Student Learning Outcomes: Where are we now?

Interview with Cynthia Murdoch

Editor’s Note: In the interview below, Cynthia Murdoch, coordinator for Student Learning Assessment, describes the current state of the SLO effort at the University. The SLOs were passed by the Faculty Senate for the Twin Cities campus on May 3, 2007. The interviewer is Paul Baepler, editor of Transform.

Q: The student learning outcomes (SLOs) were adopted by the Faculty Senate about a year and a half ago. What’s happened since then?

A: A lot has happened. We created an implementation timeline with ambitious goals for this year and for the foreseeable future. We see departments implementing the SLOs in three progressive phases.

The first phase involves mapping the SLOs onto the existing curriculum. That's what our pilot departments are doing right now. We asked our pilots to look at their existing courses and identify which SLOs are being addressed in each course. They simply record this information on grids we give them or in another fashion. That course information is consolidated in a master document—this could be a master grid, say—that reflects the major as a whole. At that point, departments are able to see how students will encounter the SLOs as they progress through the major. The insight from this collection of information is what we're calling "the map."

The map is integral to the second phase. That's where we'll ask the pilots to create their own assessment plans based on what they see in the map. The plan will just be a way to begin to measure how students are doing to create their own assessment plans based on what they see in the map. The insight from this collection of information is what we're calling "the map."

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The third phase will concern looking at the data that the plan generates. It essentially asks departments to focus on 1 or 2 of the SLOs every year and evaluate how their students are doing. What adjustments might need to be made to make the targets set in the assessment plan? Or do the assessments need to be revisited? This is the phase that will be iterative and incorporated into general course design over a period of years. It's meant to start conversations within the department about teaching and learning.

Q: Who are the pilot departments? What do you think faculty can learn from their experience?

A: The pilot departments are Applied Economics, all the departments in the Carlson School of Management, Chemical Engineering and Materials Science, Family Social Science, Food Science and Nutrition, Nursing, Postsecondary Teaching and Learning, and Sociology.

One of the lessons is that while this undertaking seems daunting on an institutional level, it's not as time consuming as it was originally perceived. What people are finding is that completing the course grid can be as simple as taking 10 or 15 minutes per course to identify which SLOs are a goal of that course. We're not asking for long or technical explanations of anything. Pretty simple, really.

We also learned that some departments had a headstart on this because they were already starting to rethink their curriculum. This process is a natural outgrowth or even stimulant for that kind of work.
Editor’s Note

Tomorrow is already Here. It’s a Stereolab song, that, on one level, is about the inverted relationship between institutions and society. Who serves whom? Mediaön on that thought for too long and everything feels trite and futile. It’s the anxiety of any futurist with a heart. (But if you’re a Stereolab fan, it’s “bob up and down tactics.”)

In a very real way, tomorrow is already here. In the realm of emerging learning technologies, we’re constantly searching for the most telling signals of how the teaching landscape is morphing, knowing that we’re already in the midst of that change. For the past six years, the New Media Consortium (NMC) and the Educause Learning Initiative (ELI) have published a forward-looking research paper that tries to take snapshots of the future. The Horizon Report tries to bundle its vision into one-, three-, and five-years-to-adoption scenarios. One of the current significant trends they identified was “access to – and portability of – content [that] is increasing as smaller, more powerful devices are introduced.” We refer to these collectively as mobile learning technologies.

In his review article, D. Christopher Brooks begins to look not only at the state of mobile technologies on the University of Minnesota campus, but also at the research questions this new emphasis will bring to the forefront. If we can see that tools like podcasts, vodcasts, Illume U, smartphones, laptops, and other personal portable devices are going to change the learning environment, we can begin to plan how we might study their impact.

J.D. Walker and Aimee Whiteside continue this exploration as they begin to research new classroom spaces designed for greater collaboration and team-based learning. These so called active learning classrooms – implemented by Steve Fitzgerald and the Office of Classroom Management – have small circular tables around which students can gather, work on computers, and then transmit their results to overhead LCDs. The rooms are enveloped in large white writing boards on which to brainstorm and report group findings. These highly designed spaces seem almost the flipside of those created by most mobile technologies, which have the capacity to be disruptive. When we begin to juxtapose these learning conditions, we begin to see the kinds of new tensions that are emerging as we adopt an increasingly diverse set of learning technologies.

“What do we want our students to learn?” That was the question with which Arlene Carney, vice provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs, began the first issue of Transform. Since we ran that article in 2006, the Faculty Senate on the Twin Cities campus officially adopted the undergraduate student learning outcomes. Today we revisit that complex conversation in a conversation with Cynthia Murdoch, the coordinator for Student Learning Assessment. We’re at a midpoint in that initiative where many colleges have made quite a lot of progress, but there is still much work to accomplish before the University’s next accreditation self-study begins in 2013.

In his memnote, Professor Mike White describes his passion for Italian food culture and the connections among family, pasta, Venice, and teaching. Mike’s autobiography was written as part of the Center for Teaching and Learning’s “Making Meaning of a Life in Teaching” program. Currently, a cohort of faculty writers are inventing themselves in a new memoir program called “This I Have Learned.” Look for excerpts from that program in future issues of Transform and please consider joining that writing group.

In addition to our calendar and the usual review of upcoming conferences, we are once again showcasing a pair of article reviews. Paul Ching examines the evidence of two new studies. One experiment examines the capacity to be disruptive. When we begin to juxtapose these learning conditions, we begin to see the kinds of new tensions that are emerging as we adopt an increasingly diverse set of learning technologies.

You’ll note several authors in this issue are from the Office of Information Technology’s (OIT) Digital Media Center (DMC). We want to thank OIT and the DMC for co-sponsoring this issue of Teaching and Learning. We’re at a midpoint in that initiative where many colleges have made quite a lot of progress, but there is still much work to accomplish before the University’s next accreditation self-study begins in 2013. Since we ran that article in 2006, the Faculty Senate on the Twin Cities campus officially adopted the undergraduate student learning outcomes. Today we revisit that complex conversation in a conversation with Cynthia Murdoch, the coordinator for Student Learning Assessment. We’re at a midpoint in that initiative where many colleges have made quite a lot of progress, but there is still much work to accomplish before the University’s next accreditation self-study begins in 2013.

Paul Baenpler

Notes

Making Connections between Teaching and Learning

Monday, April 27
McKamara Alumni Center

It is with great pleasure that the Academy of Distinguished Teachers, the Center for Teaching and Learning, UMTC, the Office of Information Technology, UMTC, and Instructional Development Services, UMD, announce a one-day conference on teaching and learning.

The conference is free and open to all interested University of Minnesota faculty, instructional staff, and graduate students. The day will feature keynote speaker Dr. John Bronfman. Dr. Bronfman holds the James W. Muglin University Professorship of Education and Psychology at the University of the Washington of Education and is the principal investigator and director of the Learning in Informal and Formal Environments (LIFE) Center, a National Science Foundation Science of Learning Center. He served as co-chair of several National Academy of Science committees that wrote How Students Learn: History, Mathematics, and Science in the Classroom (2005), How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience and School (1999, 2000), and How People Learn: Bridging Research and Practice (1999). Recently, he co-edited, with Linda Darling-Hammond, Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do (2005). He is on the International and United States Board of Advisors for Microsoft’s Partners in Learning program and has worked with the Gates Foundation to develop technology-enhanced workshops that link learning and leadership.

Those interested in reviewing the How People Learn and How Students Learn series prior to the conference can find those publications online at http://www.nap.edu.

Call for Proposals

Proposals for the conference are currently being accepted and are due Monday, January 26, 2009. For the full Call for Proposals, see http://www.adt.umn.edu/conferences/ctlc2009/invite.html.

Submissions can be made on any topic the submitter(s) feels lends itself to a discussion and exploration of the many ways in which teachers enhance students’ learning through research and practice. Proposals directly related to the main theme of connecting teaching and learning are strongly encouraged.

