
TLCExchange

The Newsletter of the Teaching and Learning Center of Wake Forest University ▲ Volume 11, Number 1 ▲ Fall 2007

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Fall 2007

Dear Colleagues,

Like many of us, I occasionally have had former students thank me for teaching a class that in actuality I never taught. As I reminisce on these exchanges, I often wonder what kind of impression I must have made. Certainly, it was not the one I had intended. The dilemma strikes at the heart of the notion commonly referred to as “teaching excellence”. But what do we mean by it? What do we want students to learn from our classes other than their titles? Is it that we want our students to master intricate details, or is it something else that transcends the immediacy of facts and assignments due?

Excellence in teaching is an enigma: although easily recognizable, as a concept its precise definition remains illusive. By its very nature teaching excellence cannot be pursued alone, because it is a form of communication and group activity. For the individual who strives to attain it, satisfaction is always wanting. Yet, it is a pursuit that is ultimately optimistic, since there are no restrictions placed on human potential. Consequently, there are as many ways to teach excellently as there are excellent teachers. Among the many qualities associated with an excellent teacher are a demonstrable enthusiasm and passion for the subject; the skill to be clear, concise, and readily understandable; the ability to be flexible in how one organizes and structures a subject; the means to stimulate curiosity and cultivate fresh, new ideas about the subject that one

teaches; and the ability to integrate scholarship in one’s teaching so as to inculcate students with the love of the subject.

As the Teaching and Learning Center’s new director, I look forward to seeing you at this semester’s array of programs — whether at a brown-bag where lunch is provided by the TLC or at one of our several discussion-based panel presentations—led by Wake Forest faculty and staff. This semester’s topics reflect concerns that affect us as teachers in and outside the classroom: implementing new learning strategies in the classroom; mentoring colleagues; class size; teaching abroad; student learning disabilities; responding to students’ writing; peer review of teaching; and implementing the revised curriculum. As part of this semester’s series, the newsletter contains an insert entitled, “Peer Review of Teaching.” The intent of the document is to serve as the starting point for departments, programs, and other units to create meaningful criteria for measuring, developing, and encouraging teaching excellence. It will also form the basis of a TLC event later in the semester.

If you would like to attend events or if you have suggestions about future events that you would like the TLC to present, please contact Deborah Snyder or me. In the meantime, you are always welcome to visit the TLC for a coffee, a conversation, to read, or to relax. Be sure to check out the TLC’s helpful references on first year seminars, and manuals for mentees and mentors.

Sincerely,
Jeffrey D. Lerner
History

THE 2007 TEACHING PROFESSOR CONFERENCE

Judy Kem, Romance Languages

The 2007 Teaching Professor Conference in Atlanta (May 18-20) hosted four plenary sessions and approximately 60 other sessions, 8-10 running concurrently. Topics ranged from plagiarism to service learning to mentoring to teacher burnout, but most fell under two broad categories: 1) creating an effective learning environment in the classroom (14 sessions); and 2) developing active learning techniques and adapting them to various learning styles (13 sessions). An example of the latter is “concept mapping,” a technique that teaches students to synthesize course material into a visual representation that links both major and minor topics in a hierarchical arrangement.

Todd Zakrajsek, director of the Faculty Center for Innovative Teaching at Central Michigan University, offered an example of the former in the opening plenary session, “Understanding Student Behavior and Creating Effective Learning Environments.” He reminded participants of the “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Teaching” (Chickering and Gamson, 1996):

- 1) Connect with students;
- 2) Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students;
- 3) Use active learning techniques;
- 4) Offer prompt feedback;
- 5) Motivate students to learn;
- 6) Communicate high expectations; and
- 7) Respect diverse talents and ways of knowing.

His personal, commonsensical advice recommended taking advantage of “teachable moments,” moving around the classroom, personalizing material,

and setting a goal for each class. He shared surprising recent statistical findings, such as "telling students they're smart reduces learning; telling them they're hardworking increases it." He ended with "Types of CATS (Classroom Assessment Techniques)" (Angelo and Cross, 1993), such as classroom opinion polls and requiring a one-sentence summary from students at the end of the class session to check their understanding.

