Teaching Collaborative Writing
By Linda Macri
Director of the Freshman Writing Program

As an English major in college, I wrote many papers which earned good grades. I had an English 101 class in my first year, and a senior thesis colloquium in my final year. But I didn’t really learn to write until about a year after graduation, in a conference room at my first full-time job.

I was the assistant in the education department of a history museum and, along with one of the collection curators, needed to write the label copy for an exhibit showcasing the museum’s collection of women’s clothing from the early 20th century. Thus began the collaborative effort that was an “aha” moment in my writing. Certainly the genre played a part; label copy aims to distill substantial concrete information and abstract concepts to a captive but wide-ranging audience in a very limited space. But for me the fundamental, altering aspect of that writing encounter had everything to do with working with a colleague. He questioned my ideas, my choice of verbs, nouns and prepositions, the

“Collaborative Writing” continued on page 10
Thinking Like Scholars, Thinking Like Teachers

By Dave Eubanks, Interim Director of CTE

In his valuable *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Ernest Boyer suggests a reconsidered approach to what universities do, or at least, how universities conceptualize that work. Operating against the convention of seeing research and teaching as opposing parts of our adventure, Boyer (and Charles Glassick, Mary Huber and Gene Maeroff in their subsequent *Scholarship Reassessed*) offers the category of scholarship as a way to organize all of what we do in academe. His four foundations are discovery, integration, application, and teaching. Each, Boyer recommends, ought to be purposeful and systematic. The scholarship of discovery, which tracks most neatly with what we call research, is the production and exchange of new knowledge. The scholarship of teaching, now what we call the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) is the exchange of findings on teaching and learning.

SoTL remains an unsettled, contested domain. Nevertheless, its starting point, the idea that we can approach teaching not as a constantly reinvented wheel, something that simply gets better with our practice, is worth regular attention. As I plan for the upcoming end of the semester, I might try to conclude my course in the same way I did last semester and hypothesize that I’ll do a better job because I’ve had some practice. Or I might try to evaluate the effectiveness of those previous efforts, investigate other strategies and their reported values, and attempt to measure the effectiveness of a new approach. Having tried more than one strategy, I might then share my conclusions about their relative strengths. The latter, while an awfully rough simplification of scholarly teaching, does begin to capture the purposefulness of teaching among a community of scholarly teachers.

It seems important to point out that, just as the disciplinary organization of the university shapes the kinds of discovery we accomplish, our departments and disciplines should inform the kind of scholarly (and scholarship of) teaching we do. In “The Amateur in the Operating Room: History and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning,” David Pace insists that we before we can reasonably talk about the effectiveness of teaching and the duration of learning, we have to understand how we think and how we perform our disciplines. While there are most definitely findings about pedagogy that hold across disciplines (the importance of active learning, for example) this approach to scholarly teaching through the communities of the disciplines ought to provide a productive route for generating and sharing findings of what sorts of teaching appear to support learning.

CTE can help to facilitate a scholarly approach to teaching. We support these exchanges in many ways for many communities. As you review this issue of *TLN*, as you attend one of our regular events, or as you take advantage of any of our resources, consider them opportunities to participate in a community of scholars.

Works cited:


I also owe a debt to the graduate students of UNIV798A, whose insights as a community of scholarly teachers shape these notes.
What exactly is the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), and why should we, as college-level educators, engage in it? Furthermore, how might we engage in it more productively—conducting, sharing, and applying our research in ways that truly enhance learning for our students? And perhaps most challenging of all, how can we work to establish a recognized space for the scholarship of teaching and learning within or alongside the traditional academic edifice of disciplinary scholarship? These are the questions addressed by noted SoTL expert Kathleen McKinney in her recent book, *Enhancing Learning Through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: The Challenges and Joys of Juggling*. As the title suggests, McKinney readily admits that “doing SoTL is a bit of a juggling act for most of us,” but her goal in writing this book is to help us as college-level educators become more successful jugglers.

McKinney’s book is structured as a guide to doing SoTL, or as she terms it, “a brief survey course on SoTL,” and as such, offers chapters outlining each stage of the SoTL process as well as a very useful set of appendices covering everything from additional resources to lists of possible funding sources for SoTL work. She defines SoTL as “the systematic reflection or study of teaching and learning made public,” and reminds us that scholarly teaching, while essential, is not equivalent to the systematic research agenda involved in the scholarship of teaching and learning. In considering why we should engage in SoTL, McKinney offers several persuasive arguments. Most importantly, she contends, it is our ethical obligation to at least consider undertaking any activity that has the potential to increase student learning. Furthermore, while it may be time consuming, there are ways of conducting SoTL research more efficiently, namely by integrating it into one’s current professional workload—including attaching SoTL work to existing campus initiatives such as program assessments and strategic planning, connecting it to committee work, relating it to something we are already doing in our classroom, and of course, engaging in team work.

In considering how to engage in SoTL more productively, McKinney is adamant about the fact that, first and foremost, we must produce more of this type of scholarship in order to create a larger and more diverse body of research from which all of us can draw. She also offers important practical advice for seeking and receiving funding for SoTL projects, and for exploring options for presentation and publication of our SoTL work. And, in addition to challenging us to produce more scholarship of teaching and learning, McKinney also urges us to be more active in actually *applying* the results of our own SoTL work as well as that conducted by others. SoTL has the capacity to enhance student learning, she reminds us, “only if we use or apply the results of our SoTL work.”