We invite conference session proposals in the following formats:

• Guided discussion – 60 minutes; intended to be highly interactive, this format invites facilitators to generate a collective dialogue about the proposed topic. Discussions may be led by individuals or guided by panels.
• Workshop – 75 minutes; intended to encourage participant involvement, this format invites facilitators to emphasize concrete application and discussion.
• Poster Session – 60 minutes; intended to provide presenters with an opportunity to display a poster highlighting their project and to talk in more detail one-on-one with interested attendees.

The posters will remain on display through lunch the day of the conference.

To Register

Online registration will open in early March. The conference is free; however, registration is required.


Contact: Jeremy Hernandez, Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, at herma220@umn.edu or 612.625.5652.

Jeremy Hernandez is coordinator for faculty awards in the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs.

Educease Midwest Regional Conference

Chicago, IL
March 23-25, 2009

The theme for this year’s meeting is “Intersections: Emerging, Commonly Accepted, and Best Practices in Higher Education IT.” Of particular interest to Transform readers might be the track on teaching and learning, as well as the track on e-learning.

http://net.educause.edu/mwrc09

29th Annual Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Conference (STLHE)

Frederick, New Brunswick, Canada
June 17-20, 2009

This is Canada’s preeminent conference on teaching and learning. The 2009 conference is aptly named for its maritime location, “Between the Tides.” Proposals are due by January 30.

http://www.umb.ca/stlhe

6th Annual Teaching Professor Conference

Washington, D.C.
June 5-7, 2009

This conference, based on the well-known newsletter “The Teaching Professor,” is now in its sixth year. Invited speakers include Ken Allford, Ed Neal, and Maryellen Weimer, among others.

http://www.teachingprofessor.com/conference

International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Conference

Bloomington, IN
October 22-25, 2009

This year’s theme is “Solid Foundations, Emerging Knowledge, Shared Futures.” The CFP has been available since December. The 2010 meeting will take place in Liverpool, England.

http://www.isoul.org/conferences.html

National Conferences

Academy of Distinguished Teachers

News

www.transform.umn.edu

IMPACT: Notes: September 2008
By Mike White

Editor’s Note: The Center for Teaching and Learning has sponsored the “Making Meaning of a Life in Teaching” program in which cohorts of faculty reflect upon their teaching careers. The following excerpt is from Professor Michael White’s “Lessons from Tuscany: A Memoir.”

I am standing high on a bluff gazing across the silver ribbon of the Arno River. The Ponte Vecchio and Duomo appear as minatures below me. The entire scene is bathed in the dying rays of the setting sun. I watch as Florence, Italy transforms from the touristy bustle of the day into the relative calm and mystery of twilight. I think about the streets traveled today and how my footprints now cover those of Michelangelo, Galileo, Brunelleschi, Dante and countless others. I am here with 25 undergraduate students from the University of Minnesota to teach an intensive learning abroad course, introducing students to the concepts of sustainability through the study of Italian food culture. I feel exhilarated and overwhelmed. I am lost in my thoughts, marveling at the powers and fates that conspired to bring me here to this amazing place. I smile. Gazing over Florence at sunset, I think back on the paths I have traveled that ultimately brought me to this place. I whisper under my breath, “It feels like I belong here.”

Like many families, the kitchen was the center of our home, and it was in this room that we spent much of our time together. It was during one of these times that I remember my mother telling me a profoundly moving story. Her brown eyes seemed to be looking at something far away as she stirred the simmering, aromatic sauce. She told me about the time, shortly after moving to Minnesota, when she and Dad had been driving Paul and me around the authentic Italian delis. Upon entering the Buon Giorno Italian market, she was immediately overcome and found herself crying. She explained that the delicious aromas reminded her of her own mother’s kitchen. Her gaze then became focused on the present and she looked at me as she smiled and said “…and you know honey, right now our kitchen smells just like Nana’s did when I was a girl helping her.”

I later discovered that when Mom had walked into Buon Giorno that first time, it was just after our family had moved to Minnesota. I was about 3 or 4 years old, and it had only been a few short months before when we had seen my Nana for the last time. That previous Christmas, Nana had come to visit us in our new home in Minnesota for the holidays. My two brothers and I had been temporarily moved out of our bedroom so that Nana had a room to herself. I was too young to remember it. In those days, Christmas dinner was not expected in our bedroom. I now know that Mom’s reaction to the wonderful aromas emanating from Buon Giorno was partly due to the sharpness of my Nana’s recent passing and how those intoxicating aromas caused the rush of sweet memories to overcome her that day. I have come to understand that the sense of smell is one of the most powerful for invoking memories, and that experiences that involve the sense of smell are not easily forgotten.

Although I did not get the opportunity to know my Nana well when she was alive, I got to know her through my mother’s stories and recipes. She had a strong and unique voice and my mother often talked about her. My Nana’s name was Sara, but they called her “Tesoro.” My youngest brother Bob later discovered that the name “Tesoro” was actually an Americanization of the true family name, “Tesoriero.” He felt such a strong connection to that name that as a young aspiring actor needing a stage-name, he legally changed his last name to “Tesoro,” based on our Nana’s family name. I am clearly not the only one in my family that feels such powerful affection for this name. Names, like food and stories, are powerful things. My wife and I even named our daughter Sarah after my Nana.

As I grew up and left home, I could not be without those delicious and emotionally grounding foods I had grown up with. So I had to learn how to cook my Nana’s and my mother’s recipes. I also became a student of the cuisine and food culture. I studied the cuisine and began to understand the importance of authentic ingredients in traditional Italian cooking. With my father’s help and my own studies, I learned to make my own wine. I began to grow fresh herbs and vegetables and to incorporate them into my culinary experimentation. I learned to make my own bread and dreamed of baking fresh breads in a backyard wood-fired oven. I wandered and dreamed about what it would be like to own a vineyard.

During this time, I was also beginning a career as a professor and balancing that with being an attentive husband and father. I was outwardly content to enact my suburban version of an Italian lifestyle, creating small bits of Italy where I lived. I was deeply disappointed in this vague hollowness where something was still missing in this seemingly full life of mine. Then, one day, my mother called with an announcement that would propel me down another path.

When I answered the phone, Mom was talking very excitedly on the other end of the line, and I did not understand what she was saying at first. When I asked her to slow down she said, “I was talking with your father … you know he is 70 years old and still not talking about retiring.

I think he should retire so we can do more things as a family. But since he won’t retire, I have decided that we should spend some of our retirement savings and take the whole family to Italy! I want us all to see Sicily where Nana’s side of the family is from and to maybe see some other places like Rome, Florence, and Venice.” After picking my jaw off the floor, I asked Mom about whether this was prudent, but she and my Dad had their minds made up.

My father and I were fortunate to be professors at the same university. He and I would frequently meet to walk together at lunchtime so we could keep each other healthy and to stay connected. Much of what I am, personally and professionally, is modeled after him. On one of our walks a few days after this phone call, I decided to ask him to be honest with me and tell me what he really thought about Mom’s “big idea.” After posing the question, we walked on in silence for a few moments and he finally answered. “You know Mike, I think it is a great idea … and it will give you a chance to collect some information first-hand about the food systems in another country for some of the courses you teach.” Then he added, after a few moments, “And even if I didn’t feel that way, there is no point in arguing with your mother about this because her mind is made up!”

The goal of this trip was to get my mother and father to the Aeolian Islands of Mom’s ancestry and for me to further my studies of Italian food culture. A side benefit was that it also helped to temporarily soothe the symptoms of the “dis-ease” which frequently induced my ache to return to Italy. There were 14 of us on this trip, and we spent nearly a week in Sicily and on the Aeolian Islands of Lipari and Panarea, the very islands of my mother’s ancestry.