In one of the most popular sessions of the three-day conference, "Survivor: Classroom Island . . . Outthink, Outplan, Outlast," Texas Tech's Suzanne Tapps and Allison Boyle provided specific classroom tactics under the broad categories of "Encouraging Preparation," "Dealing with Distracting Behavior," and "Encouraging Participation."** Tips included: "Set the tone early; explain why preparation is important"; "begin class with activities that encourage compliance, like brief quizzes, summaries or journal entries"; "don't ignore distracting behavior; address the problem directly and assertively (not angrily or sarcastically)"; and "build rapport with your students" by offering, among other signs, "non-verbal cues of encouragement and warmth." The leaders modeled their helpful tips with a large dose of humor.

In the final plenary session on mentoring, Ike Shibley and Maryellen Weimer, professors at Penn State-Berks, discussed their fruitful "colleagueship" over several years and gave us "An Eclectic List of Sources on Mentoring and Colleagueship." Each also shared an annotated bibliography of ten "Books on Teaching that I Wish Every Faculty Member Would Read."** The only work that both included on their lists was Rebekah Nathan's *My Freshman Year: What a Professor Learned by Becoming a Student* (Cornell UP, 2005), a work discussed in one of our Teaching and Learning Center events hosted by John Llewellyn, Communication, in Fall 2005.

Although the conference was held at a very inconvenient time of the academic year (mid-May during weekend graduation festivities at Wake), it was well organized, well attended, and well worth the time and money invested. Session leaders and participants were equally interested in finding solutions to teaching dilemmas and sharing suggestions for more effective instruction. During the conference, publishers offered an excellent array of pedagogical literature and teaching aids for sale at discount prices, and, after the conference, organizers provided follow-up services, like online copies of handouts, "frequently asked questions and answers," and evaluation forms and results.

**Copies of Tapps and Boyle's "survival tactics" outline and Shibley and Weimer's bibliographies are available by contacting the Teaching and Learning Center.

TLC EVENTS

Fall 2007

If you do not already receive e-mail reminders about TLC programs and would like to, please e-mail your request to snyderdw@wfu.edu. All programs take place in the TLC (Room 330, ZSR Library) unless otherwise indicated. If you are unable to attend an event but would like any handouts prepared by our hosts, contact the Coordinator at x4587 or snyderdw@wfu.edu

STRATEGIES FOR INCORPORATING AND ENHANCING ACTIVE LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM

DATE: Thursday, September 6

TIME: 11:00 A.M.

LOCATION: Room 204, ZSR Library (the electronic classroom)

HOST: Dee Oseroff-Varnell (Communication)

DO YOU EVER GET the feeling that your students think you're somewhat odd for getting excited about your course material? Is it possible to engage our students so that they think about the course content past the final exam? It's time to rethink the time-old techniques of lecturing, question and answer, and testing and to implement some new learning strategies in the classroom. This workshop will focus on strategies and suggestions for jump-starting the classroom with active learning techniques. Come with your ideas for engaging your students in the course content for this lunch-time discussion. We extend a special invitation to our new faculty.

Please RSVP to snyderdw@wfu.edu or x4587 by Monday, September 3, if you would like a boxed lunch provided by the TLC, and be sure to indicate your sandwich choice of vegetarian, turkey, or roast beef and cheddar, or of a fruit plate. Drop-ins are always welcome.

MENTORS & MENTEES

DATE: Wednesday, September 19

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

LOCATION: Room 204, ZSR Library (the electronic classroom)

HOSTS: Margaret Bender (Anthropology), James Cotter (Calloway), Wayne Pratt (Psychology)

MENTORING is often thought of as a partnership because there are obligations, implicit or otherwise, that each individual accepts. What obligations might you take on as either mentor or mentee? What challenges might arise for you in relation to these obligations? How can you partner with someone to meet your obligations to him or her? Our panelists will discuss how this relationship can lead to exceptional professional insight and growth for both mentor and mentee, and will encourage your comments and questions. Light refreshments will be offered.

Please RSVP to snyderdw@wfu.edu or x4587 by Monday, September 17. Drop-

ins are welcome. We extend a special invitation to our new faculty!