In considering how to increase the institutionalization of SoTL within the traditional academic enterprise, McKinney recognizes that this is a significant challenge, and one that will not be achieved easily or quickly, but she offers a few suggestions. Conducting more SoTL work based at levels beyond the classroom—including the program and departmental levels—could “improve the integration of SoTL into institutional cultures, strengthen linkages between SoTL and assessment, and provide additional and better opportunities for student involvement in SoTL research.” She also echoes Lee Shulman’s call for better tools to help us make our research accessible, and for increased attention to...
The unusual title refers to different ways to think about student learning. Nearly everyone knows about or is familiar with Benjamin Bloom’s taxonomy of learning or the variations that have evolved from it. Figure 1 shows a representation that combines the work of Lorin Anderson (one of Bloom’s students) with Bloom’s original cognitive taxonomy. This taxonomy is represented as hierarchal in that lower supporting domains are deemed necessary for the higher order domains (e.g. for students to be able evaluate they need to know certain facts, understand what these facts mean, be able to apply this understanding to analyze a situation, problem or task).

However, not all learning taxonomies need be hierarchal and Lee Shulman has developed a table of learning that is not hierarchal and can be represented as a web or set of connected items (Fig. 2). In truth the epistemologies that students employ in their learning are not often not hierarchal and students may engage several domains within any given learning cycle or activity.

An alternative way to think about student learning is to envision learning or educational landscapes to depict the complexity of the learning processes. Learning involves not only content, but process (pedagogies and metacognitions) and occurs within and is affected by physical, virtual, mental and personal spaces. The term learning landscape is thus a useful one since it evokes a perception of learning that is multi-dimensional and reminds one to pay attention to the interplay between the processes of learning and various space dimensions. This is illustrated by the impact the physical landscape (layout) of the classroom can have on teaching and student learning. We have all taught classes in rooms that are less than ideal, (e.g. a discussion class in a room where the seating is fixed and all students faced the same direction, a lecture class or discussion that was overly crowded, or external noises that were distracting, or being assigned a room with only an overhead or blackboards for a class that routinely used technology as part of the embedded...

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Information Literacy: A Collaborative Endeavour

by Ann Smith, Faculty Fellow, CTE

This article is the second published by CTE as part of an effort to encourage faculty collaboration with librarian subject specialists.

In science, when can we believe that information reported is of merit? A scientist will tell you that peer review is the key. When scientific discoveries are made they are reported in established journals following critical review by scientific peers. As more data is generated to support an observation, that observation comes to be accepted as fact.

As our students engage in the process of becoming scientists or scientific literate citizens, it is important that we design curricula that help students understand how scientific information is generated. All of the learning literature indicates that the best way for students to understand a difficult concept is to get students involved. To this end is my story of creating authentic assignments.

If we were going to engage students, we want them to be doing things that will benefit their development as scientists and develop their understanding of what scientists do. To this end, each module in General Microbiology expects students to use literature sources that are important to practicing microbiologists.

The Bergey’s Manual of Systematic Bacteriology is one such example. Unlike most sources today, there is no online version of this classic “bible” of microbiology. Yet the source is the most respected compendium of information on the characteristics of bacteria. This source was an absolute must for our students to use for researching characteristics of bacteria used in the microbiology lab. We refer students to the Chem library research section to consult this classic on a regular basis. The result? Each semester 300 students would show up looking to peruse this complicated volume held on reserve. One day Tom Harrod, librarian in White Memorial Chemistry Library, gave me a call. “Your students have a lot of questions on how to use Bergey’s… how can I help?”

As General Microbiology is a sophomore level class, this is a place to help students learn how to find and use appropriate literature sources.

Through the course library page (http://www.lib.umd.edu/MCK/bsci223.html), Tom set up tutorials for the use of complicated microbiology texts (including Bergey’s manual). And has guided students very carefully to sources that we have determined as good first places to look for various course assignments. A course library page is a fantastic resource that is used for many courses on campus. http://www.lib.umd.edu/UES/tutorials.html.

If your students are completing research projects, or if you are encouraging students to read specific online articles or texts, talk to a librarian!

McKinney’s book is both practical in its advice and persuasive in its calls for improving and extending the scholarship of teaching and learning. Seasoned SoTL researchers and novices alike will find this book a useful companion in conducting and reflecting on their own SoTL work.

To Wiki or Not to Wiki:
Using Online Collaborative Tools in Teaching Writing

By Jasmine Lellock

Jasmine Lellock is a graduate student in the English Department at University of Maryland. She will be presenting her classroom research on “Using Wikis to Facilitate Collaborative Student Learning” at the upcoming Lilly East Conference on Teaching and Learning at University of Delaware this month.

Most educators agree that student collaboration and peer learning are valuable pedagogical strategies, yet such projects are often a source of frustration. Students have conflicting schedules and personalities. Tracking and assessing individual contributions presents another problem. Collaborative online technologies like wikis and blogs offer a way to overcome these issues.

Wikis are especially useful for writing instruction. A dynamic and comfortable forum in which students can communicate with each other, wikis offer opportunities for improving student writing through modeling, collaboration, and revision. Indeed, using wikis in writing instruction aligns with the stated outcomes of the First Year Writing program. For example, collaborative wiki projects can assist in teaching students how to “locate [their] argument in a broader conversation” and to “define, address, and appeal to [their] target audience.” These tools can also enhance peer review skills, another student learning outcome that appears on the syllabi of many writing courses. Further, wikis help students think about writing as process, and they give students a sense of purpose. Because their work is semi-public, students feel more accountable for its quality. Finally, their collaborative nature encourages classroom community and develops their sense of civic engagement.

Despite these and other obvious benefits, the potential of open-source, collaborative technologies to reshape writing pedagogies has not yet found its outlet in many writing classrooms. One reason for this notable absence is the fear that the technology is too difficult to learn or that it will require more time and effort than it is worth. Another common concern is how to deal with students’ anxiety about making their writing public and their concern with appropriate assessment of collaborative work. With planning and training, however, instructors and students can learn to navigate this rather straightforward tool and to identify strategies that complement their teaching style and meet their pedagogical goals.

I first decided to explore wiki writing as part of my English 101 class. In conjunction with the First Year Writing Program’s emphasis on civic engagement, the course theme that I developed was “The Public I.” To accommodate this theme, I wanted to find a way to demonstrate the ways in which writing could be a public process and product, as well as to encourage group learning. The wiki, then, was an ideal tool for me. In other 101 classes, I had taught rhetorical analysis in a series of journals. This time, I designed a collaborative essay project in which students taught each other the terms and strategies of rhetorical analysis and worked together to analyze a text.