One magical day, we boarded an alfisca (hydrofoil) that whisked us from the island of Lipari where we were staying to the small volcanic island of Panarea. We spent a surreal and almost mystical afternoon on that island. Part of the time we spent in the small island’s cemetery. Everywhere we looked, we seemed to be surrounded by family. Every other gravestone had the name “Tesoriero.” It was remarkable to be surrounded by the spirits and memories of so many distant relatives. The graves had photos of their occupants on the headstones. This seems to be very common in Italy. Many of the faces were inexplicably familiar. It was like looking through an old family album of relatives you’ve never met. This was a profoundly moving experience for me and being around so many distant relatives on this beautiful, but isolated island conjured up images and feelings that I could sense were changing me in ways I am still trying to understand.

After we spent the week in Sicily, we had the great fortune to spend a full week in a beautiful villa in rural Tuscany. I was able to soak in Tuscany and experience the culture, food systems and our connection to the land and people. It was during one of my excursions to the Tuscan countryside that I not only felt, but actually heard the audible thud of my psyche being nailed to the ground … to the soil of my ancestors … to Italy.

After this experience, it became crystal clear to me that Italy was to become a significant part of my life. I had already begun to incorporate my knowledge and passion for this place into my life’s work, including my teaching. My deep connection to all things Italian has over the years caused me to become a student of the Italian food culture. I have learned that food permeates almost every aspect of the Italian culture. I feel it was my destiny to be exposed to such a rich cultural environment where food is produced as well as how it is produced is crucially important to Italians. There is a culturally-inborn or intrinsic value to food in Italy. Buying high-quality foods of known origin, regardless of the price, is a daily event. It is unthinkable to buy food that is cheaper or of questionable origin, and it is considered foolish.

I have begun to see that there are powerful lessons to be learned from the philosophies and attitudes of Italians toward their food and food systems. As a professor in a college with the words food, environment, and agriculture in the title, it seemed natural to amass as much of this information as possible and to use it in the courses I teach. And this is where it brought me, gazing at the Tuscan twilight over Florence with 25 students where we are all learning to feed our minds and bodies on the lessons and pleasures of the Italian food culture.

Mike White is a professor in the Department of Animal Science.

The Center for Teaching and Learning has sponsored the “Making Meaning of a Life in Teaching” program in which cohorts of faculty reflect upon their teaching careers. The following excerpt is from Professor Michael White’s “Lessons from Tuscany: A Memoir.”

Lessons from Tuscany: A Memoir

By Mike White

The Center for Teaching and Learning recently moved to the University Office Plaza, 2221 University Avenue SE. The UOP is a four-story building located next to the football stadium and one block east of McNamara Alumni Center. The building is conveniently located next to the Stadium Village and can be easily accessed via the Campus Connector for those on the West Bank or St. Paul campuses.

Our 20 staff members plus student workers are occupying the fourth floor of the building along with our new neighbors, the Office of Information Technology’s Academic Computing and Java and Web Services.

The CTL staff invites you to stop by Suite 400 anytime, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. However, as we have done for years, we are much more likely to come to your location on campus to provide consultations or programs. For the full array of services and resources available through the CTL, visit the Web site at www.teaching.umn.edu.
Higher Learning Commission comes to the Twin Cities. That seems like a confirmation of a commitment to public reporting of comparative institutional data. (The private colleges have their own system for this called the University and College Accountability Network (UCAN).) The VSA makes its data available to the public through a common web reporting template called the College Portrait. Within the portrait, there is a lot of information that has been commonly available, including graduation rates and tuition costs, etc. We also report scores on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and on one of three standardized tests (the CLA, the CAAP, or the MAAP). Currently, the Twin Cities campus hasn’t selected any of these standardized exams.

You can view the College Portrait for the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities at: http://www.itr.umn.edu/portrait.

Q: Do you have anything else you’d like to say?
A: Just that all undergraduate programs will need to go through this process, and we’d really encourage people to get started. Don’t wait for us to contact you. We’d be happy to meet with you and help you get the ball rolling. We now can say from experience, at least for the first phase, that this effort won’t absorb too much time. Please contact us, and we’ll help you get started.

In the end, assessing SLOs is really about improving teaching and learning. And it’s an enterprise the entire University is undertaking. As part of the Liberal Education course recertification, for instance, faculty are asked to be explicit about the SLOs their course addresses. So, we’ll see the SLOs in a lot of our work in the future.

Enriching Student Learning and Development: Important Opportunities for Undergraduate Education

By Arlene Carney and Karen Zentner Bacig

As the interview with our coordinator for Student Learning Assessment, Cynthia Murdoch, reflects, much good work has been initiated regarding the integration of the undergraduate Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) into the fabric of undergraduate education on the Twin Cities campus. Similar important efforts are taking place under the leadership of Vice Provost for Student Affairs, Jerry Rinehart, to advance the Student Development Outcomes (SDOs), which were passed by the University Senate in May 2007 as well for the Twin Cities campus.

These two initiatives, addressing complementary facets of the undergraduate experience, represent an important focus on fostering conversation and practice relative to what it is we, as a community of educators, expect our students will learn during their undergraduate years on our campus. The outcomes represent our aspirations for what it means to be a graduate with a Bachelor’s degree from the University of Minnesota’s Twin Cities campus, and our office is working closely with Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education Bob McMaster and his office’s initiatives around liberal education and writing.

We will learn much about what works, as well as what does not, in the coming months as we work with departments on our pilot efforts. As Cynthia mentions in her interview, more departments are currently being recruited for the next wave of effort, and we will continue to engage with departments in waves as, over time, all undergraduate programs initiate learning outcome assessment efforts. Our office is committed to providing as much information, resources, and support as we can and we welcome questions, ideas, concerns, and most of all, your investment in these efforts to enhance the teaching and learning experiences for all of us.

Arlene Carney is vice provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs and Karen Zentner Bacig is associate to the vice provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs.

Q: Can you say something about all the acronyms we hear about now: VSA, CLA, CAAP, MAAP, and NSSE?
A: Sure. It’s best to start with the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA). The VSA is a recent development that is the public and land grant institutions’ response to the federal and community call for greater accountability and a commitment to public reporting of comparative institutional data. (The private colleges have their own system for this called the University and College Accountability Network (UCAN).) The VSA makes its data available to the public through a common web reporting template called the College Portrait. Within the portrait, there is a lot of information that has been commonly available, including graduation rates and tuition costs, etc. We also report scores on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and on one of three standardized tests (the CLA, the CAAP, or the MAAP). Currently, the Twin Cities campus hasn’t selected any of these standardized exams.

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The new requirements for liberal education were approved by the Twin Cities Faculty Senate on April 3, 2008. Liberal education courses represent a piece of the curriculum through which students may meet the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). At the end of the summer term, 2010, all current certifications for liberal education will expire and courses will need to be recertified as part of the new “Core” and “Theme” requirements.

For students entering the fall of 2010 there will be seven Cores:

- Art/Humanities
- Historical Perspectives
- Literature
- Mathematical Thinking
- Social Science
- Physical Science
- Biological Science

and five Themes:

- Civic Life and Ethics
- Diversity and Social Justice in the US
- The Environment
- Global Perspectives
- Technology and Society

Briefly, the goals of the Core are to introduce students to the diverse ways of knowing that have characterized human societies and civilizations and that characterize our world today; reveal the complexity of information and help students appreciate the ways in which knowledge is culturally and intellectually constructed and changes over time; provide opportunities for students to experience first-hand the methods of specific disciplines across the spectrum of the University; and demonstrate that “knowing” is an active, ongoing process.

In contrast, Themes should challenge students to consider compelling contemporary issues that are at the heart of decisions they will have to make as citizens and as human beings.

