



The Joy Shechtman Mankoff Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL) at Connecticut College promotes engaged and effective teaching that cultivates significant student learning. The CTL fosters a campus culture that values a diversity of learning, teaching and disciplinary styles, welcomes honest discussion of teaching and learning, and encourages the scholarship of teaching and learning.

To achieve its mission, the CTL organizes programming that facilitates the exchange of ideas about teaching and learning; offers resources and support for new faculty, including programs that promote their smooth transition into the College community and their success in the areas of teaching, scholarship and service; creates both formal and informal sources of support for faculty teaching at all stages of their careers; and engages in efforts to improve teaching and learning at small liberal arts colleges on the regional and national level.



CONNECTICUT
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TEACHING & LEARNING AT CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

The Joy Shechtman Mankoff Center for Teaching & Learning NEWSLETTER

FALL 2012
VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1



Joe Schroeder talks about the myths and realities of multitasking at Camp Teach & Learn, May 2012

From the DIRECTOR

DEAR COLLEAGUES,

Welcome to the start of a new school year. The publication of our *CTL Newsletter* at the beginning of the year, rather than in May as in other years, allows us to both consider the CTL's past year and preview the upcoming semesters. After touching upon the core programs that the CTL currently runs, I will share with you a few of our newer initiatives related to intentional and evidence-informed teaching.

CLASS OF '57 TEACHING SEMINAR

Last year's "Class of '57 Teaching Seminar for Incoming Faculty" included 13 incoming and returning faculty members; we met ten times during the year to discuss a variety of teaching-related topics, as well as sponsored several more informal events. For the first time this year we offered the option of reading

student feedback forms together as a group. With the help of the Instructional Technology team we also incorporated a Moodle workshop immediately following our January syllabus workshop, allowing participants to more seamlessly incorporate technology in order to best meet their learning goals.

This year's Class of '57 Seminar, in its 14th year, has record participation, with more than 20 first-year and continuing faculty members who will take part in our once-a-month Friday meetings. For an insider's look at the Teaching Seminar, please read Ann Marie Davis's article about the activities of last year's seminar included in this issue of the newsletter (page 12).

TALKING TEACHING

"Talking Teaching" saw another banner year, with a dozen diverse discussions that averaged more than 23 attendees

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DEAR COLLEAGUES

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per event and involved almost 125 different faculty and staff members. We have included the highlights from last Fall's discussion on "Helicopter Parents" (page 13) and some insights from coaches based on our discussion last semester on the role of "competition in the classroom" (page 3). I want to thank all of our colleagues who served as discussants and regular participants in these conversations — without your ongoing support this series would not be as successful as it is. And, once again I want to thank MaryAnne Borrelli for her amazing ability to organize and successfully execute productive discussions again and again on such a wide variety of topics. Fall 2012 semester's topics are available now and I urge you to take time out of your busy day to enjoy a nourishing meal and conversation with our colleagues at a Talking Teaching event during the upcoming months.

CAMP TEACH & LEARN

May 2012's Camp Teach & Learn was full of engaging workshops, presentations, and discussions. Participants chose from a wide variety of book groups [including the second edition of Barbara

Gross Davis's *Tools for Teaching*, which is reviewed in this issue (page 5)] and workshops on such diverse topics as effective teaching with technology, foreign languages across the curriculum, teaching science in the liberal arts, athletics & academics, public health, and teaching writing effectively, to name a few. We also had two fascinating presentations by Joe Schroeder: one on sleep patterns of Connecticut College students (based on his and his students' own research) and the other on multitasking and its effect on learning. A record number of faculty and staff — more than 100 in all — participated in Camp Teach & Learn, and I want to thank all of the co-sponsors, session leaders, and participants who made this year's Camp Teach & Learn such a success.

OPEN CLASSROOMS

As part of our ongoing initiative to increase the visibility of our teaching and encourage more open discussion of effective teaching, last year 57 faculty members opened more than 180 classes to our colleagues. Dana Wright offers reflections on visiting her colleagues' classrooms through this program (page 16). While too few of us still actually venture into each other's classrooms for non-evaluative purposes, we continue to offer this program. New this semester will be a special week of open classrooms, where everyone who volunteers to open their classes during this week will invite colleagues to drop in unannounced and observe a class. Stay tuned for more information about this new program as the semester approaches. I want to thank Anne Bernhard for all of her hard work organizing this program.

THE CTL AND INTENTIONAL, EVIDENCE-INFORMED TEACHING

As part of the CTL's ongoing collaboration with Institutional Research and the Dean of the Faculty's Office, we continue to work with faculty and administrators to consider what we know about student learning and experiences at Connecticut College and how we can utilize that knowledge to inform faculty work, both in our classrooms and in the design of our curricula. We have tried

to incorporate evidence from multiple sources and on a variety of levels, including national research on student learning and experiences, Connecticut College's results on the Wabash National Study and NSSE, and research projects on our own campus, such as the CTL Supplemental Survey and the CTL Student Research Scholars Program.

THE CTL SUPPLEMENTAL SURVEY

This past year the CTL has continued its classroom-based research on student experiences in partnership with John Nugent in Institutional Research, both by hosting discussions between faculty members and students about teaching and learning and by continuing to offer the ever-evolving "Intellectual Challenge in the Classroom." This supplemental course survey is available to faculty members who are interested in a nuanced understanding of how students experience their classes. To date, more than 60 different faculty members from across the disciplines have utilized this survey in almost 150 courses, gathering information on more than 2,600 different student classroom experiences. If you are curious and have not seen a copy of the latest version of this CTL Supplemental Survey, please contact me and I will send you one. Later this semester we will have an event for faculty who have given the survey and would like to consider their results and for faculty interested in participating in the future.

