teaching and to improve the learning that happens as we do that teaching.

We at CTE note the importance of talking about teaching, particularly with those who don’t teach what we teach. Admittedly, not all talk leads to more effective teaching—some of it probably makes us worse—but this sort of conversation seems to me a necessary element for enhancing our work in the lab, in the classroom, around the seminar table, and in office hours. At the very least, communicating a philosophy of teaching to a peer means that some organizing principle must be identified. At most, an already thoughtful approach is enhanced, informed by the insights of peers and CTE staff.

*Understanding...* continued from previous page

done well in courses where immunology was part of the content she never really understood it until she had to present a project that involved immunology to her peers. A similar refrain is heard from undergraduate teaching assistants (UTAs). Teaching about a subject requires that one has more than surface understanding of the material; it requires deeper understanding of the topic. In the best of possible worlds each of our students would be required to be involved in teaching a course or part of a course within his/her major as a requirement to graduate. While this is impractical every student should have an opportunity to teach as part of their education. To teach is to learn, and it may be our best assessment of understanding and knowledge. Interestingly, many experts with deep and robust understanding are not effective teachers. We all know university professors and highly respect experts who are brilliant, but who are at best ineffective teachers.

Teaching effectively requires more than deep content knowledge; it requires an understanding of how students learn and a toolbox of teaching strategies. However, as a starting point, teaching something requires that the teacher understands the material, and as such it is an appropriate measure of understanding.

For more information on effective strategies for improving student learning, come to our workshops, visit the resources on our website, or contact CTE.

An Interview with Stephanie Grutzmacher, Department of Family Studies

This is the eighth 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 Stephanie Grutzmacher, a 2005-2006 Distinguished Teaching Assistant from the Department of Family Studies.

Teaching & Learning News: Would you briefly outline the kinds of courses you’ve taught?

Stephanie Grutzmacher: I have taught the undergraduate research methods course in the Department of Family Studies for five semesters. I worked as a TA for this course for one semester before I started teaching it myself.

TLN: What sorts of things do you expect students to learn in your Family Studies courses? Where do you situate that learning in the undergraduate education of your students who aren’t FMST majors?

SG: Regardless of whether or not they are FMST majors, most students enrolled in my course do not envision a career as a researcher! Moreover, they have negative expectancies for the course, assuming that it will be among their most boring and least relevant learning experiences. Many students also have a fairly high level of anxiety about research and statistics and feel that they’re “not good at” such subjects. These feelings and expectations function as barriers to learning, so I’ve designed my approach around reducing the negative influence of such barriers. In addition to learning the content of the course, I hope that students also learn to feel confident in their abilities to conduct and understand research, see the relevance of research methods, and experience some of the professional practices of social science disciplines.

The course focuses on the development of critical thinking skills so that students can be critical consumers of research, both personally and professionally. Students also participate in a group research project, which allows them to experience the scientific process and utilize basic research skills, including theorizing, data collection and analysis, and presentation skills. Experiencing the scientific process helps students understand both the contributions and the limitations of our ways to knowing, which is salient to students in all fields. Many FMST students are double majors in Psychology, Criminology, and Sociology, so I include materials addressing a broad spectrum of social issues.

TLN: Efforts to characterize students at the University of Maryland - for all sorts of purposes - are fairly common and help to inform teaching, but daily experiences in the classroom may also show us the limits of that project. How have your students challenged your expectations?

SG: I think the only safe characterization of students is that they’re all unique. Some students have had positive experiences in school, while others have struggled. Family and personal challenges, full-time jobs, and other responsibilities distract many students. Each student has different goals, different learning needs and preferences, and different experiences that shape their perspectives on the topics at hand.

It may be conventional for teachers to teach using approaches that we prefer as learners, but stepping outside of our own preferences can result in more effective and engaging techniques for learners who don’t share our preferences. My students have challenged me to provide various opportunities to honor their distinctive contributions and needs in the classroom.