Although every course is different, we expect that Core courses, since they explicitly address ways of knowing, are likely to contribute to at least two of the SLOs — identify, define, and solve problems; locate and critically evaluate information — acknowledging that there are multiple ways of knowing and that knowledge may be socially constructed. Theme courses, like Core courses, are likely to contribute to the first two SLOs, and they may also address the final SLO, requiring that students by the time they graduate — have acquired skills for effective citizenship and lifelong learning.

All current liberal education courses need to be recertified to determine if they meet the new criteria, which go into effect for students entering the University in Fall 2010. This process is currently underway and requires faculty to submit both 1) an Electronic Course Authorization System (ECAS) proposal, and 2) an electronic syllabus. Members of the Council on Liberal Education read both the syllabus and the proposal.

Some redundancy is encouraged, but students are the intended audience for the syllabus, whereas members of the Council are the sole audience for the proposal. Both the ECAS proposal and the syllabus must demonstrate in explicit terms that the course fulfills the specific requirements for the Core and/or Theme for which it is being submitted, as well as the general characteristics of Cores and Themes.

Faculty members submitting courses for recertification should not assume that the goals of their courses are obvious. A proposal for a course on Shakespeare submitted for the “Literature Core,” for example, should not assume that it is obvious that this is a literature course. Rather, it is important to explain in both the syllabus and the proposal how the course fulfills its mission as a liberal education course about literature as described in the Guidelines. It may be helpful to remember that Council on Liberal Education members, like students in liberal education courses, come from units across the University. The Council’s aim is to ensure that liberal education courses meet the University's goals and that these goals are clear to students and to faculty members. The CLE Guidelines, Final Report, and other materials are available at:

http://www.umn.edu/usenate/committees/cle.html

Already from our experience reviewing the most recent round of proposals, we can give our colleagues some helpful advice. Here is a list of the top three reasons proposals were not approved:

1. The syllabus does not explicitly state how the course contributes to a liberal education. In some cases, this material is evident in the course proposal, but the syllabus itself lacks the self-consciousness about liberal education that the Council expects in order for a course to meet the new guidelines.

2. A proposed course only partially meets the criteria. The specific criteria for each of the 12 liberal education requirements were crafted as essential course components. Courses are also expected to conform to the general guidelines for liberal education courses and have the characteristics that are common to all Cores and/or Themes.

3. A course proposed for a theme does not fully integrate the theme into the course (see above).

We are in the process of developing a Web site with FAQs related to the course proposal and review process. Watch your e-mail for an announcement of this site. In the meantime, you can contact one or more of the following individuals for additional information:

Laurel Carroll, l-carr@umn.edu
Peter Hudleston, hudle001@umn.edu
Leslie Schiff, schif002@umn.edu

Leslie Schiff is a professor in the department of Microbiology.
February

// Autoalerts for Research
Tuesday, February 3, 3-11:50 a.m.
535/545 Diehl Hall, Academic Health Center Learning Commons
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Autoalerts are brief updates generated by a database, search engine, or journal publisher’s Web site. Learn techniques for staying up to date using autoalerts and e-mail or RSS. (Note: Health sciences focus.)
Sponsor: University Libraries

// Collaborative Writing
Wednesday, February 4, 12-1:30 p.m.
101 Walter Library
To register: http://writing.umn.edu/hwwi

We often require students to write collaboratively without attending to all of the complexity of such writing. A panel of instructors shares how they structure and organize collaborative writing assignments and projects in their classes.
Sponsor: Center for Writing

// Web Tools for Working Collaboratively
Wednesday, February 4, 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
Walter Library 310
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

We learn about Web-based resources, both at the University and freely available, that can help you to effectively collaborate. We will include resources such as Google Docs, Delicious, and UThink.
Sponsor: University Libraries

// TEL Seminar: Data-driven Applications in Teaching and Learning
Wednesday, February 4, 12-1:30 p.m.
402 Walter Library
To register: Just show up in person, or to attend online as a virtual participant, contact dperiod@umn.edu. There is no charge for the TEL seminar, and they are open to the public. For more information, see http://dmc.umn.edu/spotlight.
Panelists will discuss how they developed databases and data mashups to create multimedia learning opportunities, a repository of case studies, an internet mapping application, and an online inventory of learning styles to promote authentic, engaged learning in varied modalities.
Sponsor: The TEL Seminar series is sponsored by the Office of Instructional Technology (OIT) and cosponsored by the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost (SVVP) and the panelists’ units.

// EndNote for Engineers and Physical Scientists
Thursday, February 5, 11:15 a.m.-2:15 p.m.
Walter Library 310
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

An introduction to EndNote; learn to import citations and format your bibliographies and in-text citations. We’ll also discuss EndNoteWeb, a Web-based version of EndNote.
Sponsor: University Libraries

// Leveraging Archival Materials into the Curriculum
Monday, February 9, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.
Anderson Library 120
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Archives and Special Collections at the U will broaden a student’s experience in any class. Learn how to explore the possibilities of using primary materials to enrich the classroom experience.
Sponsor: University Libraries

// Science Writing
Tuesday, February 10, 2:30-4 p.m.
135 Nicholson Hall
To register: http://writing.umn.edu/hwwi

A panel of scientists talks about how they incorporate writing – and writing instruction – in their science classes.
Sponsor: Center for Writing

// Zotero: An Introduction
Tuesday, February 10, 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
Walter Library 310
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

An introduction to the free Firefox extension that allows you to collect, manage, and cite your research citations with ease.
Sponsor: University Libraries

// Research Made Easy: Discover the Web of Science
Wednesday, February 11, 2:30-3:30 p.m.
Walter Library 310
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Learn one of the most powerful cross-disciplinary citation indexes available. New and experienced users will learn new tricks that will make their literature research even easier using the new interface.
Sponsor: University Libraries

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Spring 2009

Some Rights Reserved: An Introduction to Creative Commons
Wednesday, February 11, 2-3 p.m.
Magrath Library Instruction Room
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

This workshop will give you an introduction to Creative Commons. We will discuss various licenses, and why you might want to license your own work.
Sponsor: University Libraries

Now, Why Would A Student Say That? Strategies for Unreeling Unanticipated Classroom Conflicts
Thursday, February 12, 2:30-4 p.m., Ford 110
To register: www.teaching.umn.edu

A discussion just “erupts” unpleasantly or uncomfortably. Most teachers’ nearly planned discussions of theory issues, we encounter unanticipated student-to-student comments and student-to-teacher outbursts. Many subtle – and addressable – factors shape such moments. In this seminar, we’ll look at a conflict-resolving skill that works across disciplines to quickly assess a situation, select an effective response, and turn an uncomfortable episode into a teachable moment.
Sponsor: Center for Teaching and Learning

Grant Funding – Search Tools and Resources
Friday, February 12, 3-4:15 p.m.
Walter Library 310
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Learn how to use IRIS, SPIN, and Community of Science and the Foundation Directory to search for grant opportunities. Set up e-mail updates and find internal U of M funding sources.
Sponsor: University Libraries

Grant & Fellowship Information in the Social Sciences
Friday, February 13, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Wilson Library 530B
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Learn how to use IRIS, SPIN, and Community of Science and the Foundation Directory to search for grant opportunities. Set up e-mail updates and internal U of M funding sources.
Sponsor: University Libraries

Peer Response, Peer Review
Thursday, February 19, 12-1:30 p.m.
Location TBD
To register: http://writing.umn.edu/twwi

Peer response work can take many productive and effective forms. A panel of instructors shares how they structure and organize peer response and peer review work in their classes. Facilitated by Todd Arnold (Fisheries, Wildlife, & Conservation Biology) and Errc Watkins (Horticultural Science).
Sponsor: Center for Writing

Wishing Won’t Make It Go Away: Strategies for Graduate Students Navigating Academic Bullying and Other Incivilities
Friday, February 20, 11:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
Ford 110
To register: www.teaching.umn.edu