Communicating via the wiki discussion feature, students began the project by selecting a pair of political speeches that their group wished to analyze and compare. Their second task was to post to the wiki individual responses to the speeches; thus, the initial invention stage of composition encouraged individual reflection. Because their work is semi-public, students feel more accountable for its quality.

“...[a] concern that students have with collaborative work is that their individual contributions will not be appropriately noticed or assessed...”

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Negotiating the Politics of Interpersonal Relationships in Living-Learning Communities

By Patrick Grzanka, Assistant Director, Honors Humanities

This project was developed with Justin Maher, program coordinator and lecturer in Honors Humanities; and Dr. Tanya Jung, assistant dean in the College of Arts and Sciences at University of Pennsylvania and former director of Honors Humanities. Patrick Grzanka is the former acting and co-director of Honors Humanities and will complete his Ph.D. in American Studies later this year. He will be amongst the graduate students from University of Maryland who are presenting their pedagogical work at the Lilly East Conference this month.

Instructors who have taught in living-learning programs (LLPs) at the University of Maryland will tell you that there is something different about the pedagogical climate of “LLPs” when compared to courses in traditional departments and programs.

“In my experience, teaching in a living and learning program is unique in that the students are more engaged in the classroom,” said Mao-Lin Shen, former program coordinator for CIVICUS. “I believe this is because they are part of a program, which develops a community outside of the classroom with social, developmental and leadership activities that further enhance their classroom experiences.”

The benefits these programs offer undergraduate students are well documented and include: close contact with faculty across consecutive semesters, intellectually based thematic housing, and promotion of an engaged residential community that pushes learning beyond the classroom, to name a few. The University of Maryland has been a national leader in this movement, having earned recognition from U.S. News and World Report throughout this decade for its innovative learning communities, such as University Honors, College Park Scholars and Jiménez-Porter Writer’s House.

Less documented are the challenges that LLPs present for instructors who often occupy multiple roles in these programs and engage closely with undergraduate students throughout their college careers. At the Lilly East Conference in April, two LLP veteran instructors will join me in offering a workshop to investigate some of these challenges, particularly the interpersonal dynamics of teaching and learning in LLPs.

Based on observations of LLP faculty, administrators, graduate instructors, resident life staff and students themselves, we will explore what we call the “always-already feminist politics” of these communities. Drawing on the insights of feminist educator Beverly Daniel Tatum, we assert that there is something implicitly feminist about the general LLP model— even if feminist issues are not explicitly addressed in the mission or curriculum. This is especially evident in the ways in which LLPs tend to educate and nurture the student as a whole individual and destabilize the boundaries between the classroom and the “real world.” This nurturing of the student-as-person begins from the first day a student joins an LLP, which is often based on interests and experiences that stretch outside of the classroom.

It is not uncommon for LLP faculty to work as instructors, advisors, research mentors, admissions counselors, supervisors and administrators at the same time. This translates into relationships with students that involve multiple social and pedagogical roles and that are typically more personal than the bonds formed in traditional faculty-student relationships.

...relationships with students... involve multiple social and pedagogical roles and that are typically more personal than the bonds formed in traditional faculty-student relationships.
Creating Successful Learning Communities: Teaching to and About Diversity

By Rashi Jain

Rashi Jain is a doctoral student in Program of Second Language Education and Culture. She will be participating in a roundtable on learning communities at the Lilly East Conference on College and University Teaching later this month.

A classroom, any classroom, should be more than a collection of desks, students, and the instructor. A classroom should be a living and breathing community—a common dynamic space where everyone learns, including the instructor. Last semester, I found this an achievable goal as I set out to teach independently a 400-level course for the first time.

About the course

The course I taught in Fall 2008 was titled “EDCI436: Understanding cross-cultural communication for teaching English language learners” and had the overarching objective of understanding cross-cultural issues that students and their teachers are likely to encounter in classrooms. Enrolled students were expected to acquire knowledge and techniques to facilitate their success as future teachers of populations learning English as an additional language.

Although the course was embedded within a teacher education program, it was open to non-education majors as well. In fact, of the twelve students who enrolled in the course, only three were education majors. The rest were majoring in such diverse areas as English, History, Biochemistry, Italian, and Government and Politics. Additionally, the student body comprised of juniors and seniors, and also included one sophomore and one advanced special student. A couple of them had never taken an education course before, whereas others had taken other courses in the program prior to Fall 2008. Further, as I learned through an initial survey and classroom discussions, the student body enrolled in the course comprised of both U.S. and international students. I am myself an international graduate student, and my students and I collectively represented cultural, racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. As a result, the realities of my own classroom (adventently and excitingly) mirrored the course content; and I found myself endeavoring to practice what I was teaching.

In order to assess the needs and expectations of such a diverse body of students and to address the gaps in my own knowledge, I asked students to take anonymous online surveys at the beginning and in the middle of the semester. I also frequently sought student feedback in the classroom and outside. At the end of the semester, students filled out the formal online course evaluations. In this article, I draw upon the responses from the surveys and evaluations to substantiate my insights.

Building a community, collaboratively

At one level I tried to create a community of learning through pairwork, group-work, and whole-class discussions. I also frequently arranged the seating in a semi-circle to facilitate interaction among students. At a more encompassing level, I tried to consciously model for my students how to create a safe classroom where all views are welcomed and respected (an important component of successful cross-cultural communication in educational settings). I tried to ensure that the classroom moved at a comfortable pace and the discussions were low on anxiety while at the same time high on critical thinking. I think we were largely successful, as reflected in the feedback. One student wrote, “I really enjoy the class. It is helping me to think about things I have never seen before. You have created a comfortable environment where discussion is open and relaxed.”

