On May 14th, CTE hosted its annual ceremony for Distinguished Teaching Assistants. Departments across campus are invited to identify up to 10% of their TAs for this honor. This year, a record number of 145 Distinguished Teaching Assistants were named, an increase of 50 percent from last year. Many faculty members and mentors accompanied their TAs to the recognition ceremony.

This awards ceremony offers a yearly capstone for our efforts to recognize that commitment to teaching and learning. Speaking at the ceremony, Provost Nariman Farvardin, Dean of the Graduate School Charles Caramello, Dean for Undergraduate Studies Donna Hamilton, and Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence Spencer Benson congratulated the TAs for their outstanding teaching and recognized their profound contributions to undergraduate education at the University of Maryland in their capacities as autonomous teachers of record, discussion and recitation leaders, lab instructors, graders, and mentors.

For a full list of DTAs and pictures from the ceremony visit the CTE website: http://www.cte.umd.edu/teaching/newsletter/2007-08/Su08_HTML/DTA.htm
At a recent conference one of the speakers stated that “alchemists are individuals who turn ordinary substances into something special”. The speaker then likened this (turning something ordinary into something special) to good teaching. This was not to imply that students are ordinary but rather the special type of transformation that can and often does occur when students are guided in their learning by good teachers. We have all experienced the satisfaction that occurs when a student “gets it” and the deep sense of pride when a student exceeds their own perceived limitations and produces a product, insight, or personal growth that is unexpected. But is this alchemy, and are we alchemists? When I consulted Webster’s unabridged dictionary I did indeed find that the second definition for alchemy as “any magical power or process of transmuting a common substance, usually of little or no value, into a substance of great value. This definition lead me to look up the definition of transmute in Webster’s, “to change from one nature, substance, form or condition to another”. Given this line of reasoning then clearly we could be considered as modern alchemists who transmute our students by changing them through our teaching activities. So what does it take to be good/successful alchemist?

Being a good teacher is more than knowing one’s subject, preparing good lectures, giving fair tests and being available to answer student questions. Teachers who know their subject, prepare good lectures, give fair tests and answer student questions are adequate teachers. To go beyond this requires a transmutation or alchemy from the ordinary to the special. CTE works with faculty to help them become better teachers through a variety of programs including the CTE Lilly Fellows program, the CTE Summer Technology Institute, regular workshops during the year, invited speakers and individual one-on-one consultations. In each of these programs the alchemy occurs when faculty communicate with peers; why this is magical, I don’t know. If I look back over the last five years as director of CTE and ask what works to improve faculty teaching it comes down to one item: having them talk with each other about teaching challenges, successes and techniques. When faculty talk and listen to each other they learn.

The same is true for students; however, too often the talking is done at the students rather than with the students and in many cases the conversation is teacher-centric rather than being student-centric. One way to be a better teacher is to talk less and engage in conversations with your students more. Good teachers engage students in conversations which lead to enhanced student learning. This can be difficult since they may not want to talk about what you need to teach unless you are fortunate enough to teach about a subject that is inherently interesting to all of the students in the class e.g. sex, popular music, food, personal relationships. A second way to engage students in conversations is to make the subject relevant to them and their world. Although this is easier for some subjects than others for most it is doable.
Notes from the Summer Institute for Teaching with New Technology
by Dave Eubanks, Assistant Director, CTE

CTE, collaborating with the Office of Information Technology’s Academic Support Unit, offered its second Summer Institute for Teaching with New(er) Technology for 10 members of the faculty over three late-May days. The faculty, selected from a large field of applicants, reviewed instructional technologies available on campus, refined individual plans to enhance their 2008-2009 undergraduate courses, and offered preliminary plans for implementing new technologies in support of that enhancement.

Because new technologies occasionally find their way into the classroom for their own sakes and not as part of a clearly understood teaching goal, the institute takes as its purpose improved teaching and learning; the technologies participants consider are approached as critical elements of a larger plan to teach effectively, and their potential to contribute to learning situates our institute. CTE guided investigation of pedagogical issues and strategies for thoughtful use of these tools, and participants, who had already articulated learning goals, existed as a peer learning community and offered feedback on each other’s work.