Instances of academic incivility experienced by graduate students are seldom reported on the University of Minnesota campus for reasons of fear of retribution, ruined careers, social isolation, and inaction. A fall 2007 survey of U of M graduate students reveals that bullying and incivility impair academic progress to degrees, promote suffering in silence, or prompt leaving without completing the degree. In this seminar, we will highlight successful strategies that Directors of Graduate Studies and advisors have implemented to promote not only safe reporting, but also to facilitate difficult conversations and develop local problem-solving practices.
Sponsor: Center for Teaching and Learning

RefWorks Basics
Tuesday, February 24, 3:30-4:30 p.m.
Walter Library 310
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Learn RefWorks, a Web-based citation manager, available to all U of M faculty, students and staff. RefWorks is a bibliographic management tool that saves your time by automatically creating bibliographies in citation styles such as MLA, APA, etc.
Sponsor: University Libraries

Approaches to Grammar
Wednesday, February 25, 2:30-4 p.m.
Location TBD
To register: http://writing.umn.edu/twwi

A panel of instructors shares their approaches to addressing grammar, grammatical errors, and grammatical correctness in their teaching and their writing assignments.
Sponsor: Center for Writing

Create your Poster in PowerPoint
Wednesday, February 25, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.
Magrath Library Instruction Room
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Getting ready to do a poster at an upcoming conference? Learn pointers about using PowerPoint to create the poster as one giant slide and send it to a large-scale printer.
Sponsor: University Libraries
Learning) and Mitch Ogden (Center for Writing).

For technical support. Facilitated by Jude Higdon (Technology Enhanced Learning) at 310 Wilson Library.

Learn how to prepare and submit a scientific research paper for publication, including determining manuscript types, selecting a journal, the editorial process, and library databases that can help you more efficiently keep up with your fields of interest. 

Literature Search Techniques and RefWorks-Health Sciences
Wednesday, February 25, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
535/545 Diehl Hall, Academic Health Center Learning Commons
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Learn a few simple strategies to make your literature searches focused and sophisticated, including tips on the research process, using RefWorks to organize your references, and create your bibliography.

Sponsor: University Libraries

Making an Impact with Wikipedia
Wednesday, February 25, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.
Wilson Library 310

To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Learn how to get the most out of any Wikipedia article, how to track and evaluate the links and literature behind each entry. Learn how to write and edit Wikipedia articles.

Sponsor: University Libraries

Citation Research (Advanced)
Wednesday, February 25, 12-1:30 p.m.
Wilson Library 530B

To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Useful for preparing your dossier, a grant proposal, or to see how your own works are considered by your peers, this workshop will help you understand advanced citation research.

Sponsor: University Libraries

Wiki Writing Workshop
Thursday, February 26, 12-1:30 p.m.
Location TBD
To register: http://writing.umn.edu/hawwi

Wikis have achieved an explosive popularity in classrooms. They offer promising possibilities for students learning and student writing; however, wikis must be groomed, contextualized, and integrated in order for their pedagogical potential to be achieved. This workshop will engage various ways in which wikis can be used successfully in our teaching, sending participants forth with grounded ideas for deploying wikis. This workshop will not address technical “how-to” questions, although we will identify resources for technical support. Facilitated by Jude Higdon (Technology Enhanced Learning) and Mitch Ogden (Center for Writing).

Sponsor: Center for Writing

Keeping Up: Web-Based Tools that Help You Work Smarter
Thursday, February 26, 2:30-3:30 p.m.
Wilson Library 310

To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

This workshop will introduce you to Web-based tools like tagging, RSS feeds, and library databases that can help you more efficiently keep up with your fields of interest.

Sponsor: University Libraries

What is Web 2.0? An Introduction to the Participatory Web
Tuesday, March 3, 1-2 p.m.
Bio-Medical Library, Room 555

To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Explore various definitions of Web 2.0, its history, evolution, and defining characteristics of Web 2.0 applications. We will demonstrate examples in health sciences education and practice. (Note: Health sciences focus.)

Sponsor: University Libraries

The Publication Process
Tuesday, March 3, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.
Bio-Medical Library, Room 555

To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Learn how to prepare and submit a scientific research paper for publication, including determining manuscript types, selecting a journal, the editorial review process, and more. (Note: Health sciences focus.)

Sponsor: University Libraries

Advanced RefWorks
Tuesday, March 3, 1-2 p.m.
Magrath Library Instruction Room, St. Paul
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

For RefWorks users who would like to learn more about linking to full text documents, editing styles, and other specialized tasks. Bring your RefWorks questions.

Sponsor: University Libraries

Documenting Teaching Effectiveness: Making the New Student Ratings of Teaching (CRTs) Work for You
Wednesday, March 4, 1-2 p.m.
Bio-Medical Library, Room 555

To register: http://www.teaching.umn.edu

Systematically collecting student feedback on teaching and learning will help faculty understand the course as students experience it. Once gathered, careful analysis of the feedback will help faculty to identify ways to effectively support student learning and to document teaching effectiveness. During this seminar session, faculty will learn techniques for analyzing student feedback and for using the information to improve teaching effectiveness.

Sponsor: Center for Teaching and Learning

Google for Researchers
Wednesday, March 4, 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
Wilson Library 310

To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Explore the new tools and technology that pair Google efficient tools with library quality results to weave together a rich information web that goes beyond just the World Wide Web.

Sponsor: University Libraries

TEL Seminar: Copyright in the Age of YouTube
Wednesday, March 4, 12:30-1 p.m.
402 Walter Library

To register: Just show up in person, or to attend online as a virtual participant, contact clopez@umn.edu. There is no charge for the TEL seminar, and they are open to the public. For more information, see http://dmc.umn.edu/spotlight.

Emerging technologies can create confusion about the ownership and use of copyrighted materials in education and research. Panelists will offer insight and clarification on the complex intersection of copyright, technology, and university life.

Sponsor: The TEL Seminar series is sponsored by the Office of Information Technology (OIT) and cosponsored by the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost (SVPP) and the panels’ units.

Getting Published: How to Publish Your Science Research Article
Thursday, March 5, 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
Wilson Library 310

To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Intended for graduate students and newer faculty in the sciences to identify appropriate journals to submit your article and how to manage your copyright. Discuss issues for emerging academic authors.

Sponsor: University Libraries

Egos and Squabbles and Fears – Oh Why? Re-Invigorating the Academy
Wednesday, March 4, 2-3:15 p.m.
Walter Library 310

To register: http://www.teaching.umn.edu

The academy can be a difficult place when critique turns personal and unprofessional. This seminar will explore issues of collegiality and the impact on teaching and learning.

Sponsor: University Libraries

Getting Published: How to Publish Your Science Research Article
Thursday, March 5, 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
Wilson Library 310

To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Intended for graduate students and newer faculty in the sciences to identify appropriate journals to submit your article and how to manage your copyright. Discuss issues for emerging academic authors.

Sponsor: University Libraries

How Do I Know I Have Found Everything?
Tuesday, March 10, 1-2 p.m.
Magrath Library Instruction Room
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Working on a new research project, a thesis, or dissertation? Need to be comprehensive in your literature search? Learn techniques to improve your searches.

Sponsor: University Libraries

Grading & Responding to Student Writing
Wednesday, March 11, 2:30-4 p.m.
Location TBD
To register: http://writing.umn.edu/hawwi

Grading and responding to student writing are crucial components of teaching with writing. This workshop offers approaches and strategies that make grading and responding effective and efficient. Participants will consider specific techniques for grading and responding, including grading rubrics and response strategies. Gina Ramore, facilitator (History of Science & Technology) and Kristen Jamieson, moderator (Center for Writing).

Sponsor: Center for Writing

Grant & Fellowship Information in the Social Sciences
Thursday, March 12, 12-1:30 p.m.
Wilson Library 310

To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Learn how to use IRIS, SPIN, and Community of Science and the Foundation Directory to search for grant opportunities. Set up e-mail updates and receive U of M funding sources.