CTL STUDENT RESEARCH SCHOLARS

We have continued campus-wide research into student experiences through the CTL Student Research Scholar Program. The first undergraduate students, Sarah Lamer '14 and Daniel Brown '14, supervised by Stuart Vyse in the Psychology Department, presented their findings from their year of research into intellectual challenge to a large group of faculty members and administrators this past December. In the Spring two new CTL Student Research Scholars, Jessica Schanzer '13 and Nora Loughry '13, worked with Stuart and started running focus groups; their findings will be shared later this year at a CTL event. For an article about the CTL Student Research

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Scholars please see the previous *CTL Newsletter*, volume 2, Spring 2011.

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE RESEARCH ON EFFECTIVE TEACHING

The newsletter you hold in your hands itself represents another aspect of our efforts to bring to light research about student learning and effective teaching. Thank you to Sufia Uddin for assuming the responsibility for this large undertaking. I hope the ideas shared within these pages, particularly the book reviews of literature about effective teaching and issues in higher education, will offer insights into more effective ways to undertake our collective work of educating our students here at the College. If you are interested in reading further, the CTL library has copies of the books that have been reviewed. Moreover, if a group of faculty is interested in reading one or more of these as a book group, the CTL has funds to support this endeavor. We also have a library full of additional books on teaching and a range of issues related to higher education. Please let me or Sufia Uddin know if you are interested in reviewing one of them for a future issue of the newsletter. Also please alert us to teaching experi-

ences that we could share with the College community through the newsletter.

EVIDENCE-INFORMED TEACHING AT CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

Because of the leadership of the Dean of the Faculty Office and its collaborations with Institutional Research and the CTL, Connecticut College has become a national leader in utilizing evidence to improve student learning. Most recently we have shared our initiatives at the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., at a workshop at the Wabash Center for Inquiry in the Liberal Arts, and at a keynote talk at the annual meeting of New England Deans. We are the lead institution for a three-year grant from the Teagle Foundation that looks at ways to take much of the data colleges have about student learning and experiences and use those data to improve teaching and student learning. As part of that grant, over the past two summers Connecticut College has helped host workshops for other colleges and universities with the goal of helping them use the data they have on their own campuses to improve teaching and learning. Allegheny College, Benning-

ton College, Colorado College, Illinois Wesleyan University, Wellesley College, and Westpoint (USMA) are a few of the schools that have sent teams of faculty and administrators to participate in these multiday workshops.

I want to again thank Anne Bernhard and Sufia Uddin who are currently serving as CTL Faculty Fellows, as mentors to our early-career faculty and dedicated members of the CTL leadership. And thanks to Joyce McDaniel, the Center's Administrative Assistant; without her hard work and dedication many CTL events would not be possible.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the ongoing support of Joy Shechtman Mankoff, the Gibney Trust, and the Class of '57, as well as a grant from the Teagle Foundation, without which much of our CTL programming would not be possible. Because of these donors' generosity, as well as the dedicated work of the faculty involved in leading and participating in CTL programming, critical consideration of student learning and faculty teaching is a key component in our lives here at Connecticut College.

Sincerely,
Michael

A Conversation with the Coaches ... About Coaching and Teaching, Learning and Competing

During a Talking Teaching conversation titled "Coaching as Teaching, Teaching as Coaching," and continuing after, Connecticut College coaches offered the following insights about connections between the playing field and the classroom.

Jim Butler (Men's Cross Country): Student athletes arrive with a passion for their sport. And, often, they cultivate that in their academics – it isn't there at first, but their self-understanding changes and the academic awareness comes. And when you ask them, "What makes you special?" gradually, they shift, from being an athlete to being a student, from being a lacrosse player to being a history major.

Jeff Bresnahan (Sailing): Because if our athletes are not succeeding in the classroom, then they are not succeeding in their sport. The first question we hear from parents is, "Can my child play athletics and do well in school?"

JJ Addison (Water Polo): For a coach, it is about building a team, which is a collective investment, and it is about individual excellence. Students' personal sacrifices and hard work lead them to be more invested in the team's success. And then, that shared ownership can draw an even greater investment from the student.

What are some concrete ways in which you do this with your teams?



Coaches and professors discuss strategies for improving student learning and success

Jim Ward (Men's Ice Hockey): I distribute a sheet of paper, with 1 through 28 down the side of the page. We ask the guys to rank each player in terms of abil-

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COACHES

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ity as a player and contribution to the success of the team. We then ask them to write why they ranked themselves where they did, and then the same for the top three and the bottom three. I collate this information, but I don't post it. This allows the coaching staff to see if the players have the same perspective as the coaching staff in terms of the role each player has within the team. We will meet individually two or three times during the year, and this sheet does allow me to provide some feedback as to how I view their role and how their teammates view their role. We do not post the results but it does encourage the guys to better understand how they can improve their position on the team.

Dave Cornell (Men's Lacrosse): In lacrosse, I ask every member of the team to rank every member of the team. Then those rankings are posted. It answers questions about why different players don't have playing time – it especially answers parents' questions. And I'm trying to establish a real-world experience of accountability. It matters what people think of your performance, especially when they depend on you to perform well.

Marc Benvenuti (Swimming): On the swim team, we have tried to get rid of the extrinsic carrots-and-sticks, shifting to intrinsic motivation. We want our swimmers to do well because it is important to them to do well. It's resulted in a very different dynamic on the team – there are no captains, no MVPs. Students race because it is worth doing. And this has led to a dramatic improvement in their performance. But then swimming has a very objective standard – the clock – by which students can assess their performance.

We need to balance feedback without judgment, on the one hand, and competition on the other – because what is life without competition? But the balance between these two is what makes participating in sports and academics rewarding.