Panels of faculty, instructional designers, and representatives of several campus resources visited the institute to take part in panel presentations. These panels shared experiences with and guidance for the use of new tools on ELMS, wikis, KEEP Toolkit electronic portfolios, clickers, and multimedia digital archives.

As participants worked on developing uses of wikis, clicker questions, Blackboard tools, blogs, and other tools, CTE and OIT instructional designers offered consultation. This nearly one-to-one support during the institute allowed participants to experiment and practice in a low-risk environment. Throughout the summer and the 2008-2009 academic year, the community will continue to share feedback and will be supported by CTE. Participants will ultimately report their experiences - and their sense of improved learning in their courses - to the campus community.

For more, visit http://cte.umd.edu/sti

Participants:
Linda Macri, English
Laurie Frederik Meer, Theatre
Sara Via, Biology
Richard Bell, History
Mathias Frisch, Philosophy
Thomas Zeller, History and Engineering
Merrill Feitell, English
Jeffrey Jensen, Biology
Gerri Foudy, Libraries
Evan Golub, Computer Science

For more, visit http://cte.umd.edu/sti
Departmental Award for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching

Dean for Undergraduate Studies Donna Hamilton presented the 2008 Departmental Excellence and Innovation in Undergraduate Teaching Award to Joelle Presson, who received it on behalf of the Biological Science Program.

The CTE-Lilly Teaching Fellows established The Departmental Excellence and Innovation in Undergraduate Teaching Award in 1994 to recognize notable improvements in undergraduate education on the department, program, or university level. Each year the CTE-Lilly Fellows select the winners from departmental submissions describing current educational activities or innovations that have made important contributions to undergraduate education during the past two to three years. The award recognizes the combined efforts of a unit rather than the work of any one individual. The Office of Undergraduate Studies provides the support for this annual award.

BSCI207 was developed by a diverse faculty team who designed a common syllabus that is used by the various faculty who teach this course. Each lecture section is taught by a team of two faculty with complimentary expertise. Each year the six BSCI207 instructors come together to critique and evaluate the course, their role in it, and to ensure that it stays true to the original interdisciplinary vision.

Because BSCI207 is so integrative and conceptual in nature, and because it is required of all BSCI majors, it provides a focal point in the curriculum to address critical thinking and reasoning skills. The cooperative nature of the BSCI207 faculty team has provided a venue in which to explicitly articulate what those critical thinking skills are and to help students achieve them.

The interdisciplinary and integrative thrust of BSCI207 has stimulated the faculty in Biological Sciences to seek such reforms across the sciences. Discussions with colleagues in mathematics have led to the development of a new calculus for life sciences course and similar conversations with colleagues in physics are directed towards a similar collaborative course in that arena. The development and implementation of BSCI207 represent that type of interdisciplinary conceptual thinking that is reforming STEM education and helping the University of Maryland to be a national leader in ensuring today’s science education prepares students for a world that is increasingly interconnected across many knowledge domains.
2008-2009 Instructional Improvement Grants

Johanna K Birnir, Department of Government and Politics
*Simulating the Comparative Challenges of Confronting Terrorism Domestically*

Amy Jo Haufler, Kinesiology
*Implementation of Learning Style Methods to Enhance Student Achievement in a Cooperative Learning Environment*

Jeffrey S. Jensen, Department of Biology
*Enhancing Scientific Literacy: Understanding and presenting scientific information*

Ruth Lozner, Art
*New Technologies in Print and Time-Based Graphic Design for Interdisciplinary Courses*

Aaron J. Martin and Sarah Penniston-Dorland, Department of Geology
*Geologic Field Methods: An Inter-Disciplinary Approach to Learning Geology at the University of Maryland*

Karen Nelson, Department of Biology
*MathBench Biology Modules: Online interactive math for ALL biology undergraduates*