Sponsor: University Libraries

Grant Funding for Graduate Students
Tuesday, March 17, 2-3:15 p.m.
Walter Library 310

To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration

Learn to use IRIS, SPIN, and Community of Science and the Foundation Directory to search for grant opportunities. Set up e-mail updates and find internal U of M funding sources.

Sponsor: University Libraries
Spring 2009 part 3

Google IS a Research Tool!  
Friday, March 20, 9:30-11 a.m.  
Wilson Library 3308  
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration  
Today Google offers researchers access to the broadest array of information. Google Scholar offers alternative citation resources. This workshop focuses on tips to make your searching more effective and efficient!  
Sponsor: University Libraries

Some Rights Reserved: An Introduction to Creative Commons  
Thursday, March 26, 10-11 a.m.  
Magrath Library Instruction Room  
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration  
This workshop will give you an introduction to Creative Commons. We will discuss the various licenses, how to use Creative Commons materials, and why you may want to license your own work.  
Sponsor: University Libraries

April  
Grant & Fellowship Information in the Social Sciences  
Monday, April 6, 12-1:30 p.m.  
Wilson Library 3308  
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration  
Learn how to use IRIS, SPIN, and Community of Science and the Foundation Directory to search for grant opportunities. Set up e-mail updates and internal U of M funding sources.  
Sponsor: University Libraries

EndNote for Engineers and Physical Scientists  
Wednesday, April 8, 3:30-4:30 p.m.  
Walter Library 310  
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration  
An introduction to EndNote: learn to import citations and format your bibliographies and in-text citations. We'll also discuss EndNoteWeb, a Web-based version of EndNote.  
Sponsor: University Libraries

July  
Leveraging Archival Materials into the Curriculum  
Tuesday, July 7, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.  
Anderson Library 120  
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration  
Archives and Special Collections at the U will broaden a student’s experience in any class. Learn how to explore the possibilities of using primary materials to enrich the classroom experience.  
Sponsor: University Libraries

Senior Papers & Projects  
Tuesday, April 27, 12-1:30 p.m.  
Location TBD  
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration  
The senior paper or project is a culmination of a student’s learning experience in their major. It is an opportunity to practice, apply, and demonstrate the writing abilities gained by our departments and disciplines. Our panel of experienced faculty consider sequencing, advising, and designing senior papers and projects to be effective and influential learning experiences.  
Sponsor: Center for Writing

Some Rights Reserved: An Introduction to Creative Commons  
Wednesday, April 8, 1-2 p.m.  
Walter Library 310  
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration  
This workshop will give you an introduction to Creative Commons. We will discuss the various licenses, how to use Creative Commons materials, and why you may want to license your own work.  
Sponsor: University Libraries

TEL Seminar: Technology-Enhanced Learning and Assessment in Health Professions Education  
Wednesday, April 8, 12:30-1:30 p.m.  
402 Walter Library  
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration  
This seminar will discuss technology-enhanced learning and assessment activities created for future veterinarians, family physicians, and surgeons.  
Sponsor: The TEL Seminar series is sponsored by the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost (OIT) and cosponsored by the Office of University Libraries (OUL), the Office of Information Technology (OIT), and the Office of the Dean (OADM).

Google IS a Research Tool!  
Friday, April 17, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.  
Wilson Library 3308  
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration  
Today Google offers researchers access to the broadest array of information. Google Scholar offers alternative citation resources. This workshop focuses on tips to make your searching more effective and efficient!  
Sponsor: University Libraries

Teaching and Learning Conference  
Monday, April 27, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
McNamara Alumni Center  
To register: online registration will open during spring semester.  
This biennial teaching and learning conference will feature presentations by faculty, staff and graduate students from across the University system. Find more information regarding conference theme, keynote speaker, and call for proposals at www.adl.umn.edu. For more information, contact Karen Zemmer Basig, kbasig@umn.edu.  
Sponsor: Academy of Distinguished Teachers, with co-sponsors the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Office of Information Technology

Google IS a Research Tool!  
Friday, April 17, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.  
Wilson Library 3308  
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration  
Today Google offers researchers access to the broadest array of information. Google Scholar offers alternative citation resources. This workshop focuses on tips to make your searching more effective and efficient!  
Sponsor: University Libraries

EndNote for Engineers and Physical Scientists  
Wednesday, April 8, 3:30-4:30 p.m.  
Walter Library 310  
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration  
An introduction to EndNote: learn to import citations and format your bibliographies and in-text citations. We’ll also discuss EndNoteWeb, a Web-based version of EndNote.  
Sponsor: University Libraries

ReFWorks Basics  
Tuesday, April 14, 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.  
Walter Library 310  
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration  
Learn ReFWorks, a Web-based citation manager, available to all U of M faculty, students, and staff. Use ReFWorks to organize and create bibliographies in citation styles such as MLA, APA, etc.  
Sponsor: University Libraries

Senior Papers & Projects  
Tuesday, April 27, 12-1:30 p.m.  
Location TBD  
To register: http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration  
The senior paper or project is a culmination of a student’s learning experience in their major. It is an opportunity to practice, apply, and demonstrate the writing abilities gained by our departments and disciplines. Our panel of experienced faculty consider sequencing, advising, and designing senior papers and projects to be effective and influential learning experiences.  
Sponsor: Center for Writing

Retrieved from "http://www.lib.umn.edu/registration"
reporting that they already have access to “smart phones” and personal digital assistants (PDAs). Kurubacak’s study is timely and important and has the potential to influence future scholarship, research, and institutional decisions regarding how the spread and use of these mobile technologies might be parlayed (eff ectively and ef fectively) into a higher level of mobile learning. Moreover, his work serves as a useful framework with which we can understand and contextualize better our responses to the increasing importance of mobile technology that is already under way at the University.

D. Christopher Brooks is a research fellow at the Office of Information Technology’s Digital Media Center.

REFERENCES

A Short Bibliography on Mobile Learning and Podcasting

By Paul Baeppler

The concept of Mobile Learning is new enough that its defi nitions are still contested. Should it be defi ned by the pedagogical affordances of the technology it deploys, the social discourse it enables? We might be able to describe some of its characteristics – that it provides learning opportunities independently of time and place. We could also perhaps gain a sense of “mLearning” by analyzing a list of some of the tools of which it makes use: iPods, ebooks, smart phones, GPS handhelds, PDAs, etc. But at this stage in its evolution, it would be diffi cult to encourage students who are diffi cult to comprehend a single exposure; the ability to replay a lecture or a review lecture might help these students even more than native language students.


In this quasi-experimental design study of an introductory psychology course, the students who were given access to a podcast of a recorded lecture, but did not attend the lecture itself, scored signifi cantly higher on exams than those who had attended lecture but had only PowerPoint notes of the same lecture. The authors are quick to say that there are no ways to indicate the value of replacing live instruction with recorded lectures. They were interested in supplemental instruction, and particularly the conditions when a student might miss an occasional lecture and had access to either another student’s notes or the actual recorded lecture. They assert that “the advantage” the students in our study received was only when the student took notes as they would do during a lecture, and when they listened to the lecture more than once.” This study was limited by many factors, including a novelty effect and the disciplinary-specifi c nature of the content, but it provides us with an early study of the value of podcasting in a higher education setting.


As the title suggests, Lee et al. examine the educational value of learner-generated podcasts in graduate and undergraduate courses in Australia. The authors wanted to explore the potential for mobile learning that went beyond recorded lectures. Focus groups and content analysis were used to measure results. Using a knowledge-building framework devised by Scardamalia, the authors examined principles such as “improvable ideas,” “epistemic agency,” and “constructive uses of authoritative sources,” etc. Through an analysis of the student scriptwriting, production, and editing, the authors found “a high proportion of the student-producers’ discourse constituted ‘transform’ narratives.” The authors’ conclusion: “While the podcasts were not a transformative tool for Transform readers with a starting point into the new research on podcasting as a manifestation of the greater inquiry into mobile learning.