But these statements can seem too

“lollypops and unicorns.” It is very important to understand that our goal as coaches is to foster competitiveness. On the swim team, we focus more on the process of learning, less on the outcome of winning, because we know that this will improve students' race times. We want the members of our team to be competing well.

What makes it so difficult to achieve this balance, to engage students athletically and academically?

Debbie Lavigne (Field Hockey): You also have to remember that there are also other pressures at work. For example, the athletes' gender can be very important. On a women's team, you may need to have a captain, so that someone steps forward and takes the lead and motivates the team. Women athletes may be so focused on being part of a team that it is difficult to cultivate individuality, particularly the kind of assertive individuality that is necessary for leadership. For men, that may not be an issue. You may have players who are highly motivated individuals, but who need to become more aware of the team and to invest in the team. And that is just one way in which different students may respond differently to the same opportunity.

Ann Sloan Devlin (Psychology; Ice Skating): And it is also often true that athletes are often stereotyped as lacking academically, as not having the ability to do well in their classes, especially the classes that are especially intricate or demanding. Yet these students often have the ability to do exceptionally well, if they are encouraged. And still, the stereotyping comes very easily.

Jeff Bresnahan: If you want to avoid stereotyping, you have to look at how the student self-identifies. We need to acknowledge that the stereotyping occurs and ask why, and ask why students are willing to buy into an expectation that their performance will be limited – in athletics and in academics.

Jim Butler: Different sports require different skill sets and also different mindsets. Sports are different just as majors are different. But just as sports are typecast – especially the “helmet

sports” – so also are the majors. We have to remember that our students are individuals, and that they are individuals who are here for an education, for the rest of their lives.

So, then, what is it that helps students to do more? to invest more?

Marc Benvenuti: You have to think about what it is that causes or helps students to do more, to invest more. Trust is a key point in the coach-player relationship. This is the motivation piece, because your own expertise as a coach only takes the team so far. Discipline and structure are key, but then you have to have trust, so that players can see that you are asking them to do things that will improve their performance.

Dave Cornell: Think about how to encourage students to think about their own performance and about the larger team or class. In a class, you could divide them up into groups and then tell them ... here is an exercise or an exam; if you work on it as individuals, you will all get the grade earned by the weakest exam. But, if you work on it as a team, you will get at least a B- and you may get much higher if you collaborate well. Give them the choice to work as individuals or to succeed as a team, and then have them think about the choice that they make.

Jeff Bresnahan: We do – we have to – respect our players as student-athletes. We understand that they are taking five classes, one of which is their team sport.

So, in our classroom teaching, we need to ask whether we are thinking about both the individual student and the class as a whole, as we design and build our courses?

JJ Addison: For a coach, we can show – with video, for example – an athlete or team, performing at a higher level, the task or skill that the team is working on. How do you replicate this in a classroom? Perhaps, similarly, you could show the students what their hard work can produce. It might be a theory tested and proven, or a completed work of art, or finished research project. — *MaryAnne Borrelli, Government Department*

From the CTL BOOKSHELVES

Tools for Teaching

Barbara Gross Davis. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009. 608 pages. ISBN-10: 0787965677. \$52.

The updated edition of this best-selling book on teaching covers a wide range of topics in an easy, accessible style, full of practical, creative ideas and effective strategies to use in your classes. Geared toward faculty in any discipline, this book is designed for faculty at any stage in their career. The book is useful not only for new ideas, but for reinforcing pedagogies that we already know but often forget. Davis touches upon topics ranging from student motivation to alternatives and supplements to lectures and discussions, from teaching today's students to teaching outside the classroom. The writing is clear and direct, and the presentation of topics allows easy skimming and focusing on just the parts that interest you. In this review, I highlight a few of the sections that I found particularly useful, but everyone will benefit from something in this encyclopedic book.

Looking over the first section of the book on course design, I was immediately hooked. This section covers just about all the nuts and bolts of designing a course and general strategies to help the course run smoothly. It's a great resource for both new and experienced instructors. I found it very useful to remind myself about the importance of specific items in a syllabus and general strategies for course design. This section also provided some excellent prompts for thinking about your course in new ways. For instance, she suggests that you think beyond the semester. What do you want your students to say about the value of your class when they graduate? This can help you to focus on

the "big ideas." One of the great suggestions she offers for the course design stage is use of a concept map to structure ideas and concepts. The concept map helps setting the limits of content without sacrificing learning outcomes.

In addition to big ideas, Davis also offers lots of clever gimmicks and tricks to facilitate running your course. In every section, I found useful suggestions and reminders that I was eager to try. For example, in her section about running discussions, she suggests using a system of tokens to encourage more even class participation. I tried it in my seminar class of 12 students, giving each of them two tokens (I used playing cards) and informed the students that each time they contributed to the discussion they played one of their cards with the goal of getting rid of both cards before the end of the discussion. The students seemed to really like the idea, since they could decide when to play their cards. If this seems too "gimmicky" for your taste, she offers more serious ideas for how to run successful group work, strategies for writing letters of recommendation, creative writing assignments, and suggestions for how to best use student feedback to improve your teaching. She has special sections on things to do on the last days of class, such as having students reflect on the class experiences by asking them a series of questions. My favorite was "Do you think there are responsibilities that come with the knowledge you have gained? If so, what are they?"

Since I can't cover the entire volume in this short review, I have highlighted some of my favorite suggestions below.

- To address academic honesty on student papers, Davis suggests that you have students keep a research journal or log indicating websites visited

and search words used, databases they have searched, meetings with librarians, etc.

