Th'Ink Well

Center for Teaching Excellence

An occasional Newsletter from the Center for Teaching Excellence

CTE Seminars Offer Opportunities for Pedagogical Conversation

Teaching is often a solitary activity. Although a teacher works with groups of students, his/her role is to initiate and facilitate learning among students, and outside the classroom pedagogical decisions are largely made on an individual level. Unless one is team teaching the classroom rarely offers opportunities for dialogue with colleagues, let alone opportunities for collaboration – particularly after tenure. But, like our students, teachers learn from each other – through conversations and observation. With the many demands on faculty time in today's university, many of us feel we don't have time to engage in the luxury of pedagogical conversations and collaborations. But an investment of a few hours every month can pay off richly in energized teaching and inspired student learning. The Center for Teaching Excellence offers a regular opportunity for such conversations, monthly, with a range of seminars on significant pedagogical topics. Seminar topics range from a focus on instructional skills and techniques to theoretical issues. Every seminar is faculty-run, with an interactive, discussion-oriented focus. Perhaps the most important function of these seminars is the opportunity to join your colleagues in dialogue. The seminar theme for 2007-8 is developing engaging teaching and promoting learning.

Missed a seminar? While we can't offer a substitute for the richness of dialogue, we can help you if you're interested in viewing ancillary readings and support materials. Email us at CTE (FerrisS@wpunj.edu or CrupiT@student.wpunj.edu) and let us know. Materials for previous 2008-9 seminars include the following topics:

- Interactive Teaching and Learning
- Preventing Plagiarism
- Integrating Critical Thinking into Course Content
- Ending Your Class Effectively
- Getting the Semester off To a Good Start

Save the dates:
Upcoming Seminars will be held on February 26, March 27, and April 24, 2008, from 12:30-1:45pm, with a light lunch provided.

Topics include: Balancing Teaching and Research *(Feb 26. Paterson Room)*, Integrating Media into Courses *(March 27, Room TBA)*, and Promoting Synthesis, Analysis and Evaluation In Learning *(April 24, Paterson Room)*.

Faculty Invited to Participate in GE Re-Envisioning

William Paterson is engaged in a re-envisioning of General Education, under the guidance of a newly-enlarged GE Committee. In addition to their campus-wide forums (next forum date is March 13), members of the GE Committee are leading online discussion groups to facilitate consideration of issues. If you have not done so yet, please do contribute your thoughts and ideas to your discussion group.

New York Times Archive Search Brings 72 Years of History to Your Desktop

Richard Kearney

The New York Times has recently made available a free, full-text, searchable archive of its articles, reviews and editorials covering the period from its first issue in September 1851 to December 31, 1922. The archive contains over 3.5 million items. The search engine supports searching by keyword, headline, and author, and it is also possible to limit the date range of a search. Search results are displayed by relevance (closest match to search terms), with options to resort by date (oldest or newest first). The display of results includes complete citation information and the first paragraph of each article; to view a complete article it is necessary to select a link to a scan of the article in PDF format.

The New York Times archive site also includes contents from 1923 to 1980, but the majority of these articles are not freely accessible.

The library offers an ever-growing array of e-resources such as the one listed below. See the current e-resources at the Cheng Library Extra at http://chengextra.blogspot.com/ or get it as an RSS feed at http://feeds.feedburner.com/ChengLibraryExtra

Share Your Campus Event

Planning an event of interest to your faculty colleagues? Let us know, and we'll include it in our next e-newsletter. We can even help you create promotional information. Call 720-3684, or email FerrisS@wpunj.edu or **mailto:crupit@student.wpunj.edu**

Technology and Pedagogy

Want to learn more about using technology in your classrooms? CTE highly recommends IRT's workshops for faculty "designed to introduce you to various multimedia applications and pedagogical methods using technology." Workshops for February are listed below. To register for a workshop, go to http://www.wpunj.edu/irt/FTC/default.htm

William Paterson University presents at the Middle States Commission on Higher Education Conference