TLN: As one of the instructors using clickers, could you briefly talk about the ways you implement this tool and assess its relative ef-
From the CTE Library: Learning is Change


Reviewed by Spencer Benson

In *The Art of Changing the Brain: Enriching the Practice of Teaching by Exploring the Biology of Learning* James E. Zull makes a case for linking how we teach to the way the brain learns. Zull, a biochemist/biologist and the founding director of the University Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning at Case Western University, provides a very readable and engaging book that helps the reader understand and connect current ideas in neurobiology and learning science with teaching and student learning. Embedded in the book’s twelve chapters are student stories that help the reader connect the concepts to actual teaching and learning situations.

In the first of three parts Zull explores the relationship between the structure of the brain and learning. He draws a parallel between the Kolb learning cycle and the physical layout of the brain. The five chapters that make up part one describe key brain structures and functions, and Zull links them to how students learn. He includes sections on memory, feeling, rewards, and motivation’s effects on learning. In the second part he delves deeper into neurophysiology and focuses on neuronal connections and their relationships to learning connections (those connections that we as teachers hope students establish as they construct new knowledge upon existing knowledge). This part may be the weakest of the book, and several of my neurophysiology colleagues have pointed out apparent weaknesses. However, the chapter lays out in a simplified fashion the complexities neurophysiology at the cellular level necessarily entails. For those of us who are not up on the latest advances in neurobiology and neuronal connection biology it provides a framework for understanding the relationship between neuronal connections and learning connections. In part three (chapters eight through twelve) he connects what happens in the classroom to the concepts presented in the first two sections. For most teachers this may be the most useful part of the book since it allows the reader to view teaching and learning through the lens developed in the first seven chapters. Here Zull uses numerous student examples to illustrate the points he is making. The stories help the reader to see and connect the concepts to their own teaching experiences.

In his epilogue Zull makes the following points about the biology of learning: it enriches our understanding of what learning actually is, it enriches teaching by making educational theory more real, it helps us to recognize the separateness of the teaching and learning (i.e., the different roles that teaching and learning entail in the classroom); it provides us with ideas about learning; and it can clarify our values with respect to the roles of the teacher, the student, and learning responsibilities. The book is worth reading for anyone with an interest in the biology behind learning and/or current views with respect to how learning occurs in the brain.

Anyone affiliated with the University of Maryland may borrow from the CTE library. Our holdings can be searched at [https://www.cte.umd.edu/onlinelibrary/index.html](https://www.cte.umd.edu/onlinelibrary/index.html), and we invite you to browse at 0405 Marie Mount Hall.
The Office of Undergraduate Studies and Center for Teaching Excellence

Improvement of Instruction Grants

The Office of Undergraduate Studies and the Center for Teaching Excellence are pleased to sponsor the Improvement of Instruction Grants (IIG) program for the 2007-2008 academic year. IIG selection criteria give priority to proposals that contribute to the University’s efforts to improve undergraduate teaching and learning, and we solicit projects that have the potential to produce the greatest impact. Previous Improvement of Instruction Grants have underwritten exciting initiatives at the University of Maryland; these projects have fostered the development of valuable and effective educational programs. Individual faculty members, as well as departmental or interdisciplinary clusters, are invited to apply.

Grant funds may support salaries (e.g., staff, graduate students, summer support), operating expenses, or other necessary costs. Past awards have ranged from $1,000 to $6,000. The program does not fund purchases of equipment (e.g., computers), extensive travel, course buyouts during the regular academic year, or expenses that are considered routine obligations of the applicant’s department or program.

Priority Categories (full descriptions of each category are available at http://cte.umd.edu/iig):

*Identifying Student Preparedness:* We are soliciting proposals that support the development and use of diagnostic instruments that address the issue of student preparedness for academic work in a course or curriculum.

*International Experiences for Undergraduates:* We are soliciting proposals that increase the opportunities for undergraduates to engage in international academic experiences that increase their awareness of other societies, cultures, and the global nature of modern society.

*Teaching with Technology:* We are soliciting proposals that improve courses or create new courses in which there is enhanced integral use of technology in the learning environment.