- To provide incentives for attendance and participation, announce that at the end of the term you will ask each student to name 2-3 students whose class participation most contributed to their learning, and that students will receive credit for being nominated.
- As a homework assignment, have students write out several questions they hope to answer during the next class. During class, they check off questions as they are answered and add new ones. They then turn this in at the end of class for a snapshot of what they got out of class.
- As an alternative to a mid-semester evaluation, give each student three postcards that they can mail to you anytime during the term with feedback about the class.
- To encourage more effective group work, have students agree on expectations for group members and the consequences for violating them.

If you like any of these ideas, there are many more in the book, and I

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bright ideas

I gave the students the opportunity to set their own paper deadlines. They looked at their calendars and picked the dates that fit best.

— David Jaffe

BOOKSHELVES

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strongly suggest that you get a copy for your library. The real value of this book is that you don't have to read it from cover to cover to get something useful. I see it as a book to use more as a reference, to read about a specific aspect of teaching and incorporate one or two suggestions into your courses each semester. It is a book that I plan to return to frequently to refresh my teaching, get new ideas for assignments, make my classes more engaging, and be a more intentional, reflective teacher. — *Anne Bernhard, Biology Department*

Team-Based Learning: A Transformative Use of Small Groups in College Teaching

Larry K. Michaelsen, Arletta Baumann Knight, and L. Dee Fink, editors.
Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2004. 304 pages.
ISBN-978 1579220860. \$24.95.

Team-Based Learning provides theoretical frameworks and practical advice for implementing semester-long small-group learning in college classrooms. The book is an excellent resource for faculty who are already using collaborative learning activities and who may be interested in developing even more engaged peer interactions and more extensive group projects.

The book is organized into three sections. Part I differentiates team-based learning (TBL) from other collaborative learning techniques and offers helpful TBL strategies. Part II details the experiences of professors using TBL in a wide variety of teaching scenarios, including specific disciplines, large courses, and diverse student collectivities. Part III mostly consists of a rich appendix that supports Part I with examples of TBL logistics, from a useful FAQ to models for grading and peer assessment forms.

The authors define TBL as “a particular instructional strategy that is designed to (a) support the development of high performance learning teams and (b) provide opportunities for these teams

to engage in significant learning tasks” (9). While other small-group learning strategies might pair students in temporary small groups (as in the “discuss this question with your neighbor” activity), TBL establishes stable teams of students who work together throughout the semester. This long-term team structure, Fink argues, fosters trust among teammates and commitment to common team goals (12). As a result, these teams may work together more effectively and may produce at a higher intellectual level than less invested groups of students. Much of this early discussion in the book participates in current debates within the scholarship of teaching and learning and may appeal to pedagogy wonks (like myself); the casual reader could productively skip to Chapters 2 and 3.

According to the authors, effective TBL requires devoting substantial in-class time to group work and developing assignments that require teams to make a choice. How should interested faculty go about designing a course around TBL principles? How can we re-think independent small-group activities and transform them into semester-long team projects? In considering these and other practical questions, Chapters 2 and 3 provide the most useful information in the book. Chapter 2 addresses potential faculty concerns with the TBL approach and offers practical strategies for organizing a TBL course for the first time. Written by Larry K. Michaelsen, who has been developing and experimenting with TBL methods since the late 1970s, this chapter considers such issues as ensuring fairness in group work and grading, fostering individual accountability, and what to do on the first day of a TBL class. In addition, Michaelsen insists that effective group formation is crucial in the success of TBL courses. Convinced of this point, I was surprised to find that the book merely outlines, rather than details, these procedures. Fortunately, faculty can find step-by-

step guidelines for forming effective groups on the website associated with the book (www.teambasedlearning.org). Chapter 3 presents specific advice on the challenging task of creating “significant” team projects. Michaelsen and Knight argue that effective assignments require teams to use course concepts to make a decision, solve a problem, or defend a unique point of view. Particularly helpful is a list outlining

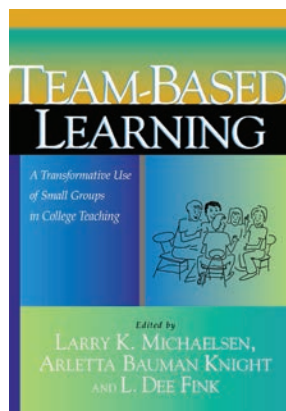
the characteristics of good team assignments (55).

While providing in-depth resources for interested faculty, this book does advance a particular point of view on TBL. The authors suggest that TBL activities should be very specifically sequenced and used in particular combinations. Their method also demands constant in-class quizzing.

While a strict, sequenced approach may be effective in some classroom settings, these inflexible practices seem unwieldy and may be less useful for humanities and higher-level science courses requiring students to interpret ambiguous texts or data and grapple with multiple, potentially contradictory ideas. The authors' leanings toward content-heavy science and business courses are explicitly reflected in Part II. This section describes faculty experiences using TBL in different disciplines and settings, but neither humanities nor hypothesis- and research-based science courses were represented here.

Team-Based Learning will be a useful source for faculty concerned with creating meaningful in-class peer interactions and developing long-term, group-based projects. If you can overlook the authors' strict approach and disciplinary bias, you might find that its straight-forward, hands-on practical advice make it an important active learning resource in your teaching library.

Based on the ideas in this book, I'm currently implementing TBL strategies in my Introduction to the History of Art II survey courses this semester. This survey covers more than 600 years of



art history and, with two sections that include 40 students each, grading can be substantial. I'm experimenting with teams as a means of facilitating students' active engagement with this broad range of material, and I'm hoping that the team structure will help me provide better, faster, and more efficient feedback.

I divided students into teams on the second day of class, using methods I learned from the book's website. With the goal of distributing students with key skills throughout the teams, I developed a series of questions to assess student experiences with the discipline, from "Have you taken Introduction to the History of Art I?" to "Do you have posters hanging on your dorm room wall?" According to their answers, students lined up around the room and counted off to form their teams. This quick, transparent method seems to have created groups with varied skill sets, majors, grade levels, and personal experiences with art.

