

Th'Ink Well

Center for Teaching Excellence

An occasional Newsletter from the Center for Teaching Excellence

New Leadership at CTE

We are very pleased to announce that Dr. Maria Villar will be joining the Center for Teaching as co-director, serving in a joint leadership role with Pixy Ferris. Maria has been in the department of Anthropology at WPU since 1997. She brings a love of teaching and true commitment to student excellence.



CTE Seminars Continues to 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 the 2008-9 academic year is negotiating balancing academic life. As productive members of the university community, faculty at William Paterson must deal with issues of balance: in teaching, research, and service, as well as work/life balance.

Save the dates:

Upcoming Seminars will be held on September 25, October 30, November 13 and December 11, 2008, from 12:30-1:45pm, with a light lunch provided

Additional dates to save: Retention Forum, Sep 19; Ken Bain, Nov 14.

2007-8 Seminars Materials Available

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(CrupiT@student.wpunj.edu) and let us know. Materials for previous 2007-8 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

Effectively Teaching Today's Students



On University Day (9-2-2008) Richard Sweeney worked with 14 WPU students to present an informative glimpse into the behaviors of the Millennial generation. Richard Sweeney's extensive Powerpoint presentation also offered useful information on how we can teach improve our teaching to maximize Millennials' learning. While time constrained him to focus largely on descriptive characteristics of this unique generation on University Day, the Powerpoint offers a great deal of significant data on teaching and learning (*Richard Sweeney's complete Powerpoint presentation is available at <http://library1.njit.edu/staff-folders/sweeney/>* Millennials are the generation who grew up with digital technologies, the Internet and constant connectivity. Many of the defining characteristics of this generation stem from their status as "digital

natives." Sweeney provides extensive data to define and describe Millennials' learning. For example, Millennial educational expert Diana Oblinger (2003) notes that:

Along with differences in attitudes, millennials exhibit distinct learning styles. For example, their learning preferences tend toward teamwork, experiential activities, structure and the use of technology. Their strengths include multitasking, goal orientation, positive attitudes, and a collaborative style." (*Understanding the New Student.* " *Educause Review*, 38.3, pp 36-42.



Richard Sweeney provides a mass of other related data on effectively teaching and learning with Millennials, some of which follows:

- ➔ Millennials are a generation constantly connected – through texting, phones and computers. They are a generation defined by online social networking and a focus on community. Thus effective teaching should include team based activities which build on Millennials community-focus: "Interaction and a sense of community are the key requests of those born digital when it comes to online learning, as surveys indicate." (*Joel Hartman, Patsy Moskal, and Chuck Dziuban,*

2008. *Preparing the Academy of Today for the Learner of Tomorrow*. In Diana G. Oblinger and James L. Oblinger, Eds. *Educating the Net Generation*. Boulder: Educause, pp. 6.6-6.10)

- Millennials learn experientially. As one Millennial notes "We are a generation of learners by exploration. My first Web site, for example, was constructed before I had any concept of HTML or Java. I simply experimented with the commands until the pieces fit together." (Windam, Carrie. (2005) "Father Google and Mother IM: Confessions of a Net Gen Learner". *EDUCAUSE Review*, 40.5, pp. 42–59)
- They are impatient and have a higher boredom threshold. Katie Smith, a student at the University of Florida, encapsulates this characteristic In "We want everything to be easy, and we want it now," "We have no patience." (Lillo, Andrea. 2002, May 27. "Young consumers tell it 'straight' " *Home Textiles Today*; High Point; 23.38, p. 6.). This has some serious implications for the classroom "Even if the lecturer is charismatic, holding the attention of several hundred students for an entire lecture of 50 minutes or longer is impossible (Foreman, Joel. 2003. "Next-Generation Educational Technology Versus the Lecture." *Educause Review*. 38.4, pp. 12-22)
- They want learning to be meaningful: " 'Nothing infuriates us more than busywork,' says 24-year-old Katie Day, an assistant editor at Berkley Publishing. (Sacks, Danielle.2006. "SCENES from the

culture clash". *Fast Company*, 102, pp. 72-77)