DOES CLASS SIZE MATTER?

DATE: Monday, September 24

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

LOCATION: Room 204, ZSR Library (the electronic classroom)

HOSTS: Angela King (Chemistry), Ralph Tower (Calloway), and Robert Ulery (Classical Languages)

THIS SESSION explores the issues of whether there is a substantial trade-off between class size and student learning. The discussion will focus on what, if any, impact class size has on student academic performance, student attitudes toward the class and subject matter, and student evaluations of faculty. Our panel will encourage discussion, questions, and concerns. We extend a special invitation to our new faculty to attend! Light refreshments will be offered.

Please RSVP to snyderdw@wfu.edu or x4587 by Wednesday, September 19. Drop-ins are welcome.

RESPONDING TO STUDENTS' WRITING: WHEN LESS IS MORE

DATE: Tuesday, October 9

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

LOCATION: Room 204, ZSR Library (the electronic classroom)

HOST: Tom McGohey (Director, WFU Writing Center)

FOR MOST OF US, grading and commenting on students' papers can be a time consuming chore. Yet research shows that a lot of our painstaking comments are counterproductive! Come find out how fewer, briefer comments on papers can help students learn better. Your comments, concerns, and questions are encouraged and welcomed.

Please RSVP to snyderdw@wfu.edu or x4587 by Thursday, October 4. Light refreshments will be offered. Drop-ins are

welcome. We extend a special invitation to new faculty to participate.

DEMYSTIFYING ADHD AND LEARNING DISABILITIES

DATE: Tuesday, October 16

TIME: 12:00 P.M.

LOCATION: TLC, Room 330, ZSR Library

HOSTS: Van Westervelt, Michael Shuman (Learning Assistance Center)

THE SESSION will explore such issues as why we need to discuss ADHD and learning disabilities, how ADHD and LD are diagnosed, when are academic accommodations justified, how can we identify students with potential learning issues, and why faculty should become involved. Topics will range from diagnosis to accommodation, including recommendations. We extend a special invitation to new faculty to attend our events.

Please RSVP to snyderdw@wfu.edu or x4587 by Wednesday, October 10, if you would like a boxed lunch provided by the TLC, and be sure to specify your lunch choice of a chicken salad, roast beef and cheddar, or vegetarian sandwich, or of a fruit plate. Drop-ins are welcome.

PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING

DATE: Wednesday, October 24

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

LOCATION: Benson 344F

HOSTS: Sharon Andrews (Theatre), Sally Barbour (Romance Languages), Jeff Lerner (History, TLC), Gordon McCray (Calloway)

HOW DO WE undertake a systematic review of a colleague's teaching? How do we assess teaching excellence? What are the criteria we use? Faculty peer review of teaching entails the collaboration of colleagues who assist one another in developing, improving, and transforming approaches and course content through an evaluation of teaching activities. The panelists will discuss a set of strategies that de-

partments, Schools, and programs can use in developing their own faculty peer review document based on their culture and local issues.

Please RSVP to snyderdw@wfu.edu or x4587 by Friday, October 19. Light refreshments will be available. Drop-ins are welcome.

THE NEW CURRICULUM

DATE: Tuesday, October 30

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

LOCATION: Pending

HOSTS: Dilip Kondepudi (Chemistry), Win-Chiat Lee (Philosophy), Barry Maine (English), Meg Zulick (Communication)

COME JOIN US for a round-table discussion about the new curriculum. Four faculty will share their insights and lead a lively discussion about the changes made to the curriculum. The session will afford us an opportunity to reflect on what has taken place in this the first semester of its implementation and on what the future holds. Please RSVP to snyderdw@wfu.edu or x4587 by Thursday, October 25. Light refreshments will be available. Drop-ins are welcome.

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO A "MEET AND GREET" RECEPTION SPONSORED BY THE TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTER

DATE: Wednesday, November 7

TIME: 2:00-4:00 P.M.

LOCATION: Johnson Room, ZSR Library

WE INVITE YOU to join your Wake Forest colleagues for an informal pre-holiday gathering. Enjoy an assortment of delicious hors d'oeuvres and wines, meet new faculty members—our special guests for the event—and greet old friends. Please feel free to arrive and depart as your schedule dictates. RSVP not required.

TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTER EXAM WEEK COFFEE-AND-COOKIE BREAK FOR FACULTY

DATE: Monday, December 10-Thurs-
day, December 13

TIME: 8:00am-12:00pm

LOCATION: Teaching and Learning
Center, Room 330, ZSR Library

FACULTY are cordially invited to stop by each morning during finals week for coffee, cookies, and other treats. Feel free to enjoy your treats in the Center or take them with you (to-go cups will be available, or bring your own). No RSVP required!

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTER

The Teaching and Learning Center was established in 1997 with a dual purpose: meeting faculty-identified needs for teaching support and promoting dialogue about teaching. Faculty are encouraged to fill out a Faculty Information Form available from the Center designed to help us target specific needs and concerns which are then the topics for brown bag lunch discussion and workshops throughout the academic year.

The Teaching and Learning Center also offers a number of voluntary and confidential evaluation services outside the traditional departmental evaluation process. These have included mid-term evaluations, videotaping, peer class visitations, and a faculty mentoring program.

To learn more about the Teaching and Learning Center, and/or to discuss the programs and services the TLC offers, please contact the TLC Director Jeff Lerner at Ext. 4559 (lernerjd@wfu.edu) or TLC Coordinator Deborah Snyder at Ext. 4587 (snyderdw@wfu.edu). The Teaching and Learning Center is open Monday-Thursday until 4:00 P.M. The

Director will hold office hours from 9:30-11:30am, Monday and Friday. The Center is located in room 330, Z. Smith Reynolds Library.

The TLC Advisory Committee is elected annually. Committee members for the 2007-2008 academic year are: Sharon Andrews (Theatre), Leah McCoy (Education), Gordon McCray (Calloway), Wayne Silver (Biology), Sarah Barbour (Romance Languages), and Peter Siavelis (Political Science).

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CLASSROOM VISITS AND MENTORING

If you would like to get feedback on your teaching from one of your peers, there are now several ways to do so.

Peer Classroom Visits

Inspired by a suggestion by Alyssa Lonner in the Department of German and Russian, the Teaching and Learning Center coordinates voluntary faculty classroom visits. These are friendly visits, meant to help newer faculty members without pressure; generally the observer will be a colleague of similar rank, but from a different department. Unlike the classroom visits that your department may require as part of your yearly review, feedback will be very informal, as agreed upon by the participants.

If you would like to have a faculty member from another department visit your class, or if you would like to visit someone else's class, please send an e-mail to Deborah Snyder. (snyderdw@wfu.edu). Let her know your department preference and teaching schedule.

Mid-Term Evaluations and Videotaping

If you prefer a more structured evaluation of a particular class, the TLC can arrange a mid-term evaluation. A faculty member visits your class during the semester and interviews students about their expectations and experiences, without the instructor present. Afterwards the course instructor and

colleague meet to discuss the students' responses.

The TLC can also videotape your classes, or you may borrow our camera to do it yourself.

If you would like more information about either of these options, please see our web page, <http://www.wfu.edu/organizations/tlc>, and click on Evaluation Services. Allow two weeks notice for mid-term evaluations.

RESOURCES

The TLC has many resources available to the campus community, including books and journals promoting teaching excellence. The Teaching and Learning Center also maintains a vertical file and notebooks of teaching-related articles. Subjects include, but are not limited to:

- Active learning
- Assessment
- Collaborative learning
- Critical thinking
- Generating discussion
- Interdisciplinary teaching
- Syllabus construction
- Teaching portfolios
- Testing and grading
- Writing across disciplines

We are pleased to offer several excellent articles within the "Course Documents" section of the TLC Blackboard site (<http://blackboard.wfu.edu/>) that may enhance your classroom teaching experience. Contact the Coordinator at snyderdw@wfu.edu to receive access. Information on WFU grants for faculty is also included on this site.

For information about other TLC services and upcoming events, see the TLC web site. In addition, information about First-Year Seminars and FYS proposals from several faculty members is now available. FYS materials as well as other web-based information are accessible by going to the TLC homepage and clicking on "Teaching Resources."