Teams work together in class in two ways: on a daily basis, teams analyze and assess readings and course concepts, and in bi-monthly labs, teams interact with actual art objects from the College's Wetmore Print Collection. So far, organizing students into teams has yielded lively peer discussions in class—though perhaps no livelier than using other collaborative learning techniques. For me, the key benefit is that teams have made it possible for me to provide in-depth, useful, timely feedback tailored to each group's needs. Individualized attention can be a challenge during a semester with 80 students, but with the team structure, I can spend time working with each group during class discussions as well as during labs, targeting the specific issues they present and responding to their work. Of course, this means that, in the moment, I have to work quickly to identify and point out successes or issues with each team and manage my time to make sure that I equally address each small group. Despite these challenges, I think teams have made it easier for me to have meaningful interactions with students.

Some readers may be concerned

that teams could make coursework too easy; but I have observed that, instead, working in groups has led students to foreground the challenges of course material early in the semester. Through dialogue and debate, students have already identified key problems within the discipline as well as the complexities of disciplinary practices. In addition, at the midpoint of the semester, lab projects in particular continue to be difficult for students; they are productively struggling to develop the skills they will need for their final project. In the second half of the semester, I am curious to see whether teamwork provides opportunities for resolving their questions about the discipline and expanding their comfort with the ambiguities they have raised. In addition, I look forward to assessing how well teamwork and team assignments have contributed to students' progress toward the course learning goals. —
Karen Gonzalez Rice, Art History and Architectural Studies Department

Teaching What You Don't Know

Therese Huston. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009. 320 Pages. ISBN-10: 0674035801. \$26.50.

Whether at a large research institution or a small liberal arts college, one common experience of most college instructors is that they have to teach beyond their expertise. The exceptions are senior scholars at research institutions who teach one or two courses a year for graduate students and advanced undergraduates. The rest of us find ourselves stretching beyond our expertise, says Huston.

Huston, who has a Ph.D in Cognitive Psychology and is the Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Seattle University, writes an engaging book on the challenge of teaching outside our comfort zone. Huston rightly acknowledges that we are increasingly

asked to teach outside our expertise and newly minted Ph.D's in particular face this challenge. The book goes on to categorize those "content novices" into three groups. They are the "Poised and Confident," "Undecided but Untroubled," and the "Strained and Anxious" groups. She argues if you are among the "Strained and Anxious," your experience and that of your students is likely to be a disaster. The purpose of Huston's book is to help "content novices" who are members of the "Strained and Anxious" group become members of the "Undecided but Untroubled," if not "Poised and Confident," group.

The book is filled with great strategies and detailed explanations about how and why these strategies work. Certainly, some of the strategies are obvious, such as reading the course material before the course begins. However, Huston provides some other insights, such as organizing your course to boost your confidence and students' confidence in you by starting the course with material you know best. First impressions mean everything. If you make a great first impression with your students, they are more likely to see you as the expert. This last point leads to the issue of credibility in the classroom which Huston turns to in Chapter Four.

Huston raises some critical issues about maintaining credibility in the classroom. Here Huston gives concrete advice on ways faculty may effectively respond to challenges. Huston acknowl-

edges the troubling and unique challenges faculty of color and women face in the classroom. From interviews Huston conducted with faculty and administrators of color we learn what others have done to maintain their authority and credibility in the classroom. For example, she interviews Beverly Daniel Tatum, an African-American professor of clinical psychol-

ogy, author of *"Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? A*

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BOOKSHELVES

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Psychologist Explains the Development of Racial Identity and the President of Spelman College who relays the story of when she was a new assistant professor teaching a course titled “Psychology of Racism” at Westfield State College. Students assumed she was biased because she was African-American. They assumed that all of her material for the course must be biased. Eventually, Tatum decided to have students collect data on their own by having them visit and make observations of supermarkets, libraries, and other facilities in predominantly white and predominantly black neighborhoods. Tatum found that when students discovered for themselves the way racism works in society, they were more willing to acknowledge and engage the theories about those behaviors. This course became so popular that Tatum had to eventually offer it three times per year. In this example, Tatum was teaching in her expertise but students challenged her credibility. The book is useful for looking not only at teaching outside of one’s expertise but also teaching students you don’t understand. Huston gives detailed instructions of activities to do in class that push students to deep learning even when we are not teaching in our expertise.

When we are teaching material that is new to us, we often don’t have all the answers. Huston provides strategies for dealing with questions you just cannot answer. What I appreciate about her strategies is that they are not one-size-fits-all answers. She acknowledges that for a new, young female tenure-track professor the challenges are very different from a seasoned and tenured professor.

The last chapter of the book is advice for administrators. In short, Huston found that good faculty leave their jobs because they feel the job leaves no space for their personal life and as hard as they try, they feel they cannot succeed. Another reason faculty leave is the problem of poor leadership. So Huston encourages deans and provosts to provide training to chairs of departments because

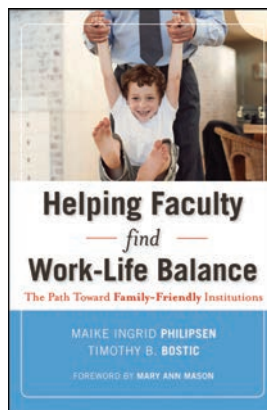
it is here where the support for a new scholar and teacher must be established. Here again she provides concrete actions chairs must take to support junior faculty and faculty of color.