Kent Norman, Psychology
*Engaging Students in Technology: The Psychology of Video Games and Entertainment*

Joseph B. Richardson, Department of Art History and Archeology
*Examining the Effects of Urban Public Policy Through Ethnographic Research Studies*

Johnna Schmidt, Jimenez-Porter Writers’ House
*Developing a Study Abroad to Egypt*

Allen Stairs, Department of Philosophy
*Toward Excellence in Online Logic and Philosophy Instruction*

Leah Waks, Department of Communication
*Advocacy Beyond the Classroom*

The Instructional Improvement Grants program is part of an ongoing commitment by the Office of Undergraduate Studies and the Center for Teaching Excellence to support faculty, department, and college initiatives to improve undergraduate education at the University of Maryland. This year’s Instructional Improvement Grants funds were supplemented by contributions from Academic Instructional Technology Services and the Office of Community-Service Learning.
2007-08 Graduate Teaching Assistant Development Grants

During the 2007-2008 academic year, CTE and the Graduate School awarded three TA Development Grants. These grants are awarded annually for programs to improve the professional development, support, and recognition of graduate teaching assistants.

2007-2008 GTA Development Grants were as follows:

- **“Astronomy Models and Demonstrations”**
  Submitted by Mia Bovill, Department of Astronomy

- **“Enhancing Teaching Excellence of International Graduate Students in Communication”**
  Submitted by Erica Lamm and Hongmei Shen, Department of Communication

- **“Developing English Department TAs through Teaching Resource Archives and Exchanges”**
  Submitted by Kelly Wisecup, Department of English

CTE also supported the fourth proposal entitled **“Lilly-East/ECE Peer Mentoring Program”** with five Lilly-East Grants for Electrical Engineering Graduate Teaching Assistants. The proposal was submitted by Tracy Chung and Melanie Miller.

The Center for Teaching Excellence and the Graduate School award a number of small grants each year to departments and colleges working for Graduate Teaching Assistant development. The application deadline for 2008-2009 awards will be the first week of December. For more information about the GTA Development Grants visit [http://www.cte.umd.edu/grants/TAGrants/index.html](http://www.cte.umd.edu/grants/TAGrants/index.html).

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**Faculty Handbook of Policies & Resources**

- Can I reschedule a final exam?  • What are the University’s guidelines for attendance policies?
- In what cases I am required to submit early warning grades?  • What must be included in my course syl-
  labi?  • Do I need approval to sell my own textbook to students taking my course?

This guide offers a brief introduction to the University’s policies, procedures, and resources related to teaching, advising and mentoring. It is available at the following address:

[http://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/InstructionalGuide.htm](http://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/InstructionalGuide.htm)
“Teacher as Alchemist” continued from page 2

In my non-majors microbiology class I have good success in getting most students to be better engaged with the materials by starting each lecture class with “microbes in the news,” where I point out recent news articles that feature microbes and their impacts. On ELMS I have a “microbes in the news” blog where students are encouraged to post their microbes in the news findings.

A second hallmark of a good teacher is that she/he is reflective and scholarly with respect to their teaching, i.e., she/he thinks about their teaching before, during and after the semester and engages in scholarly conversation with peers regarding their teaching. In order for the reflections and conversations to be productive it is best if they are based on more than a feeling that something is going well or not so well. Formative feedback is essential. There are many ways to build this type of feedback into the fabric of one’s courses; if you are unsure how to do so contact us at CTE. We have large collection of resources on assessment and feedback that we can help you learn from.

A final hallmark (although I am sure there are others) of a good teacher is that he/she enjoys teaching and interacting with an ever changing set of students. The joy comes from the challenge of trying new things, developing new pedagogies, continuing to learn about how people learn, and learning from my students.”

“For me this is the true reward, the joy of teaching and interacting with an ever changing set of students. The joy comes from the challenge of trying new things, developing new pedagogies, continuing to learn about how people learn, and learning from my students.”