*Civic Engagement and Service-Learning:* These proposals encourage faculty to explore the civic and social issues related to new and existing courses. The Coalition for Civic Engagement and Leadership has developed a set of student learning outcomes for civic engagement (http://www.csl.umd.edu/CCEL/Learning_Outcomes.htm) that are intended for use by faculty in course design.

*Other:* If you have a proposal to significantly improve undergraduate teaching and student learning that would impact a large population of students but does not fall in any of the above categories, please contact Spencer Benson at sbenson@umd.edu or 301 405 1283 to discuss submission of the proposal.

Proposal guidelines and an electronic submission form can be found at http://cte.umd.edu/iig

Proposals are due March 1, 2007 and will require a letter of support from applicant’s Dean. Decisions will be announced in early April.
Reducing the High Cost of Textbooks

Do you know that during the past 20 years the cost of textbooks has been increasing at twice the rate of inflation? According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, full-time undergraduate students now spend $898 per year on required readings for courses. As the cost of tuition increases and federal aid programs decline, the high and increasing cost of textbooks is a real financial strain on many students. One simple way to dramatically reduce the cost of textbooks is to order books on time. The campus due dates for book orders are May 1 for summer session and fall semester and December 1 for winter term and spring semester.

Submitting book orders on time quickly and easily lowers the net cost of textbooks. The savings come from selling books at the end of the semester and buying used books at the beginning of the next semester. Local bookstores buy back most books that have been re-ordered at 50 percent of the new book price. However, if the book has not been re-ordered, books the bookstores buy back are bought at the national wholesale price, which is never much; the average is 15 percent. Students who are able to buy used books save a lot of money because used books sell for 25 percent off the new book price.

Since 2000-2001 students in the I’d Rather Be Studying Gang with the help of the Student Government Association and Provost Destler have called on faculty to get book orders in on time and the faculty have heeded the call. Back in 2000-2001 only 16 percent of book orders were in by the May 1 due date and only 32 percent by the December 1 due date. Last May 65 percent of book orders were in on time and last December 95 percent were. The University Book Center estimates that last year students were able to reduce the net cost of textbooks 1.2 million dollars more than they did in 2000-2001.

Turning book orders in on time is a simple step that make a huge difference to students. It saves students money, it prevents students who are skidding on the black ice of college costs from crashing, it aids retention, it helps the environment by recycling, and it creates a sense of community.

Zoe Paterson (zoep@umd.edu) is a senior Environmental Science major and member of the I’d Rather Be Studying Gang. John Pease (pease@umd.edu) is associate professor of sociology and faculty adviser to the I’d Rather Be Studying Gang.

Online Teaching Resource Packets

CTE has made available a valuable teaching resource for the campus community. Visit http://cte.umd.edu/PODresources.htm to review a number of brief essays published by the POD (Professional and Organizational Development) Network.

These POD packets address current, relevant topics in higher education teaching and learning. Each is composed of past “Essays on Teaching Excellence,” a POD Network publication series.

EXAMPLES OF AVAILABLE PACKETS:

- Technology and Related Issues
- Improvement of Teaching and Assessment
- Alternatives to Traditional Teaching Methods
- Defining and Characterizing Teaching
- Motivating Students
- Cooperative/Collaborative Learning
- Critical Thinking
- Diversity Issues
- Grading, Testing and Assessment
Concept Maps
February 16, 12:00-3:30, Maryland Room, Marie Mount

Note: This session will be limited to twenty participants, and registration will be required.

Concept Maps are graphic representations of the relationships of facts and concepts. They can be used to facilitate student learning and as an assessment instrument. Join other faculty and graduate students in exploring how they can be used in your course by participating in a three-hour hands-on workshop.

Evaluating Participation
March 9, 2:00-3:30, Maryland Room, Marie Mount

Many course grading schemes include some measure of class participation, but this is a notoriously difficult aspect of student work to evaluate. This workshop will begin with a discussion of the purposes and nature of class participation, and we will work to develop preliminary standards for assigning participation grades.