I might have played an important
As CTE planned a recent workshop entitled, “This is What a Feminist Pedagogy Looks Like,” one of my colleagues asked, “What would a feminist pedagogy look like in an engineering classroom?” So we began to consider how some of the teaching and learning tools we can employ are able to promote feminist pedagogies across the disciplines.

Contemporary feminists have carefully excavated what Michel Foucault called “local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges,” with special attention to the multiple, partial, situated, and particular, and to the methodologies that enable inclusion rather than exclusion. In terms of a feminist pedagogy, this means an attention to what we teach (the knowledges produced) and also how we teach (how knowledge is constructed in our classrooms). Today we are beginning to see an appreciation for “situated learning” – that is the understanding that knowledge is socially constructed rather than transmitted in some decontextualized form.

The teachers who attempt to make the material personal – accessible – relevant – are making progress towards a vision of teaching and learning that does not separate emotion from intellect, or subject from object.

The wiki is a good place to begin, as it is a tool that offers non-traditional means of collaborative authorship, editing, and publishing (see “To Wiki or Not to Wiki” in this issue of Teaching and Learning News). As new media critic Andrea Cliffolilli put it, wikis are an example of “enacting horizontal knowledge assemblages in higher education practices” (Cliffolilli, 2003). They are authored, edited and maintained, not by individuals but by self-regulating communities. Wikis authorize everyone, and prioritize no one through their processes of construction and creation. The wiki’s content is subject to reordering, rewriting, to a kind of rigorous collaboration and collectivity. Using such a tool in our classrooms necessarily challenges traditional notions of authorship, knowledge, production, and power.

Unlike wikis, blogs are not edited by others, but they too offer a forum for personal narrative, and often in conversation with the readers. Typically blogs involve a recentering and validating of the personal voice, and in wikis we can identify a rare instance of the simultaneous communal voice.

These are just two examples of how feminist visions of less hierarchical and communal knowledge construction can take place in our classrooms and learning communities across campus. There are, fortunately, many more. The experiential, group knowledge advocated by sociologist Patricia Hill Collins, for example, is validated not by the disembodied researcher or teacher, but in conversation with the community, with “connected knowers” who acknowledge their values and experiences. The teachers who attempt to make the material personal – accessible – relevant – are making progress towards a vision of teaching and learning that does not separate emotion from intellect, or subject from object.

“This is What a Feminist Pedagogy Looks Like” continued on page 19
length and order of my sentences. And I questioned his. In the end, we wrote perhaps 300 words, but the experience of making decisions with someone equally invested in what we wrote reshaped the way I approached writing. Those hours at a conference table (this was 1988; we used pen and paper, not a wiki in sight) anticipated both theory I would later read by rhetoric and composition scholars and my own teaching practices.

As with many of our pedagogical practices, while some technique may feel new and innovative, collaborative writing has a very long history. We might blame Romanticism and its theories of genius and originality for emphasizing writing as a solitary act, overturning the centuries of education focused on communal rather than individual values, yet collaborative learning and writing continually had their proponents throughout the history of American education. In Writing Groups: History, Theory, and Implications, rhetorical historian Anne Ruggles Gere reveals that writing groups, for peer response and collaborative writing, had been advocated by many teachers and by groups beyond the classroom since colonial times. John Dewey, who influenced generations of teachers and decades of education in 20th century America, called for education to be seen as aiming at communal context.

Perhaps we are still inspired by Dewey’s values when we prepare a syllabus. Many of us choose collaborative assignment; our goals may include wanting to create a more student-centered classroom, wanting to prepare students for work in the “real world,” or perhaps even wanting to reduce our own grading load. Perhaps an equal number of us avoid collaborative assignments; such projects can be difficult to manage, students often object to them, and we are unsure how to evaluate them.

My courses generally include some level of collaborative writing or editing. I have taught collaborative papers before, and, as Director of First-Year Writing, I instruct others about including collaborative projects in their syllabi. Peer editing is a cornerstone of the English 101 curriculum, and most sections require a collaborative project, either an oral presentation done in groups or a group paper, typically as the second assignment in the course, with the goal of having students help each other understand the intricacies of rhetorical analysis. This past fall and winter term, I tried something I had not done before. In my special topics course, English 379L: Graphic Novels and the Representation of War, a collaborative project that students developed in a wiki and then recreated as web pages was their final project; constituting 20% of students’ grades, it was the major work of the last third of the semester. The collaborative effort and final products were some of the most exciting and innovative work I have received from students, and, on evaluations, many students remarked that they enjoyed the projects and felt they were the best group work they had ever done.

So what worked? To begin with, having taught collaborative papers before, I knew what often didn’t work. Students often dislike collaborative projects. They complain that one or maybe two team members do all the work; students then resent being judged as a group. Collaborative efforts are often not as polished as the best individual papers can be, often because students postpone their writing or because they don’t really know how to edit by committee. And students often don’t appreciate the justification that they will often work in groups in the “real world” so they should get some practice now; the assignment feels just as artificial as other assignments.

In Singular Texts/Plural Authors, one of the major works on collaborative writing in composition scholarship, authors Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede suggest that successful collaborative writing assignments have a common set of characteristics, which include ample time for group cohesion to form and for authority to emerge, room for creative conflict, and...
Teachers’ Notes

IIG Recipient Showcase

April 6

Each year the Dean for Undergraduate Studies provides funds for Improvement of Instruction Grants. Grants are awarded to individual faculty members, as well as groups, that wish to pursue projects to improve instruction in undergraduate education on campus. Please come to hear from a panel of 2008/2009 Recipients of the CTE Improvement for Instruction Grants. Each will present outcomes of their funded work and talk in general about the value of participating in the IIG initiative.

