

Th'Ink Well

Quarterly Newsletter from the Center for Teaching Excellence

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Welcome to the 2009-2010 Academic Year

A Message from the Director

As we publish our first newsletter for the fall semester, I'd like to take this opportunity for a late but heartfelt welcome back. Summer break does seem like a long time away already, but I do hope it was both restful and re-energizing!

We hope you will take advantage of some of the opportunities the CTE offers for academic and professional development, and invite you to explore our website to learn more about these services (<http://www.wpunj.edu/academics/cte/>).

As we immerse ourselves in our teaching, research and service, the CTE is here for you as a resource. We would love to hear from you!



Library Session with Nancy Weiner for a First-Year Seminar course.

First-Year Students for Fall 2009

Information provided by WPUNJ's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

Statistical data on admissions provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (IR&A) shows that the newly enrolled undergraduate (part-time and full-time) student population at William Paterson University slightly increased this year, totaling 2,733. Of these students, 1,453 are first-time students and 1,030 are transfer students. Most students come from local counties within New Jersey. More than two-thirds of the transfer students (68%) are from New Jersey Public Community Colleges.

The characteristics of first-time undergraduate students this year resemble those of newly enrolled students in Fall 2008. About half of the cohort is female, and half report a minority status, Latinos being the largest contingent (45%). The percent of regular admitted students increased this fall to 75.5 percent of entering full-time, first-time, first-year students. The average

SAT score of Regular Admits is 1030 and their average class rank is 59 percent. Only 14 percent of the first-time undergraduate population is enrolled as Special Admit.

Clearly our new incoming students are more technologically savvy than students in the past. In Fall 1998, nearly one in five students did not feel confident about using the internet to find information. In Fall 2009, almost half of the incoming first-year students are familiar with Twitter, the social networking and micro-blogging Internet service, and three out of four express interest in using Twitter to follow a feed from WPUNJ, featuring announcements and event updates.

Contact Information



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We are located in Cheng Library,
Room 203.

Please visit our website:
<http://www.wpunj.edu/academics/cte>

National Online Teaching Trends

Online teaching has become a common practice at many colleges and universities across the country. Recent studies call attention to this growing trend, as well as the issues it raises.

- ♦ Online enrollment is growing at a rate more than 10 times that of higher education population at large. (1)
- ♦ Convenience is one of the main reasons nearly 4 million American students took at least one online course in the 2007-08 school year. (1)
- ♦ Seventy percent of all faculty members believe that the learning outcomes of online courses are either inferior or somewhat inferior compared with face-to-face instruction. (2)
- ♦ Veteran professors (who have taught more than 20 years) are teaching online at rates equivalent to less-experienced faculty members. (2)

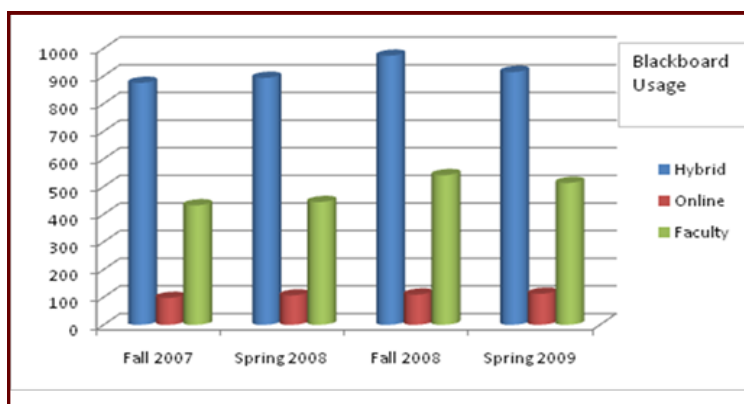
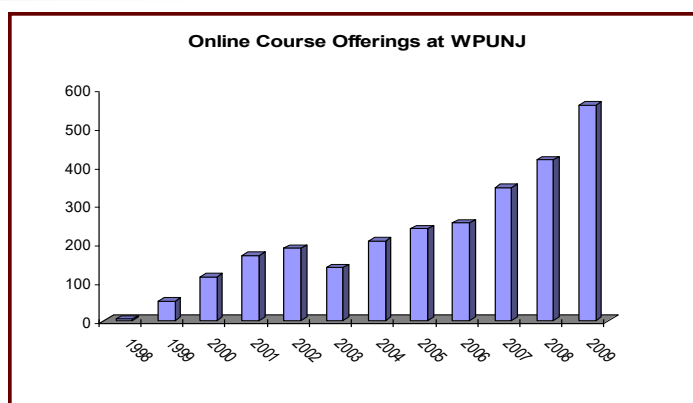
- ♦ Faculty members open to teaching online courses do not feel they are receiving adequate support from their administration. (3)
- ♦ Faculty developing and teaching online courses consider these activities more time-consuming than traditional classroom activities. The extra effort necessary to develop online courses as a crucial barrier to teaching online. (3)