From December 9-11, members of William Paterson University's Learning Literacies team presented 3 poster sessions detailing the university's steps to assess the four "learning literacies" of information seeking and understanding, technology, critical thinking and numerical literacy. Anne Ciliberti, S. Pixy Ferris & Miryam Wahrman presented a session, entitled "Assessing Learning Literacies at William Paterson University: Meeting Standard 11 and Standard 12." They discussed WPU's multi-phase and multi-level assessment plan, with a focus on decision processes over the past two years. The poster (pictured here) also detailed methodology, while an accompanying live computer link gave participants a chance to view and share the assessment rubric. Want to learn more about this assessment initiative? Details can be found at http://www.wpunj.edu/academics/cte/literacy.htm]

The Learning Literacies Team will be presenting an updated version of the project, including analysis of data from the Fall 2007 Information Literacies survey, at the American Association of Colleges and Universities in Boston this month.
The team is currently working on an assessment rubric for Critical Thinking, which will be rolled out to the full faculty

this Spring, while an assessment of Technology Literacy is planned for fall 2008, and Numerical Literacy to follow. This will ensure that the team can concurrently analyze data on one learning literacy while working on closing the loop with data already collected. If you'd like to be involved in any aspect of this assessment, let us know.

Customized Learning Community (Cluster) Workshop

The Cluster program at WPU provides opportunities not only to collaborate with faculty colleagues and work with a range of student learning communities, but to expand teaching and research. CTE, in conjunction with the Vice President for Student Development and the Director of the Cluster Program, offers customized workshops to help faculty learn more about this teaching opportunity, consider issues pertaining to adoption of the learning community model, and making connections with other interested colleagues. Please contact one of us if you are interested: CTE (x3684), Dr. Glen Sherman (x 2761) or Dr. John Peterman (x3030).

Teaching Tips Corner

Effective Syllabi

No matter what the subject, or who the teacher, every course benefits from a strong syllabus. A well-designed syllabus not only helps students, but assists the instructor. At the beginning of every semester, CTE offers one-on-one and group workshops in syllabus evaluation and effective syllabus construction. We can meet with you to evaluate your syllabi to see that they best meet your, and students, needs. If you don't have the time for a one-on-one meeting, you can still work to make your syllabus more learner-centered. While the structure and content of the syllabus depend on the course and the instructional activities preferred by the teacher, a learner-centered focus helps you to consider how each and every aspect of your course can most effectively support student learning. To develop an effective syllabus of this type, try to accomplish the following goals in your syllabi:

- Define students' responsibilities
- Define instructor's role and responsibility to students
- Provide a clear statement of intended goals and student outcomes
- Establish standards and procedures for evaluation
- Acquaint students with course logistics (a particularly important element as we include more group work and out of class experiences)
- Establish a pattern of communication between instructor and students
- Include difficult to obtain materials such as readings, complex charts, and graphs

At WPU, a learner-center syllabus is facilitated by the requirement that every course syllabus contain measurable *Student Learning Outcome Objectives (SLOO).*

Formulating your course SLOOs should go hand-in-hand with learning goals and assessment procedures, to give both you and your students a clear idea of what students in the course will be expected to know, understand, be able to do, etc. For real clarity, plan your course with process, content and product goals in mind.
For example, in addition to the conceptual knowledge and technical skills of a discipline or field, your students will need other tools for living and working effectively in society. Grunert (1997) recommends that students should be able to do the following:

- Initiate, understand, assess, and assume responsibility for their own ongoing learning process.
- Access and use resources effectively
- Work alone and collaborate with others.
- Resolve dilemmas emerging from complex situations
- Think and communicate effectively using appropriate means such as writing, speaking and listening, numbers graphics, digital, 3D form, or performance
- Clarify personal values, purposes, and goals
- Understand and respect differences

Also, whenever you formulate learning goals you should simultaneously address assessment procedures. Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995, in Grunert, 1997), recommend the following norms for developing an assessment philosophy:

- The assessment process is connected to the learner's world, frames of reference, and values
- Demonstration of learning includes multiple ways to represent knowledge and skills and allows for attainment of outcomes at different points in time.
- Self assessment is essential to the overall assessment process.

(Material taken from Judith Grunert (1997). *The Course Syllabus.* Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing, with added material relevant to WPU).

Newsletter formatted by Tami Crupi