Nominate Your Distinguished Teaching Assistants

Nominations Due April 14

We ask that each program/department identify the top 10 percent of their graduate teaching assistants for their excellence in undergraduate teaching and submit their names to the Center for Teaching Excellence. These Distinguished Teaching Assistants will be presented a certificate recognizing their contributions to undergraduate education at Maryland during the 2008-2009 Distinguished Teaching Assistant Ceremony. The ceremony will be held at the Riggs Alumni Center on May 13, 2009 from 4:00-5:30 p.m.

As this award is meant to honor exemplary teaching assistants, we request that you limit the number of awardees to ten percent of all teaching assistants in your unit. Awardees are selected by their departments based on positive student evaluations, classroom observations, and/or noted contributions to the teaching culture within the unit. Specific selection criteria are at the discretion of the individual unit.

Please submit the names of the teaching assistants you have selected as Distinguished Teaching Assistants electronically via the Center for Teaching Excellence website http://cte.umd.edu/grants/DTAAward.html no later than April 14, 2009. If another person in your unit has responsibility for selecting the unit’s nominees, please forward this information about recognition of Distinguished Teaching Assistants to him or her. If you have any questions about the recognition process, please contact Ms. Henrike Lehnguth at extension 4-1283. We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to recognize outstanding graduate teaching assistants in your unit. Thank you for your continuing support.

Call for Nominations: 2009-2010 Departmental Excellence & Innovation in Undergraduate Teaching Award

Nominations Due April 14

Sponsored by the Lilly-CTE Teaching Fellows, the Center for Teaching Excellence, and the Office of Undergraduate Studies

The Departmental Excellence & Innovation in Undergraduate Teaching Award honors a department’s commitment to and accomplishments in improving undergraduate education. The Award recognizes notable improvements and accomplishments in undergraduate education at the department or program level.

Applications should highlight a current initiative or programmatic or curricular improvement that has made a positive impact on student learning and the quality of undergraduate education in the last two or three years. For more information or to apply online visit: http://www.cte.umd.edu/programs/faculty/lilly/teachingaward/index.html.

The Office of Undergraduate Studies provides a $5,000 award.

“Teachers’ Notes” continued on page 19
students monitoring and evaluating the group’s performance. They found, in surveying collaborative writing groups in many “real world” situations, that satisfaction with a collaborative project was based on such factors as the degree to which goals were shared, a sense of mutual respect was created, and writers had control over the text, as well as who could respond or modify the text and the status of the project within the organization. Lunsford and Ede also identify seven organizational patterns for collaborative groups (for example, the group plans and outlines the task then individuals write sections and the group comes together to revise, or one person assigns tasks followed by each member completing individual tasks, culminating with one person compiling and completing a final revision), suggesting that there are many ways collaborative assignments might be carried out.

In planning the collaborative assignment for English 379L, I endeavored to pre-correct for problems I had encountered with group work in the past. From the very beginning of the term, I stressed that we were here to make knowledge together, not for me to disseminate it to them. Admittedly, this may be easier to achieve in a class on comics than in other topics. Class sessions were discussion based, and before their mid-term and the beginning of the projects, students had a “soft-entry” into wikis and knowledge-making by being responsible for the terms and definitions in the course glossary. The first step of the projects involved students deciding on viable topics. Although I created the assignment and its parameters, students tossed ideas around on a class blog; as a homework assignment, students had to suggest a topic and comment on the suggestions of others. After the mid-term exam, I brought the ideas from that blog to class where we spent the session mulling over the ideas, brainstorming about how they might be developed and what texts might be addressed. At the end of that period, students selected a topic they liked, thus forming their groups.

I posted a reading about working in groups on our course ELMS site, and asked each individual to articulate, early in the process, what their role in the collaborative effort would be. I also discussed ways they might organize their efforts, including suggesting that they might mimic an academic conference panel, with individual papers uniting under a common theme and each member being responsible primarily for their own paper but also for the strength of the panel. After topics had been selected, we spent one of two sessions each week in the English department’s new media classroom, where students developed their ideas on group wiki sites that I looked over and commented on. The class time they had to work on the projects and the use of wiki together countered a common challenge of group work, the difficulty of getting a group physically together to work. After a couple of weeks, the groups had to submit a few “draft” pages of their projects, which I reviewed. This, along with the feature of wikis that allows one to see a history of the work being done, mitigated the problem of students not pulling their weight and the concordant resentment of others in the group. Finally, after they completed their projects, each group had to deliver a ten minute presentation on their work to the whole class; this served to introduce the projects to everyone, which was important since students were required to refer to the work of a group other than their own in their demonstrating one last time that I felt the knowledge created was on par with all the other knowledge engaged and created in...
From my perspective, the results of this project were impressive. When students worked on projects in class, I heard conversations about their topics that impressed me not just because they were talking about “big” ideas (though they often were), but also because they were talking about small ideas: what’s our thesis, how do we articulate our ideas, how can I make that point clearer, what’s a better word for. . . . These were conversations by writers at work, writers thinking about their work in ways they may never have before sitting alone in front of their computers. The projects they completed were exciting in terms of the ideas they encompassed. I really enjoyed reading them, and talked about the ideas my students generated with my own colleagues. During class presentations, students asked questions that engaged topics in ways I have rarely heard during student presentations. And in referring to the work of their classmates in their final exam essays, students connected with new ideas and made meaning for themselves rather than trying to recall or regurgitate what they thought I wanted them to say. While I don’t know if any of my students had an “aha” writing moment during their collaborative work, I was reassured that students had engaged effectively in a class that was more student-centered than was, perhaps, typical for them.

But this question of the class being different from what they were used to inevitably shaped how they judged the course. While many said this was the best group work they had done, many commented on their (anonymous) final evaluations that they felt too much time had been given over to this project, that they would have preferred to read more texts rather than have so many sessions in the new media classroom (we had four class meetings in the new media classroom, plus one class period to narrow topics and a final period spent on presentations; all totaled, three weeks of class were dedicated to the projects). In Winterterm, some of my best students commented that they would have preferred individual papers to the group projects. I am still mulling over what to make of these critiques. It’s a rare thing for students to want to read more in a class (okay, they were comic books!) and I’m pleased that they did. Is the objection that we spent too much time on the projects based on students not buying into the valuing of their own ability to make knowledge? Why did they not feel that the collaborative projects were sufficiently challenging? Was an expressed preference for individual papers more of a preference for what is safe and familiar, a matter of good students being confident that they could perform well on their own while a collaborative project removed some of their control?