Sources:

- (1) Breslau, K. (2009, August 12). The Sound of One Hand Clicking: Online Schools are Booming, Thanks to Their Convenience, Low Cost, and Improved Quality. *Newsweek*. Retrieved from <http://www.newsweek.com/id/210904>
- (2) Parry, M. (2009, August 31). Professors Embrace Online Courses despite Qualms about Quality. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/Professors-Embrace-Online-C/48235/>
- (3) (This article is based on a Sloan National Survey) Kolowich, Steve. (2009, August 31). Going for Distance. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/08/31/survey>

Online Teaching Trends at WPU

Since 1998, there has been consistent growth in the online course offerings at William Paterson University.
From Institutional Research & Assessment Office



Blackboard hybrid courses grew by 7% in 2009 and online courses grew by 9%. This has slowed over the last two years. Prior to this, William Paterson University had been averaging a 15-20% growth rate. However, general faculty usage increased this year by 20%, so new faculty are coming on board. WPU has close to 50% of *all* faculty and adjuncts using Blackboard.

From Instructional Research Technology

Faculty & Student Voices on Effective Online Teaching

Make Your Class “Of the Web” Rather than “On the Web”

Professor Richard Blonna, EdD, CHES; Professor, Department of Public Health

Even the best textbooks and teaching materials are somewhat dated by the time you get to use them in your classroom. This is one reason why I find integrating the Internet into my classes through a variety of web-based strategies as so important. I often require students to enter specific websites, read material posted there, complete assessments and perform other “web-based tasks.” I make my class “of the web” rather than just being “on the web.”

In my discipline, Public Health, there are many excellent public and non-profit websites on the Internet. Every professional society has one, as do most journals, professional societies, non-profit organizations, and government agencies. I ask students to visit any of these sites and have them retrieve information and review the site. For example, in my Active Lifestyles for Health Class, I have designed an assignment to help students understand how personal health behavior impacts the overall health of the nation. Students visit the Healthy People 2010 home page (<http://www.health.gov/healthypeople/>), describe the leading health indicators for our nation, explain why they feel America is (or isn't) a healthy nation, and discuss what they can do as an individual to contrib-

ute positively to the health of our nation. The answers provided by students generate great discussion within the Discussion Board feature of BlackBoard, which often continue well beyond the original posting date.



Why I Like Online Classes

Student Cindy Meakam, Senior, Department of Public Health

I am a non-traditional student at William Paterson University. I joined college in 2005 and transferred to WPU in the Fall of 2007. I was leery about taking online classes; many individuals told me they were much harder than regular classes and required more work. I have already taken 10 online classes at WPU and have really enjoyed my online class experience.

There are many reasons why I like the online classes. I am very busy with work and school and live an hour from the university; this takes time away for studying. I know when assignments are due and can choose to do them ahead of time. I can work at my own pace and there is always a class at hand. With online classes, the syllabus rarely changes; you always know what chapter you are going over and due dates for work. Professors usually add notes on the chapters that explain the material in laymen's terms. All of this helps the learning experience.

In online classes, every exchange is written out. When

you are adding comments to the discussion board, you are writing, and you are getting to read what other students write. Questions and answers stay up the whole semester and you can go back for references. The professors write comments and give feedback that helps you know right away if you are on the right track. It is very important for the professors to provide feedback to students, as this helps engage students and sets the tone for the class.

Anonymous postings help students like me to ask more questions (even if not sure of the material or feeling uncomfortable about topics). The answers posted by the professor and other students often make more sense to you; it becomes easier to learn when the whole class participates. The more students participate, the more they get out of the learning experience.