“The other side of campus”: A Roundtable on Teaching in the Disciplines
March 30, 12:00-3:30, Maryland Room, Marie Mount

If a common objective for student learning is transferable and deep knowledge, it seems to follow that we should have some sense of the student experience outside of our courses, in particular, some familiarity with the many sorts of academic work our students accomplish in other classes. This roundtable discussion will introduce a limited survey of undergraduate teaching in varying disciplines across campus.

Save these dates - Guest Lectures TBA
April 20, 2:00-3:30
April 27, 2:00-3:30

As workshops and other events approach, visit http://www.cte.umd.edu for more details. You can also find an archive of past workshops, including electronic resources made available by the presenters, at http://cte.umd.edu/teaching/workshops/index.html

Innovations in Teaching and Learning Conference
February 23, 2006
Adele H. Stamp Student Union

Jointly sponsored by Office of Information Technology and the Center for Teaching Excellence

The ITL is an outgrowth of the Teaching With Technology Conference which, for 13 years, recognized excellence in the integration of pedagogy and technology. While technology still may play a significant role in making a positive impact on student learning, it is recognized that many other non-technical solutions have been envisioned and deployed to respond to pedagogical problems. To that end, the sponsors of the conference, the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) and the Office of Information Technology (OIT), have broadened the scope of the conference in order to recognize all forms of teaching innovation.

The conference will be highlighted by a keynote presentation by Gardner Campbell, Ph.D., whose presentation, “Deschool, Reboot, Real School,” will cap off a plenary breakfast. The conference will also feature a roundtable luncheon for presenters and attendees.
intimately involved in the process but not be held hostage by it; that assessment would serve as a tool for curriculum improvements, not dictate course structure.

This fall, the College launched www.jportfolio.umd.edu, its new online assessment Web site designed to measure student learning in fundamental areas of the curriculum. Conceived by administrators and a faculty committee and designed by the college’s technology director, the Web site database successfully collected assessments of more than 500 students by 33 faculty and adjunct instructors. Start-up programs are rarely trouble-free, so the College braced for computer glitches, student and faculty complaints, and unforeseen quagmires that plague every new endeavor. However, problems were few and very manageable. In fact, the program had the cooperation of nearly all the players, even when problems cropped up. And the data collected so far have already pinpointed issues for the faculty to review.

Student assessment is not new to this college. It has assessed student learning by reviews of graduating seniors’ professional portfolios, conducted each spring by the faculty and the College’s Board of Visitors. It has surveyed alumni about their careers and their training. The College’s administration pays close attention to retention and graduation rates. Yet this was the first time it tried to quantify classroom learning in “real time” – as students progressed through their courses. The idea of real-time assessment sprang to life months earlier, but much of the work occurred last fall, when Dean Kunkel formed an 11-member committee of tenure-track professors, professional journalists who teach as lecturers at the College and administrators. The committee’s challenge, in the dean’s words, was to create an assessment plan that would be “organic to and an extension of” the college’s curriculum.

The committee’s first task was to write learning outcomes that captured core principals and skills for a discipline that demands raw talent as well as classroom knowledge for success. These learning outcomes (adopted for the bachelor’s, master’s and Ph.D. programs) address not only the obvious – the ability to research and write for publication or broadcast, the ability to use the latest technology to deliver the news – but also cover more academic issues, such as an understanding of ethical and legal standards and the importance of history and diversity in journalism. In-depth rubrics were crafted for each of the learning outcomes. This took several weeks of discussions, sometimes heated, in person and by e-mail. Once the committee had its outcomes, it had to decide how best to measure them. The committee identified approximately 20 undergraduate and masters-level requirements for assessment, including basic news writing and broadcast production courses, graphics, editing, media research, law and ethics. (Note: The College’s Ph.D. students are not assessed on the portfolio site. Instead, four or five students will be assessed by their individual committees at their oral comprehensive exams each year.)