If I were to identify any shortfalls in this book, I would say it is the ambiguous notion of teaching outside one’s expertise. I think Huston should survey those she interviewed to ask them how do they define teaching outside of one’s expertise. Perhaps teaching outside one’s area is defined as teaching general education courses regardless of your discipline, such as a course titled “The Rise of Western Civilization,” where the college demands science professors teach literature. Or maybe it is teaching a general survey course in your discipline. Maybe how we define what is outside our expertise has more to do with our comfort level with what we teach and how much support we get from our departments to do that kind of teaching. Whatever the answer, I’m sure it would stir lots of lively discussion and maybe even some fruitful outcomes. This is a great book for chairs, new faculty, faculty of color, and deans. — *Sufia M. Uddin, Religious Studies Department*

Helping Faculty Find Work-Life Balance

Maike Ingrid Phillipson and Timothy B. Bostic. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010. 240 pages. ISBN-10:0470540958. \$42.

Maike Ingrid Phillipson and Timothy B. Bostic introduce *Helping Faculty Find Work-Life Balance* with brief statements from three pseudonymous faculty, all suggesting what the third states overtly: “I would be hard-pressed to name more than a handful of people in my field ... who have thriving personal lives outside of the field.” The authors call such testimony “alarming” — as well they should if those statements are true — and this book is dedicated to



bright ideas

I grade all papers on screen. It’s faster and allows me to provide more commentary. It does take some willingness to sit in front of the monitor.

— *Anonymous*

the idea that “a system of higher education that prides itself on leading the world can and must do better” (xvii), especially because work-life balance issues, while presenting particular challenges to women and to junior faculty, affect all faculty at all stages of their careers. Combining quantitative and qualitative research, the book describes the ways in which faculty are affected by the attempt to meet work-life challenges successfully, their coping strategies, and the ways academic institutions can help faculty combine professional and personal lives to the benefit of both the institution and themselves.

The authors have looked at the personal experiences of faculty at public and private schools, research intensive schools, liberal arts institutions and a community college, and they describe

both expensive and low-cost solutions to the problems of work-life balance. Although their research seems a little light on institutions such as ours (Williams is the only cited school similar to ours), the issues they discuss and the institutional approaches to these issues are relevant and many, in fact, have been addressed by this college as well. Nonetheless,

this book may provide some useful information for faculty and administra-

tors at Connecticut College who are attempting to help faculty lead productive and fulfilling professional lives without sacrificing their personal lives in the process.

The first three chapters delineate challenges tenured and tenure-track faculty — and particularly junior faculty and women — face as they attempt to create satisfying and productive careers while meeting the demands of personal lives: life partnerships and dual careers, unexpected illness, parenting, and sometimes the care of aging parents. Within these chapters the authors cite examples of the choices between family and work that are choices “female tenure track faculty are asked to make ... [that] their male counterparts hardly ever have to make” (10) but point out that their research shows “that men are beginning to struggle with the incompatibility between academe and personal commitments” (11) as well. Arguing in these chapters that as productivity standards at most institutions have been “ratcheted up ... most junior faculty end up with less time to spend on personal pursuits than their senior colleagues,” an ironic tendency in that “it is typically the earlier years in a career during which people build partnerships and families ... a time when they can least afford it” (13). Along with identifying exemplary institutions and their policies, each of these chapters ends with a set of recommendations, e.g., stopping the tenure clock in cases of childbirth or adoption, or caring for family members for medical reasons, flexible work arrangements, and part-time options for tenure-track faculty. It is gratifying to note that all of these have been addressed or have begun to be addressed here at Conn.

The final two chapters concentrate on the factors that help faculty to thrive personally and professionally, summarize findings and provide additional recommendations, and three appendices provide lists of resources, readings and helpful websites along with details of the authors’ research. Many of the beneficial elements cited, as noted earlier, are already in

place at Connecticut College: a web of supportive colleagues and friends, “relatively sane productivity expectations” (109), scheduling that takes into account the needs of dual career couples and parents (one thinks of the family-friendly calendar we’ve recently approved), allowing children to be brought to the office from time to time, and stopping the tenure clock when parental or family leave is approved. Even a small boon, such as providing child care at faculty meetings, goes some way to support faculty in maintaining work-life balance and underscores “the central message of the book: institutional renewal to support faculty thriving is paramount” (110).

The College has progressed significantly from the days when local daycare possibilities were practically nonexistent, when the College’s exemplary Children’s School had very limited hours, and when the tenure clock moved inexorably forward, no matter what the faculty member’s circumstances. Nonetheless, this book provides useful information for even further progress. — *Theresa Ammirati, Dean of Studies*

Effective Grading

Barbara Walvoord and Virginia Johnson Anderson. Jossey-Bass, Second edition, 2009. 272 pages. ISBN-10: 0470502150. \$40.

This book helps teachers make grading fair and time-efficient. The emphasis of the book is to construct the syllabus and the assignments in a way that makes grading a less strenuous task. According to the authors grading should accomplish several goals. It should enhance student learning and provide an assessment of the teaching and department standards. Grading is more than a letter grade. A grade should reflect a fair evaluation of student work and is a means of communicating student learning to the

students and others including faculty, potential employers, and graduate schools. The grade should motivate the student and reflect both student and faculty teaching taken as a whole.

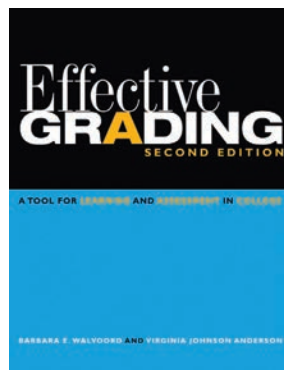
How can one make grading efficient? How do I motivate the students? What should I tell students who ask me what they need to do to get an “A”? How should I establish standards for the student’s work? How can I fairly grade the students who are diverse in their skills? How can I effectively communicate to the student with feedback and guide student learning? While trying to help students achieve learning goals, the instructor must also ask, how can I handle the workload and make the grading process time efficient?