This British study examined instructor-generated podcasts as a review tool after a lecture but before an exam. They found evidence to support three hypotheses. First, they found that students believed that listening and re-listening to the podcasts was a quicker method to review exam material than going over their own class notes. Second, students found the podcasts a more eff ective studying tool than reviewing the assigned text. Third, re-listening to the podcasts was a quicker method to review exam material than going over their own class notes.

By Paul Baeppler

UM launches iTunes U

Faculty at the University of Minnesota have a new avenue to help make their instructional content available to all students, no matter where they are ported for students. The University has partnered with Apple and has organized a dedicated space within the iTunes U store, especially for University material. Faculty can request course sections in iTunes U in order to privately share audio, video, and pdfs with students enrolled in their courses. A second public area gives students and instructors the capability to broadcast their work to a global audience.

To see what iTunes U has to offer or to begin uploading your own content in either the UM access restricted area or the public site, go to http://itunes.umn.edu. For questions, contact the iTunes U team at itsunes@umn.edu.

Introduction

In recent years, large-format classes of 100 or more students have become increasingly common on American college and university campuses. They are often seen as efficient ways of coping with rising enrollments in fiscally difficult times (Carseo, 2007; Stanley & Porter, 2002).

But any instructor who has taught such a class understands the challenges of the large-enrollment classroom. These challenges, which are amply documented in the scholarly literature (Bligh, 2000; Carbone, 1999; Walff, Nyquist & Abbott, 1987), include:

- achieving student-student and student-instructor interaction;
- a truncated range of feasible assessment techniques;
- limited feedback on student learning; and
- limited cognitive and emotional engagement.

In addition to concerns about large class size, recent scholarly literature reflects the awareness that physical spaces have the potential to affect how, what, and how much students learn (Chium, 2006; Lomas & Olinging, 2006; Lomas & B. Long, 2006; Dori & Belcher, 2005; Strange & Banning, 2002; Chism & Bickford, 2002; Montgomery, 2008).

In response to this research, the University of Minnesota’s Office of Classroom Management, under the leadership of Steve Fitzgerald, created a new option among its more traditional classroom spaces: Active Learning Classrooms (ALCs), located in the Biological Sciences Center, Room 64 and in the Electrical Engineering/Computer Science Building, Room 2-260. The ALCs are state-of-the-art “smart” classrooms specially designed to promote interaction, inquiry-based learning, and collaboration in mid-sized and large enrollment classes.

These learning spaces feature large circular tables that seat nine students with capacity for several laptop computers for collaborative work. Instruction in these classrooms typically centers on hands-on activities and problems that require students to interact to reach a solution. Students can display their work on large LCD screens mounted around the room to promote small- and/or large-group discussion, and the rooms feature 360-degree glass markerboards around the circumference of the classroom.

Research

The novelty of the ALCs called for research to determine how instructors adapted their teaching techniques to the new learning spaces, how students reacted to the new environment, and how well the spaces’ technological components functioned to help students and instructors teach and learn. In the academic year 2007-2008, the Office of Information Technology’s (OIT) Digital Media Center (DMC) partnered with the Office of Classroom Management (OCM) to design and conduct exploratory research intended to answer these questions (see ALC Pilot Evaluation Team, 2007).

More specifically, the research questions that guided the investigation were as follows:

1. What were faculty attitudes and expectations with respect to the ALCs?
2. How did students perceive and respond to the new learning spaces?
3. How were the technological components of the ALCs used? Did the spaces affect which teaching/learning strategies instructors chose?

The data collection methods used in this investigation included instructor interviews, student and instructor questionnaires, class observations, and student focus groups. Data were drawn from courses in a wide variety of disciplines, including Wining Studies, History of Medicine, Biology, and Computer Science.

Findings

Overall, the ALCs were very well received by both instructors and students. Instructors did adapt their teaching techniques to the new learning spaces and frequently found themselves in the role of learning coach or facilitator. Students found the classrooms effective at promoting teamwork and collaboration. Finally, reactions to the technology and physical features of the ALCs were generally very positive, with certain features singled out for special praise.

1. Faculty attitudes and expectations. Instructors had high expectations when they began teaching in the ALCs and strongly positive attitudes toward the spaces at the end of the term. They reported that the ALCs changed their classroom experience in a number of ways, including:
   - the overall relationship they had with their students deepened; they felt closer to their students;
   - their role changed in the ALCs; one instructor noted a shift to the role of a learning coach or facilitator;
   - each of the instructors felt that the experience in the ALCs changed the relationship students have with each other, which was a benefit for collaborative projects;
   - teaching in the ALC was a different experience and may require major changes in instructional strategies; and
   - all of the instructors interviewed expressed a strong desire to keep teaching in the ALCs in the future.

2. Student perceptions and comfort levels. Students also had strongly positive attitudes toward the ALCs. They reported:
   - numerous positive comments regarding teamwork and collaboration with their classmates;
   - the ability of ALCs to appeal to a variety of student learning styles; and
   - a sense that their professors were close and more accessible to them in the ALCs than in traditional classrooms.

3. Use of technology and teaching/learning strategies. Both students and instructors responded to questions about the ALCs’ technology and its integration into teaching-learning activities. Their largely positive observations included:
   - collaborative, student-centered learning activities were more common in the ALCs compared to traditional classrooms;
   - the round tables, document camera, glass markerboards, and student display screens were the most important features of the ALCs;
   - the glass markerboards were thought by some students and instructors to be overly reflective; and
   - the round tables seemed to be the key to the changes in student-student relationships in the ALCs.

Future Directions

This research on the ALCs was limited in several ways. To begin with, the instructors of the courses included in the study were self-selected, in the sense that they volunteered to teach in the ALCs. Their responses to the new learning spaces may therefore not be representative of the reactions of the broader faculty population at the University of Minnesota.

Furthermore, the 2007–2008 research was largely limited to recording student and instructor perceptions of the ALCs. While those perceptions were overwhelmingly positive, they may be subject to a variety of distortions, such as a novelty effect.

Future research should overcome these limitations by recruiting faculty members from the general population and by examining, through comparison-group research designs, the effects of teaching in new learning spaces on variables including student-learning outcomes.

In fall 2008, the OIT’s DMC extended its learning spaces research through an Archibald Bush Foundation grant for innovative teaching and technology strategies (http://www.umn.edu/oit/teachlearn/faculty/innovative/index.html).

This project, which involved undergraduate students as full partners in the research process, examined both formal learning spaces, such as the ALCs, as well as the informal learning spaces in which students study. Results from this study will be available in summer 2009.

J. D. Walker is the manager of Evaluation and Research Services and Aimee Whiteside is a research and evaluation consultant, at the Office of Information Technology’s Digital Media Center.
Faculty Explore Emerging Learning Environments

By Lauren Marsh and Kimerly Wilcox

What does a university need to do in order to become a leader in designing, utilizing, and evaluating emerging learning environments? The Office of Information Technology’s Digital Media Center (DMC) 2008-09 Faculty Fellows are engaging this question in the context of a program that encourages interdisciplinary dialogue and partnerships with campus leaders across the University of Minnesota. Our partners are helping to frame the institutional questions that need to be addressed if the University is to become a twenty-first century leader in emerging learning environments.

The group records their reflections about the surprises and struggles they face as they learn to design and evaluate emerging learning environments. As faculty exploring educational technologies and administrators working to support faculty, you are invited to participate in the discussion. Visit the blog: read the posts, share your insights, or ask a question.

Below is an excerpt from the Faculty Fellowship blog on “emerging learning environments” between Amy Garrett Dikkers and Brad Cohen.