Assessments should occur each semester, the committee decided. After all, the College of Journalism has just 517 undergraduates and 67 graduate students. However, without much of a budget for the task, the college wanted a plan that would be easy to manage, transparent and valuable to everyone who uses it. Inspired by the College of Education’s professional online portfolios, Associate Dean Olive Reid suggested a Web-based assessment that would not only provide data to faculty but permit students to see how they performed on the learning outcomes. The committee approved the creation of a secure online database where students could upload assignments selected by their professors. Faculty could then assess these assignments online, using a 0-4 scale. Only the student and the instructor and the College’s administration would see the individual’s assignment and score. Outcomes and their rubrics would be linked to the site so that faculty and students could easily find the assessment standards. And the committee envisioned a Web site as simple to use as the University’s UMEG system.

The proposal was adopted unanimously by the faculty in the spring. Now it needed to move from proposal to reality. Clint Bucco, director of technology for the College, looked into commercial software programs but none fit the college’s needs. Instead, Bucco wrote the program himself, creating the secure Web site over the summer, with the help of Matt Sheehan, assistant to the dean. The site requires one or two uploads from students for each class;
The Program for the Professionalization of International Graduate Teaching Assistants (PITA) is a one-year pilot mentoring program that pairs each novice IGTA with a faculty mentor outside of his/her department. CTE is beginning implementation of PITA during the 2006-2007 year, and proposed requirements include regular meetings between mentor and mentee, group meetings, class observations, and reflective writing. This one-on-one mentoring addresses IGTA as individuals with individualized needs in and approaches to teaching and learning. Upon completion of the program, IGTA will receive CTE documentation. IGTA of all teaching levels may apply. For more information, please contact the PITA Coordinator or call (301) 405-9356.

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.

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.
faculty are required to select the assignment, give it a deadline and then assess the students’ work once it appears online.

Dean Kunkel appointed one of his administrators to spearhead the program, and in the early fall, faculty members were trained to use the Web site. Administrators went class to class to discuss assessment with students and to show them how to upload their assignments. With minimal prodding, faculty members logged onto the site, entered short descriptions of their assignments and set deadlines for student uploading. Students then uploaded their papers or projects, either as PDFs or as HTML files. Some did this in class, with the professors supervising. Others were instructed to do this outside of class. Only four students did not upload assignments, and so far, faculty members have assessed all but 30 of 535 students.

The learning outcomes require 90 percent of the undergraduate students to earn at least a score of 2, which indicates a fair rating. For master’s students, the bar was set at a score of 3 (good) for 90 percent of the students. A few faculty members remarked that some students received lower assessment scores than actual grades on the same assignment, because teachers could only consider the factors spelled out in the learning outcome and rubric. Other factors went into awarding a grade, they acknowledged.

The data collected so far show that in many areas, the College does a good job; students scored well in writing and editing. However, the results pinpointed a few rough spots that will require some faculty discussion. Undergraduates fell below the benchmark in areas such as an understanding of journalism history and basic mathematics. Master’s students lagged in their understanding of journalism ethics and law. Neither group met their goals for thorough news story research. These results will be shared in more detail with the College’s faculty in February.

Some fine-tuning of learning outcomes and the Web site itself will also occur this semester, based on faculty feedback and the first semester’s run-through. But overall, faculty gave the experience a thumb’s up. In the words of one user, Lee Thornton, the College’s Richard Eaton Broadcasting chair: “I think this site is excellent, really. The broadcast component is amazing – (I was able) to click on the (assignment) and recall everything about it.”

Penny Fuchs is Director of Career Placement and Professional Development and a lecturer on the faculty of the Philip Merrill College of Journalism. Dean Kunkel appointed her to run the assessment program last year. She is also the college’s representative on the college coordinators’ committee.

"Grutzmacher..." continued from page 4

I use the clickers to discuss strategies for survey design, encouraging students to determine the strengths and weaknesses of various questions by assuming the role of a survey participant. I also use the clickers during exam reviews to practice applications of course material and to discuss the various responses chosen by students. In addition to reviewing the material, this use allows me to test exam questions for clarity, determine what topics are confusing to students and need more coverage during class, and discuss subtle differences between multiple correct responses.