The authors argue that well-constructed assignments will lead to efficient grading. In constructing an assignment convey the learning goals clearly using concrete words such as “define,” “argue,” “solve” and “create,” and avoid vague or weak words such as “know,” “understand” and “exposed to.” The better assignments ask students to describe what they learned, to solve problems by doing research, make ethical choices, and test their worldview or to nurture good habits of the mind. Thus, students are pushed to take a position or develop an argument. To make the assignments interesting to students, allow them to collaborate and make each student responsible for one part of the assignment.

Once the assignments and tests are carefully and precisely created, the next step is to create a skeleton of the course. “Coverage-centered courses” often fail according to Walvoord and Anderson. Instead, assignment-based courses should be developed. In the assignment-based approach, a course can still have lectures covering the foundational knowledge

and textbooks can be used. Alternatively, the students could receive the foundational information by listening

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BOOKSHELVES

continued from page 9

to videotaped or prerecorded lectures before coming to class. During class, students will answer questions from their reading material, work on problem sets, critique primary journal articles, and engage in online discussions. The “assignment-centered approach” enhances evaluation, analysis, application and synthesis, and produces “self-directing” learners.

The next step for the instructor is to evaluate the course load and feasibility. Doing partial assignments building up to a paper/lab report followed by 1 paper/lab report is better than getting 10 average papers/lab reports. When designing a course, you can analyze what students will need to learn and how students will learn concepts and reconsider the class time.

On the first day of class, you can ask students to write down what they want to learn (goals) before handing the syllabus to them. You can see how your goals for the course match with their goals. You can meet the students individually to clarify the goals. You can ask the students about their goals later in the term and check on any problems they faced achieving those goals.

Proper communication with students about assignments, providing rubrics and checklists are ways to get better completed projects. To make grading more time efficient for an essay/lab report, teachers could use strategies such as making students submit a checklist of what they did, addressing the fundamental concerns first, not extensively marking grammar and punctuation, not wasting time for careless student work, saving comments only for the teachable moments, commenting without grades, spending more time guiding rather than grading, using as many grade levels as you need (pass/fail, check, check+, check-, or A-F), limiting the basis of grading, asking students to organize their work and delegating the work to students such as checking the reference formats in papers. The students can be encouraged to self-record their class

participation based on class interaction for that particular day, rather than relying on the instructor’s impression. It will be difficult to give students feedback on each and every paper. So, instead you can type up some generic comments, which could be given to the student to fix one particular mistake. It is good to keep a grading log to check your efficiency and the time you spent for grading. Get organized and use spreadsheets for grading. You can refer to this book for great grading rubrics in different fields.

The authors say that it is important to teach what you will be testing and at the same time test what you have been teaching. Wolvoord and Anderson also point out that by doing so, the teachers could avoid curving grades, which could be harmful to learning and also cause grade inflation. Grading is not only a part of teaching for teachers but also a part of learning for students. By providing constructive criticism about their strengths and weaknesses with their grade, students actually can learn.

I enjoyed reading this book. It is a wealth of information about course development and guides you through developing rubrics for grading assignments. I recommend the book to anyone frustrated with the grading process. — *Sardha Suriyapperuma, Botany Department*

Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses

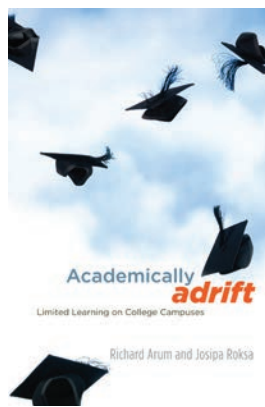
Richard Arum & Josipa Roska. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011. 259 pages. ISBN-10: 0-226-02856-9. \$25.

Since many undergraduate professors spend much of their time in introductory courses with first- and second-year students, this book deserves their attention as much for the disturbing data it provides as for the challenging suggestions it offers. The authors have joined the growing,

and sometimes antagonistic, conversation about whether higher education is actually doing what it purports to do. Although it is not their particular focus, their analysis could also be taken as supporting the chorus of those doubting whether collegiate education, given its evident failings, is worth the price.

At the center of Arum and Roska’s investigation is a cohort of 2,322 students at a relatively representative sample of institutions of higher education in the U.S. The central question that they want to answer is whether and to what extent students in their first two years of college develop their capacities for critical thinking and complex reasoning—goals that appear very frequently in many institutional mission statements and general education rationales. Their primary research tool is the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), which was given, along with a short survey, to their sample population at the beginning of their first semester of college in the Fall of 2005 and again at the end of their second year in the Spring of 2007. In brief, the CLA consists of “a performance task and two analytical writing tasks (i.e., “to make an argument and to break an argument”) which were designed to assess “critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem solving and writing” (21). The authors provide more detail about their procedures and results in a methodological appendix of more than 60 pages.

Arum and Roska’s methods and the claims they support have been disputed, notably by Alexander Astin in the February 14, 2011, issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. But even if they have to be severely discounted, their conclusions should be deeply troubling to any undergraduate teacher. Their most provocative finding is that “at least 45 percent of students in our sample did not demonstrate any statistically significant improvement in CLA performance during the first two



years of college” (121). When digging deeper for the underlying causes of that dispiriting information, they use supplementary data from surveys like the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the National Study of Student Learning (NSSL), and the ongoing work of the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College.

Also among Arum and Roska’s findings is that a high percentage of students see college as primarily an arena for social networking and leisure pursuits rather than academic work. Consequently, they become adept at “the art of college management,” including finding those courses that make the fewest demands on them. As a result, only 50% of the sample reported having taken a single course in the previous semester that required at least 20 pages of writing and one-third did not have a single course that required even 40 pages a week of reading (71).