Is collaboration a value students share? Why—or why not? Is it our right—or perhaps our responsibility—to encourage a shift from individual to communal values? Are these really “real world” values, or only ideally so? Are they, indeed, the values of our own working lives in academia?

These questions lead to others that instructors must consider when deciding about collaborative projects. How do we judge student learning in these situations – not how do we evaluate the projects, but how do we assess the less tangible elements of the projects. Did students learn about their own behavior in a group? Is a sense of communal accomplishment more or less valuable than individual accomplishment? Is the goal the best papers or the best collaborative papers? In the end, these decisions, like many we make in the classroom, are about values. Is collaboration a value students share? Why—or why not? Is it our right—or perhaps our responsibility—to encourage a shift from individual to communal values? Are these really “real world” values, or only ideally so? Are they, indeed, the values of our own working lives in academia?
Having a wonderful, modern, bright, well equipped, functional learning-friendly space however does not insure good teaching or enhanced learning. Poor or inadequate teaching and learning can and does occur in the best of classrooms. However, a learning-friendly space opens up possibilities for multiple pedagogies and reduces the faculty efforts necessary to achieve increased student learning. Conversely, having a poor physical classroom environment does not preclude learning or prevent great teaching or enhanced learning. It does increase the costs in terms of efforts on both the part of the teacher and the students and stifles innovation.

A third way to envision student learning is to envision learning bubbles (Fig. 3). This view depicts learning occurring within a bubble of activities that students participate in. These activities include classroom work, studying (individually or in groups), browsing the Internet or the library, conversations with peers and faculty, thinking and reflecting and writing. The bubble is meant to represent learning as a 24/7 process, not just something that occurs within the classroom. The bubble analogy implies that the learning environment is constructed by the student. However, appropriate pedagogies can help to shape what items are present in the bubble.

Learning clouds (Fig. 4) are unlike learning bubbles; they do not have clear boundaries, are not necessarily constructed by the learner and are ever-present. Throughout campus and beyond students exist in accessible digital information clouds that can be accessed through various smart devices, e.g. laptops phones, PDAs, and music devices such as iTouch. This digital information includes text, images, sound, videos, social networks, virtual worlds and a variety of communication and networking tools. A personal learning cloud occurs when this information is harnessed by students for learning purposes.

One of the great challenges is how to make use of this ever-present digital cloud to increase student learning. The challenge has two parts, the first is to increase faculty awareness and comfort with the cloud’s resources and the second is to harness/make use of the resources to enhance student learning.

There is a large collection of resources in the cloud, including ELMS, wikis, blogs, pod-casting, moving images, mobile-learning (m-learning using smart devices such as the iPhone and iTouch) and social networking via Web2.0.

CTE and OIT work collaboratively to provide faculty opportunities to increase their awareness and comfort with the current and emerging digital resources for teaching and learning. For a list of current and summer opportunities see CTE and OIT’s Institute for Instructional Technology websites. Again, this summer CTE, in partnership with OIT, will host a 3-day summer institute on teaching with new(er) technologies for faculty who would like to be part of a learning community that focuses on using technology to enhance student learning.

The second challenge is to develop pedagogies that capitalize on the unique resources within the digital cloud that surrounds all of us and make use of the enhanced capabilities of technological devices that students carry with them 24/7. Increasingly educational technologists are exploring mobile-learning and virtual worlds as venues for increasing student engagement and learning. One technology that holds great promise is m-learning, since it uses...

....continued from page 4
devices (e.g. smart phones) which most students own and carry everywhere, and which they are experts at using. The current set of applications (apps) available for learning activities is quite large and continues to grow, many of which are free or cost less than $1.

A second aspect of m-learning and e-learning is the presence of social networks and Web2.0. Increasingly individuals are interconnected or networked through the digital cloud. Student use of Facebook and MySpace is ubiquitous yet only recently have universities begun to capitalize on this resource, mainly for tracking alumni. These established social networks have great potential to enhance student learning when used properly. As more educational usages are integrated into the social network systems students will be better equipped to accept and be comfortable with the blending of learning and socializing and hopefully will see learning as part of their everyday activities rather than a compartmentalized aspects of their life. Numerous studies have shown that in many contexts group learning within a social network enhances student performance and helps student to feel more connected to and engaged with the education institution. This is especially true for at risk students and those in the middle and lower performance quartiles (i.e. the majority of our students). Social networks also provide a venue through which we as faculty can hear and listen to our present and future students through the media they routinely use.

In summary, to develop a more accurate view and understanding of student learning we need to understand, be aware and use traditional and new taxonomies, educational landscapes and emerging paradigms for how students access information and construct knowledge in an increasing complex and interconnected world.

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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.


completing research projects, or if you are encouraging students to read specific online articles or texts, talk to a librarian! Library Subject Area Specialists http://www.lib.umd.edu/guides/specialists.html will work with you to set up resource page for your course tailored to your specifications. You may want to link to very specific articles, journals, or data bases. You may want to include guides to help your students “find search terms that yield results” or show students how to cite sources in the manner specific to your discipline.

For General Microbiology Librarian Tom Harrod has tailored some specific guides that are important for our course goals; these include “The Value of Various Resources: Identifying Scholarly, Primary Articles,” “Citing Your Sources: Help with Citations,” and “Ethics - Avoiding Plagiarism: Academic Integrity and Plagiarism.”