I haven’t conducted any formal assessments of the effectiveness of these uses, but students think clickers are a fun and interesting tool. Unfortunately, I’ve had too few creative ideas for how to utilize the clickers beyond what I currently do.

TLN: In light of conventional wisdom about disconnect between scholarship and teaching, are you able to draw productive connections between your research and your teaching?

SG: Having guided many groups of students through their investigations, the process of helping students apply concepts in their projects deepens my own understanding of those concepts each semester. In this sense, teaching this course has strengthened my skills as a researcher. Moreover, conducting assessments of teaching approaches and student learning provides a new area of scholarship with very obvious

"Grutzmacher..." continued on page 12
“Grutzmacher...” continued from page 11

and constructive connections to
the practice of teaching.

TLN: What are the major corner-
stones of your teaching philoso-
phy?

SG: Many of us have had a
course so anxiety provoking, we
couldn’t get beyond our feelings
of incompetence long enough to
learn a great deal. As the teacher
of a course that students tend to
dread, a crucial task is to provide
an environment where students
feel engaged, interested, capa-
bile, supported, and able to make
mistakes. In order to foster this
environment, it is important for
me to be accessible, flexible,
creative, challenging, and pecu-
liarily enthusiastic! In addition
to introducing course content,
I consider the barriers my stu-
dents face in learning the mate-
rial, the means of reducing such
barriers, and the effectiveness of
my approaches in achieving this
goal.

I feel that my primary role as an
instructor is to foster the devel-
opment of critical thinking skills
and social conscientiousness
among students. While basic
skills, knowledge, and social-
ization within a discipline are
important products of higher education, education in all fields should prepare students to be conscientious,
competent, ethical, critical, hopeful, and community-oriented problem solvers. Research is one of the key
problem solving processes that students can use to address social problems, challenge accepted knowledge
with new innovations, and advance public interests.

Subscribe to Teaching &
Learning News

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, dis-
tinguished lectures, assessment, learning outcomes, classroom man-
agement strategies, consultation programs, new conferences, estab-
lished programs, award winners, grant recipients, University policies
on teaching, and other valuable information for faculty and gradu-
ate 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, notify-
ing you that a new issue of the only regular campus-wide publication
on teaching and learning has arrived. If you are one of the many who
already read, please share your feedback with us via cte@umd.edu.

Visit http://www.cte.umd.edu/TLNMailingList/
2007 Graduate Teaching Assistant Development Grants

Julie Lyons & Cynthia Shaw, Psychology: “Improving Graduate Teaching and Student Learning in Psychology”

Uche Akobundu & Mara Luther, Nutrition & Food Science: “Developing a Faculty - Graduate Student Learning Community for Improving Teaching and Learning in Nutrition and Food Science”

J. Gwen Schlichta & Jean-Francois Savard, Entomology: “Documenting and Sharing the Collective Experience for Graduate Teaching Assistants in BSCI106”

Mara Dougherty, Chemistry & Biochemistry: “Developing a TA Manual to Actualize the Pedagogical Need in the POGIL Based General Chemistry Laboratory”

Tracy Chung, Electrical Engineering: “Engaging ECE TAs in the Field of Pedagogy”

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CTE Workshop on Concept Maps
16 February, 12:00-3:30
Maryland Room of Marie Mount Hall

Concept Maps are graphic representations of the relationships of facts and concepts. They can be used to facilitate student learning and as an assessment instrument. Join other faculty and graduate students in exploring how they can be used in your course by participating in CTE a three-hour hands-on workshop. RSVP at http://www.cte.umd.edu
Are you interested in the student response devices known as clickers? CTE has a loaner program. You can borrow a set of radio frequency (RF) clickers and a laptop equipped with the RF receiver which makes any classroom with an LCD projector a clicker classroom.

For more information about classroom response technology, visit http://www.clickers.umd.edu, see the November-December 2005 issue of Teaching & Learning News, or contact CTE at cte@umd.edu.