- Technology is an essential aspect of Millennials' life. "Technology is a huge force in shaping the way Millennials consume as well as "commune" with media." (Mumford, David E. 2006. Nov 13. "Make a Connection With Tech-Savvy Millennials". *Television Week*: 25.43, pp. 11-11.) What does this mean for teaching? "The most important thing that schools can do is not to use technology in the curriculum more, but to use it more effectively. We ought to experiment with ways in which technology ought to be part of the everyday curricula in schools—but only where it belongs." (Pauley, John and Urs Gasser. 2008. *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives*. New York: Basic Books, p. 247)
- Millennials respect intelligence and value learning. They "...believe "it's cool to be smart". (Oblinger, Diana. 2003. "Understanding the New Student." *Educause Review*, 38.3, pp. 36-42.)

Based on this and other research, Sweeney offers several learning strategies for Millennials, a subject we will explore in greater depth later this semester.

Teaching Tips Corner

GOOD TEACHING: THE TOP TEN REQUIREMENTS

Richard Leblanc, York University, Ontario (From The Teaching Professor, Volume 12, Number 6)

One. Good teaching is as much about passion as it is about reason. It's about not only motivating students to learn, but teaching them how to learn, and doing so in a manner that is relevant, meaningful, and memorable. It's about caring for your craft, having a passion for it, and conveying that

passion to everyone, most importantly to your students.

Two. Good teaching is about substance and treating students as consumers of knowledge. It's about doing your best to keep on top of your field, reading sources, inside and outside of your areas of expertise, and being at the leading edge as often as possible. But knowledge is not confined to scholarly journals. Good teaching is also about bridging the gap between theory and practice. It's about leaving the ivory tower and immersing oneself in the field, talking to, consulting with, and assisting practitioners, and liaising with their communities.

Three. Good teaching is about listening, questioning, being responsive, and remembering that each student and class is different. It's about eliciting responses and developing the oral communication skills of the quiet students. It's about pushing students to excel; at the same time, it's about being human, respecting others, and being professional at all times.

Four. Good teaching is about not always having a fixed agenda and being rigid, but being flexible, fluid, experimenting, and having the confidence to react and adjust to changing circumstances. It's about getting only 10 percent of what you wanted to do in a class done and still feeling good. It's about deviating from the course syllabus or lecture schedule easily when there is more and better learning elsewhere. Good teaching is about the creative balance between being an authoritarian dictator on the one hand and a pushover on the other.

Five. Good teaching is also about style. Should good teaching be entertaining? You bet! Does this mean that it lacks in substance? Not a chance! Effective teaching is not about being locked with both hands glued to a podium or having your eyes fixated on a slide projector while you drone on. Good teachers work the room and every student in it. They realize that they are the conductors and the class is the orchestra. All

students play different instruments and at varying proficiencies.

Six. This is very important -- good teaching is about humor. It's about being self-deprecating and not taking yourself too seriously. It's often about making innocuous jokes, mostly at your own expense, so that the ice breaks and students learn in a more relaxed atmosphere where you, like them, are human with your own share of faults and shortcomings.

Seven. Good teaching is about caring, nurturing, and developing minds and talents. It's about devoting time, often invisible, to every student. It's also about the thankless hours of grading, designing or redesigning courses, and preparing materials to still further enhance instruction.

Eight. Good teaching is supported by strong and visionary leadership, and very tangible institutional support -- resources, personnel, and funds. Good teaching is continually reinforced by an overarching vision that transcends the entire organization -- from full professors to part-time instructors -- and is reflected in what is said, but more importantly by what is done.

Nine. Good teaching is about mentoring between senior and junior faculty, teamwork, and being recognized and promoted by one's peers. Effective teaching should also be rewarded, and poor teaching needs to be remediated through training and development programs.

Ten. At the end of the day, good teaching is about having fun, experiencing pleasure and intrinsic rewards ... like locking eyes with a student in the back row and seeing the synapses and neurons connecting, thoughts being formed, the person becoming better, and a smile cracking across a face as learning all of a sudden happens. Good teachers practice their craft not for the money or because they have to, but because they truly enjoy it and because they want to. Good teachers couldn't imagine doing anything else.