Amy
The more time I spend thinking about my own faculty fellowship project (redesigning curriculum for a new learning space, specifically the active learning classroom) and attend Faculty Fellowship Program meetings, the more I think what we are really doing is delving into a new version of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

For example, I was first tech-driven in my redesign for my fellowship: “How can I use the affordances of the active learning classroom to enhance School and Society, an educational foundations course for initial teaching license students?” Now, as I am thinking about team-based learning, designing cooperative learning groups in 5s and 9s (easily afforded by the space), revamping projects to take advantage of Web 2.0 tools like wikis, blogs, and social networking sites, I realize that I am re-positioning my teaching and my students’ learning.

Perhaps taking the focus from technology-enhanced learning to “The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Goes Digital” is the way to go? What do you think?

Brad
Interesting idea! If there is anything distinctive about SOTETL (a new version - the scholarship of technology-enhanced teaching and learning), I suspect it is in the doing of it and the multiple perspectives, disciplines and organizationally-unique collaboration that marks the best of it. SOTETL may “require” it. When technology is in the mix, good scholarship draws on research in educational technology, in teaching and learning, and in the discipline of focus in the course. And, often, the development of the environment and its scholarly investigation are marked by collaboration between experts in these domains.

That your experience is marked by a widening reconsideration of the very foundations of your course strikes me as a particularly vivid instance of the often-cited observation that technology is a change agent. It’s less often noted that for it to really be a change agent, agents have to be open to making change!

You can visit and contribute to the blog by going to http://blog.lib.umn.edu/dmc/dmcfacultyfellows0809. If you are actively involved in leading institutional conversations about emerging learning environments and would like to join as a partner, please contact Kimerly Wilcox (wilco001@umn.edu) or Lauren Marsh (lauren@umn.edu).

Lauren Marsh and Kimerly Wilcox are senior educational technology consultants at the Office of Information Technology’s Digital Media Center.
**Center for Teaching and Learning**

**Multicultural Teaching and Learning Fellowships**
Up to six projects are supported each year through this fellowship program. Fellows receive a $2,500 grant and meet six times during the year for discussion and feedback on their projects.

For more information, visit [http://www.teaching.umn.edu](http://www.teaching.umn.edu).

**Early Career Series**
Faculty members may select a semester length or two-semester experience to extend their knowledge of best practices in teaching and course design. Programming includes Lunch with a Great Teacher, Creating Great Lecture-Based Courses, and an Academic Year Faculty Learning Community.

For more information, visit [http://www.teaching.umn.edu](http://www.teaching.umn.edu).

**Mid-Career Faculty Learning Community for Women**
Tenured faculty women are invited to join this community. Join us for discussions, reflection, learning, and collegiality. Our focus is to understand how the lens of gender informs our professional lives.

For more information, visit [http://www.teaching.umn.edu](http://www.teaching.umn.edu).

**This I Have Learned**
This learning community invites tenured faculty to share their core beliefs and stories about teaching through discussion, short essays, and other creative venues.

For more information and to pre-register, contact Jane O'Brien at o'brien093@umn.edu or 612-625-3885.

**Office of Information Technology’s Digital Media Center**

**Digital Teaching Workshop, Summer 2009**
Instructors develop skills and knowledge to integrate “21st Century Literacies” (e.g., media literacy, information literacy, social networking, online assessment) into teaching and learning over the course of a week-and-a-half in an intensive workshop taught in a blended format.

Register in April by contacting Cristina Lopez at clopez@umn.edu.

**Faculty Survey**
The Office of Information Technology's Digital Media Center (DMC) staff members, in consultation with University of Minnesota-Twin Cities constituents, have conducted an ongoing, longitudinal research project to help University faculty, staff, and administrators understand the expectations, experiences, preferences, and attitudes of University faculty members regarding digital technology. As part of this effort, the DMC has conducted a series of faculty technology surveys, with the next such survey to be delivered in spring 2009.

Reports from past surveys, along with survey instruments, are available at [http://dmc.umn.edu/surveys](http://dmc.umn.edu/surveys).

**Ongoing Programs for Faculty**

**The Myth and Power of the Front Row Smarty**

Many instructors believe that stronger students tend to sit in the front of the classroom, weaker students sit towards the back, and they assume that those seating choices simply reflect stronger and weaker students' preferences. However, what if the seat location itself contributed to stronger and weaker student performance? In their study of an introductory physics class for non-science majors, Perkins and Wieman come to the surprising conclusion that when students were randomly assigned seats, their seat locations appeared to have positive and adverse effects on student performance.

Perkins and Wieman conducted their study on 201 students who were from a diverse background of majors and ages; 43% were first-year, first-term students. The lectures for this physics class were highly interactive, with extensive use of peer instruction techniques and a personal response system (“clickers”). At the start of the course, students received random seat assignments; at the midterms, their initial seat locations were reversed so students sitting in the front were shifted to the back of the lecture hall and students in the back were placed in the front. The lecture hall had sloped seating and was equipped with a system that could both project PowerPoint slides as well as magnify in-class demonstrations that took place at the front of the room. Reading quizzes, class participation, homework, and exams determined students’ grades.

Perkins and Wieman discovered that students who had been initially sitting at the front had a disproportionate percentage of A’s (27%) when compared to those students who had been switched from the back of the room to the front (18%). The pattern for F’s likewise mirrored students’ initial seat locations: those students who had been switched from front to back had a lower percentage of F’s (2%) compared to those who had been switched from back to front (12%). Attendance and confidence levels about physics knowledge also reflected the initial seating arrangements; those who had been initially sitting in the front missed fewer classes and expressed more confidence about their knowledge of physics than those who had been initially seated in the back.

Considering that students had random seat assignments, thereby mixing stronger with weaker students, Perkins and Wieman’s findings are striking, especially considering that all class sessions contained active learning strategies that were meant to engage everyone, particularly those seated in the back of the lecture hall. While silent about possible reasons for this disparity in student performance, Perkins and Wieman’s study certainly raises interesting questions and calls for further research.

**Do Cheat Sheets Reduce Testing Anxiety?**

While most exams are not “open book,” instructors sometimes allow students to use “Crib Cards” – notes limited to a single note card or sheet of paper. Such cards are assumed to alleviate test-taking anxiety and allow students to focus less on rote memorization, and more on answering more conceptually-oriented questions that assess higher order cognitive skills.

Drawing on a sample size of 54 undergraduate students in two sections of an upper division psychology class, Dickson and Miller administered four multiple choice exams that contained both lower and higher order cognitive skills. On the first day of class, students filled out questionnaires that assessed initial perceptions of crib cards: how likely crib cards would be used; how likely they would improve grades on exams; how they would affect anxiety levels during exams; and, the degree to which they would be used in other classes. On the last day of class, students completed questionnaires that recorded crib card use during the term.

While the results of Dickson and Miller’s study were consistent with previous research – crib card use did not lead to higher exam scores – their study did provide insight into the assumptions that crib cards alleviated test-taking anxiety and enabled students to focus on higher order cognitive skills. Dickson and Miller learned that while nearly 80% of students had initially predicted using a crib card would decrease anxiety, only 40.5% said that it actually did. In addition, students’ inability to do well on questions that assessed both higher and lower order cognitive skills – despite crib card use – suggest that the cards did not support the assumption that they improve students’ ability to focus on the conceptually oriented questions.

The authors offer a few possible reasons for these results. First, crib cards likely contained information that students already knew and therefore did not help to enhance their performance on exams. Second, constructing the crib cards might have consumed valuable time that could have been spent studying for the exams, especially if total study time did not increase and study habits did not change.

Dickson and Miller conclude by suggesting additional areas of research, especially into providing students with advice about effective crib card construction and use, as well as analyzing crib card content to understand the process of how students study and use them.

Paul Ching is a teaching consultant and part of the Preparing Future Faculty staff at the Center for Teaching and Learning.