Next year I will be away from CTE on a Fulbright to Hong Kong where I will be working with other faculty to develop general education for the Hong Kong universities. I am excited about the opportunities to try something new, learn a new language and reflect on teaching and learning. I will miss the interactions of my UMD friends and colleagues during my absence.

Try Clickers for a Day

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.

Subscribe to Teaching & Learning News ~ http://www.cte.umd.edu/TLN-MailingList/

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.
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.

UTLP is supported by the Office of the Provost, and administered by the Center for Teaching Excellence. For more information about the UTLP, contact Henrike Lehnguth at cte@umd.edu.

University Teaching & Learning Program

Graduate students, boost your teaching, boost your CV – join the UTLP!

What is the UTLP? CTE’s University Teaching and Learning Program (UTLP) assists graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) in professionalizing as college teachers by encouraging you to self-reflectively practise and document your teaching in writing.

You complete the program with a notation on your transcript and a teaching philosophy and portfolio in hand. Institutions of higher education nowadays require teaching portfolios and philosophies from applicants for academic jobs.

Please visit http://www.cte.umd.edu/UTLP for further information on UTLP and electronic application forms.
2007-2008 University of Maryland
Faculty and Graduate Student Teaching Awards

Departments and programs from across campus have reported the following recipients of teaching awards:

Department of English

The Robinson Award for Excellence in Teaching went to graduate student David Coley.

Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

Graduate students Leonard Demoranville and Mara Dougherty were this year’s recipients of Carl L. Rollinson Teaching Awards.

Department of Kinesiology

Graduate Students Alexander Hooke and Laura Levin were awarded the F. Daniel Wagner Memorial Award for Outstanding Teaching.

Sarah Camhi was named Kinesiology Outstanding TA.

Department of Sociology

John Michael Ryan was selected as the BSOS Outstanding Graduate Instructor.

Jeff Lucas was named BSOS Outstanding Faculty Instructor.

John Pease received the Regents Outstanding Mentorship Award.

Nihal Celik and Brian Ward were named outstanding teaching assistants.

2008-2009 Distinguished Scholar-Teachers

Stephen Elkin, Department of Government and Politics

Howard Lasnik, Department of Linguistics

Theodore Jacobson, Department of Physics

Melanie Killen, Department of Human Development

John Haltiwanger, Department of Economics

Distinguished Scholar-Teachers will be called upon to participate in one or more programs for faculty or students in which they will share their expertise in establishing productive research programs and in developing successful teaching methods and approaches. They will also make a public presentation on a topic within their scholarly discipline. The award carries an honorarium of $5000 to support the Distinguished Scholar-Teacher’s professional activities. For more information, call the Office of the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs at (301) 405-2509.
2008 Fall Orientation for Graduate TAs

Tuesday, August 26th, 2008
8:30 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.
Location to be announced

CTE’s annual Graduate Teaching Assistant orientation introduces TAs to teaching at the University with a series of presentations, workshops, and panel discussions, as well as offering the opportunity for returning TAs to re-engage in pedagogical conversations and take part in specialized workshops. Participants will be given a copy of the 2008-2009 Graduate Teaching Assistant Resource Guide, as well as a number of other CTE and campus resources. TA orientation also begins to support communities of TAs by offering a pre-semester venue for discussion among colleagues.

Tentative Workshops and Panels:

Grading Made Easy: Grading with Rubrics
Preparing a Lesson
Teaching Students How to Write
International GTA Q & A
Cheating and Harassment
Talking About Identity and Difference
Expectations for Lab GTAs
Teaching in STEM
Teaching as Performance
Teaching Tips: A Panel Discussion
How to Stay Sane: Resources for GTAs

An experienced TA panel will offer their reflections, and outstanding faculty will present and discuss good teaching practices.

Mark your calendars and notify your incoming TAs as soon as possible. Visit www.cte.umd.edu for more information and to reserve a space.

Share Your Teaching and Learning News!
CTE welcomes your contributions to Teaching and Learning News. Submit an article, or send your news to cte@umd.edu.

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