Working with Tom Harrod, my subject area librarian, has helped me see my course assignments in a new light. While course assignments have long included a student learning goal of achieving information literacy, the directions to the students related to this goal were vague and likely did not achieve the desired outcome. Working with Tom has helped me to put into place the necessary instructions for students, and the necessary support. Specifically Tom has helped with the General Microbiology assignment that asks students to determine the current facts, questions and controversies surrounding the use of genetically modified crops as an alternative to chemical insecticide use. For this assignment we ask students to read and evaluate all sources of information on the topic. Tom meets with the Undergraduate Teaching Assistants who monitor the online assignment. He has added great detail to our Library page to help students understand the value of reading popular source vs a scholarly source. We now expect students at the completion of the assignment to know how scientific information is reported, and that for the facts students should be looking at peer reviewed articles. (Students now use Ulrich’s data base to check if a source they are reading is peer reviewed). Students find that the “professional looking” sources may have little scientific merit but rather be an indicator of controversies surrounding a topic.

Information literacy is increasingly important as in every realm of our lives we are encouraged to “go look it up on the web”. Working with a librarian has helped dramatically as I aim to:

- design authentic assignments that will meet the UM information literacy learning outcome “Evaluate information and its sources critically, and assess the value added by new information in relation to prior knowledge.”
- AND engage students in learning the skills necessary for success as a scientist.

For an appreciation of the role of scientists in generating scientific information, skills that allow students to assess sources of information, understand their inherent value, and be able to distinguish verified fact from opinion, are essential.

Information Literacy Skills

Goal: University of Maryland undergraduates will learn and develop information literacy skills that they can successfully apply within a wide range and intersection of disciplines inside and outside academia.

Objectives - University of Maryland undergraduates should have the ability to:
1. Determine the extent of the information needed, and identify appropriate sources for information.
2. Access and manage needed information effectively and efficiently including, but not limited to: Using appropriate investigative methods and information retrieval systems; designing an effective search strategy, i.e. using keywords, Boolean operators, finding aids, etc.; retrieving information regardless of format; refining the search strategy if necessary; and, extracting, recording, and managing information and its sources.
3. Evaluate information and its sources critically, and assess the value added by new information in relation to prior knowledge.
4. Use information effectively to accomplish research goals.
5. Understand and respect legal and ethical issues that govern the use of information, and acknowledge information sources in a discipline-appropriate format.

https://www.irpa.umd.edu/Assessment/AssessmentUM/goals_objectives.shtml
also mitigated some of the stress of exposing their writing to the public eye. Another concern that students have with collaborative work is that their individual contributions will not be appropriately noticed or assessed; this assignment helped allay some of those anxieties.

The next step in the process was for students to prepare a group presentation in which they presented their initial observations to the class as a whole and then solicited ideas and feedback from their peers. After receiving input from their peers during the group presentations, students revised their individual responses to the speeches. Often, students complain that work on discussion boards or other electronic spaces is simply busy work that doesn’t relate to the issues of the class. This presentation helped to bring into the classroom the work that went on outside of class in the space of the wiki, demonstrating its centrality to class activities. As with the initial wiki posting, the group presentation also reinforced the value of writing as a process and as a collective learning endeavor.

The final stage was composing a collaborative essay, to be assigned a collective grade according to the First Year Writing grading standards. Students drafted and revised their essays on the wiki, modifying their peers’ contributions and using the discussion feature to ask questions and post updates. More than any of the others, this task unearthed student anxieties. The major concern, to my surprise, was not fears about making their early, less-polished drafts public, but rather concerns about intellectual property and fair assessment. They were nervous about modifying the writing of their peers, so they wanted to divide and conquer—to assign a section to each group member—rather than to compose and revise collaboratively the essay as a whole.

I have used this project for two classes, modifying it each time. When I next implement collaborative wiki writing, I hope to work through in greater depth the issue of assessment. Another area I wish to improve is helping students feel more comfortable revising the work of their peers. Despite student concerns about the collaborative nature of the assignment, however, the wiki essay is often the most successful one in each student’s portfolio. Further, students often identify the wiki project in their course evaluations as the most useful assignment. While implementing wikis in writing instruction requires some careful planning, in my experience, the pedagogical benefits outweigh its drawbacks.
"LLPs" continued from page 7

student relationships. While LLP faculty are ideally well equipped to successfully negotiate the complexity of these multiple roles, faculty and undergraduates alike sometimes struggle with these relationships for a variety of reasons.

Some students have difficulty recognizing the authority of their instructors once they have worked with them for several semesters; this is especially acute when dealing with graduate instructors, who constitute a significant portion of LLP faculty/staff. Other students seek an inappropriate degree of interpersonal sharing and emotional intimacy with their LLP mentors, treating their instructor-advisor like a counselor or therapist. In other cases, years of consistent positive feedback from instructors can cause students to become complacent in their own growth and learning.

Other students seek an inappropriate degree of interpersonal sharing and emotional intimacy with their LLP mentors, treating their instructor-advisor like a counselor or therapist. The workshop we will be facilitating at Lilly East will offer a diverse group of faculty the opportunity to engage with these problems in cooperative setting. We will develop specific strategies for maintaining appropriate interpersonal distance from students in LLPs while still fostering a sense of group cohesion and close mentoring relationships. In the interest of political diversity and inclusiveness, we will ask how instructors can promote dissent and productive debate within and outside of the classroom, across several semesters, and with the same group of students. In three small groups led by session organizers, participants will explore hypothetical scenarios involving interpersonal conflict between students and faculty/staff in an LLP; our findings will help develop a list of best practices for negotiating these relationships. We welcome feedback on this project and encourage participation in the conference and workshop from all members of the UMD-LLP community.

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.
Cultural theorist bell hooks’ “critical consciousness” is somewhat akin to the critical thinking emphasized at this University as one of the CORE student learning outcomes. In many classrooms we can begin to see what a feminist pedagogy looks like. The field work – the hands on experiences – the civic engagement – these are things that are going on across campus that can give great hope for more egalitarian institutions of teaching and learning.