Student Views of Online Courses at WPU

The Center for Teaching Excellence conducted a small survey about online courses in two traditional undergraduate classes at WPUNJ this Fall. Forty-four students from various majors ranging from sophomore to senior level participated. Students were asked to list the words that came to mind when thinking of online courses, and to compare online and traditional courses in terms of grades and learning outcomes. Though the sample is too small to make generalizations, some patterns emerge:

- ♦ About half of the students in these classes (24 of 44) have taken at least one online course before.
- ♦ Among the students who have taken online classes,
 - Negative terms are associated with online classes more often than positive terms (3:2).
 - Two of five students claim to earn better grades in online classes than regular classes; one in four claims to do worse.
 - Three out of four students claims to learn about the same in online classes and regular classes; only one student (out of 24) claims to learn more in online classes.
- ♦ Among the students without any online experience,
 - Negative terms are associated with online classes more often than positive terms (3:1)
 - Social isolation, workload, and difficulty are the concepts most frequently associated with online courses



Online Teaching Tips

Courtesy of The Technology Source Archives at the University of North Carolina

Research conducted at a large Midwestern University suggests seven principles for successful online teaching. As we read the list of principles, it is important to ask, "Are there any pedagogical differences between online and traditional teaching practices?"

P1: Good Practice Encourages Student-Faculty Contact

Lesson for online instruction: Instructors should provide clear guidelines for interaction with students.

P2: Good Practice Encourages Cooperation Among Students

Lesson for online instruction: Well-designed discussion assignments facilitate meaningful cooperation among students.

P3: Good Practice Encourages Active Learning

Lesson for online instruction: Students should present course projects.

P4: Good Practice Gives Prompt Feedback

Lesson for online instruction: Instructors need to provide two types of feedback: information feedback and acknowledgment feedback.

P5: Good Practice Emphasizes Time on Task

Lesson for online instruction: Online courses need deadlines.

P6: Good Practice Communicates High Expectations

Lesson for online instruction: Challenging tasks, sample cases, and praise for quality work communicate high expectations.

P7: Good Practice Respects Diverse Talents & Ways of Learning

Lesson for online instruction: Allowing students to choose project topics incorporates diverse views into online courses.

Source:

Cagiltay, K., Craner, J., Duffy, T.M., Graham, C., & Lim, B. (2001, March/April). Seven Principles of Effective Teaching: A Practical Lens for Evaluating Online Courses. *The Technology Source*. Retrieved from <http://ts.mivu.org/default.asp?show=article&id=1034>

For more online teaching tips visit
www.onlineteachingtips.com

Faculty Spotlight

Presenters from CTE Seminar on Teaching Strategies, September 24, 2009

Thomas Uhlein



Professor Uhlein teaches graphic design. He earned his undergraduate degree in art from Penn State University in 1996. After working for a number of years in the design and publi-

cation industry, Professor Uhlein went on to earn his MFA in Graphic and Interactive Design from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University. He joined the Art Department at William Paterson University in 2003.

Professor Uhlein's philosophy on design takes root in two basic fundamentals; have fun and explore all possibilities.

David Slaymaker



Dr. Slaymaker is an associate professor in the Department of Biology. He received his Ph.D in Genetics from the University of California - Riverside in 1999 and his B.S. in

Horticulture Science from Kansas State University in 1993. Following receipt of his Ph.D, Dr. Slaymaker was a USDA Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Waksman Institute, Rutgers University, NJ before joining William Paterson University in Fall 2001. He teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in the areas of general biology, biotechnology, and plant science.

Janet Pollak

Professor Janet Pollak (Ph.D. 1973 Rutgers; M.A. 1971 Temple) is WPUNJ's senior anthropologist and the founding chair of the department. Professor Pollak specializes in the pre-history of Eastern North America and teaches the department's courses in archaeology along with maintaining a laboratory where she conducts research on artifact collections with our majors.

Besides archaeology, she teaches "Indians of North America" and "Shamans, Witches, and Magic." She also conducts ethnographic fieldwork on ethnicity and nationalism in Eastern Europe, especially Slovakia. Professor Pollak speaks Slovak, Russian, and French.

Center for Teaching Excellence Calendar Upcoming Seminars

Date	Seminar Title	Location/Time
Thursday, November 19	<i>What is the Role of Technology in the Classroom?</i>	Paterson Room, 12:30-1:45 p.m.
Thursday, December 10	<i>Potentials for Technology in the Classroom</i>	Paterson Room, 12:30-1:45 p.m.