To return to the question of the engineering classroom, or indeed a chemistry classroom, or a physics lab, what does a feminist pedagogy look like there? I’m not sure but wikis and blogs alone already speak to some of the multiple possibilities. To begin with, contextualizing the discipline and the material – to give it a social meaning – as the Marquee Courses here on campus try to do – this would be a start. And perhaps a feminist pedagogy is all the more important for those engineering classrooms and science labs because those are precisely the locations that have traditionally failed to attract and nurture women.

One final note. The purposes for which knowledges are produced are also important to a feminist pedagogy. We need to pay attention to the way in which education is framed and for what purposes, because it remains the primary tool for shaping the newest members of society and reproducing cultural discourses.

3rd Summer Institute for Teaching with New(er) Technology

Applications Due April 20 - Institute Held May 27-29

Applicants should submit a preliminary proposal for improving an existing course with technology-enhanced pedagogy. During the institute, faculty will discuss connections between technology and pedagogy in order to guide and refine their proposals.

Faculty selected as participants agree to: Implement a new technology in at least one course during the ’09-‘10 academic year; commit to sharing their work with each other as part of a peer learning community, meeting several times a semester; present their experiences and findings at the Innovations in Teaching and Learning conference during the spring 2010 semester; and report their experiences and findings at the end of the spring 2010 semester.

Faculty participants will receive a $1,500.00 stipend.
For more information, or to apply, visit http://cte.umd.edu/sti/

Innovations in Teaching & Learning Conference

Conference Date: April 24

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

Learning at the University of Maryland takes place in many locations and within the context of a variety of forums. Instructors are challenged on a daily basis to find innovative ways of enhancing student learning experiences. In traditional classrooms, distance, collaborative or independent learning environments, students and faculty explore a variety of techniques and tools meant to improve the overall academic experience. The Innovations in Teaching and Learning (ITL) Conference has evolved to showcase and celebrate the creativity and dedication of University instructors who have demonstrated excellence in their teaching endeavors.

http://oit.umd.edu/itl
Imagine how discouraging (and mortifying!) it would have been to teach a class on understanding cross-cultural communication, while being unsuccessful myself at communicating with the class due to differences in cultural backgrounds.

I think one of my biggest worries at the beginning of the semester was whether I would be able to communicate successfully across cultures in my classroom. Imagine how discouraging (and mortifying!) it would have been to teach a class on understanding cross-cultural communication, while being unsuccessful myself at communicating with the class due to differences in cultural backgrounds. Again, the students’ feedback towards the middle of the semester reassured me. All the ten students who took the anonymous survey responded affirmatively to my question about whether they thought that the instructor was effective in communicating cross-culturally in the classroom. In looking back, I realize that I showed such flexibility also as an acknowledgement of my own inexperience. Aware of the power dynamics where I controlled many aspects of the instruction (including grading) I might have overcompensated to make sure that the students did not feel obligated to fall in line with my rules. There were times when I was unsure if students had understood some key concepts, and I pushed for feedback. Often, I was unable to finish all the items on my lesson plan in my anxiety to ensure that every-

...teachers are more effective when they value diversity of all kinds, the rich experiences their students and they themselves bring into the classroom, and have the skills to draw on these resources and make them a part of the classroom instruction.

The students, with their diverse backgrounds, had rich experiences and prior knowledge that I tried to draw upon throughout the semester. I wished to model the importance of validating student experiences and funds of knowledge (a valuable teaching approach in diverse classrooms). The students cooperated through in-class discussions as well as responses posted on the course website, and found value in this approach. One student wrote, "What I liked the most was that I was able to bring my own experiences to the class and this made it even more interesting."
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By Cynthia Shaw, Administrative Assistant, CTE

For the first time in recent memory, the University of Maryland was represented at the Lilly South Conference on College and University Teaching in Greensboro North Carolina. Julie Lyon, Cynthia Shaw, Hil-ary Gettman and Scott Roberts, showcased their ADOPT Initiative during a workshop entitled “ADOPT’ing a teaching and learning culture: Advancing departmental teaching at an R1 institution. ADOPT, Advancing Department of Psychology Teaching, came about as a result of a 2007-2008 CTE TA development grant.

The workshop gave a short presen-
tation on the genesis of the initia-
tive, highlighting the need for peda-
gogical professional development of graduate students to make them more competitive in a tight job market.

The group agreed that a determined few can begin change with few resources, but departmental leadership must support and invest in graduate professional development for there to be lasting changes.

Looking back, looking ahead

What I have offered here are snapshots into the course. As I learned from my semester-long independent instruction, effective teaching involves a teacher’s ability to see students as whole individuals with three-dimensional personalities and lives outside of the classroom. When teachers acknowledge the realities within which we all operate, account for realities in planning and implementing instruction, and perceive their students as whole people, the classroom gets transformed into a space where people connect and have more meaningful experiences. Also, teachers are more effective when they value diversity of all kinds, the rich experiences their students and they themselves bring into the classroom, and have the skills to draw on these resources and make them a part of the classroom instruction. Further, teachers need to have strong content knowledge while being open to learning through their own instruction and from their students. Finally, I am learning that teaching is a dynamic process. Teachers should be able to adapt their instruction to the context, and show flexibility across space and time. Teaching EDCI436 was an affirmation for me of all these. I am already looking forward with eager anticipation to teaching the course again in the coming semesters.

continued from page 20 thing was discussed in detail. The students, through their feedback and support helped me convert my mistakes into learning experiences as we worked towards creating a successful learning community. One of the most perceptive, insightful, and helpful comments came from a student who wrote, “I think you underestimate us sometimes. For example, when you ask if you are using words we can’t understand or concepts that are difficult. I appreciate you always making sure that everyone understands, but I think that you second guess yourself a little too much. This is meant both as constructive criticism and as a complement - obviously you teach well and explain things well because we do understand. I just think you should be more confident in your teaching and in our understanding.”
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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.

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