Some flickers of light, however, can be discerned in the gloomy mass of data. The variability in outcomes on the CLA indicates that institutions that create a “culture of learning” can make a substantial contribution to improving student learning. At base, the authors identify two fundamental practices. Faculty need to set and uphold high expectations (93, 119, 129) and students need to spend more time studying alone (100, 135). But Arum and Roska are relatively pessimistic about the ability of institutions to reform themselves. They see too many entrenched interests and incentives that work against developing robust cultures of learning. In fact, they are even pessimistic about the ability of institutions of higher education to assess their own educational efforts. Perhaps their most controversial move is their endorsement of nationwide externally mandated accountability systems for U.S. higher education (137, 142).

Whether one endorses its methodology and accepts specific prescriptions or not, this book is good to think with for anyone involved in teaching undergraduates. — *Eugene V. Gallagher, Religious Studies Department*

PUZZLES, PIZZA AND EARPLUGS: *Inside Finals Week at the Library*

IT’S A FAMILIAR SIGHT for anyone who visits Connecticut College’s libraries during finals week: every seat occupied by students studying for exams, into the small hours of the morning. At the end of each semester, Shain Library stays open all night for several nights to accommodate the high demand for study space. In the past, we’ve even occasionally observed students setting up tents and camping out in the building. Last fall, librarians at Shain decided to go one better by offering stressed-out students a few extra ways to relax and recharge during the exam period.

Other academic libraries have experimented with offering study breaks, stress-relieving activities, free coffee and snacks, and even toys and games. A growing number of academic libraries, including the libraries at the University of Connecticut and MIT, have even started bringing in trained service dogs for some free “pet therapy.” Inspired by these reports, we tried a few special finals activities of our own. Though we didn’t bring in a therapy dog (this time, anyway), we got such a positive response from students that we’re already planning to try it again. To quote a representative comment from a student during finals week: “The library rocks!”

The finals week initiatives started small. We set out disposable earplugs at the reference and circulation desks for anyone who wanted to screen out noise and distractions on the busier floors (“Oh my God, you’ve saved my life!” a student exclaimed as she picked up a set of earplugs). A giant crossword puzzle went up on a wall on the lower level of the building, with a book-length list of clues on a table next to it.

We also set up jigsaw puzzles at a small table opposite the Shain reference desk. We weren’t sure what the response would be, but the puzzles proved very popular; each of the four puzzles we brought out was done twice, and we’ve had requests to make the

puzzles a regular feature. And we held several study breaks in the Blue Camel Café area, featuring pizza and cookies for any students present in the building for as long as the food lasted. At one of the pizza study breaks, one tired freshman was overheard remarking to another, “This library is so much nicer than what we had in high school.”

Finals week is always a stressful time, particularly for new students studying for their first set of college exams. Jigsaw puzzles, crosswords, and free pizza might seem like unusual things to have in a library, but by offering them in the place where so many Connecticut College students do their pre-exam studying, we strove to make the experience a little less exhausting and a lot friendlier. To judge by all the positive comments we got, we succeeded in that goal. We’re very much looking forward to planning our next round of finals week de-stressing measures. — *Amanda Watson, Research and Instruction Librarian, Shain Library*

Do you have suggestions for something we could do to make finals week better or to help students study? Contact Carrie Kent, Director of Research Support and Instruction, at extension 2444 or ckent@conncoll.edu.

bright ideas

I ask the students to come up with their own homework assignments for my Russian language course.

— *Petko Ivanov*

Class of '57 TEACHING SEMINAR

THE CLASS OF '57 Teaching Seminar for Incoming Faculty (formerly known as the Johnson Seminar) is a year-long, monthly series of meetings wherein new members of the College faculty engage in conversations about more effective teaching and learning at Connecticut College. The Teaching Seminar's format emphasizes a sharing of personal experiences, challenges and successes in the classroom in combination with discussions about the latest research on effective teaching, all with an aim of improving faculty teaching and student learning experiences at the College.

Participating members for the past 2011-12 academic year included Terry-Ann Craigie (Economics), Karen Gonzalez Rice (Art History), David Jaffe (Theater), Ross Morin (Film Studies), Erin Eckhold Sassin (Art History), and Mark Seto (Music). The seminar was also coordinated by members of the Organizing Committee, which included Anne Bernhard (Biology), Christine Chung (Computer Science), Ann Marie Davis (History), Michael Reder (CTL), Jennifer Rudolph (Hispanic Studies),

Tanya Schneider (Chemistry), and Sufia Uddin (Religious Studies).

The seminar kicked off in late August 2011, a week before classes began. The topic of our first meeting was "Teaching and Learning Cultures at Connecticut College." This discussion was immediately followed by a workshop on syllabus composition during which participants exchanged drafts of their own syllabi. Faculty also shared their knowledge about useful resources and upcoming CTL-sponsored opportunities such as open classrooms, Talking Teaching seminars, and the annual Camp Teach & Learn at the end of the Spring semester. The participants also selected the topics for the future meetings. After breaking for winter vacation, the CTL and Information Services held a two-part syllabus and Moodle workshop (facilitated by Instructional Technology Director Chris Penniman and Instructional Designer/Developer Diane Creede) to help new and returning participants prepare for the Spring semester.

At our early February 2012 meeting we discussed strategies for

encouraging and responding to student writing. In March our efforts focused on the challenges of "Creating an Inclusive Classroom." Connecticut College Trustee Frank Tuitt '87, the associate provost for multicultural excellence at the University of Denver and an expert on race and higher education, facilitated a discussion on "the opportunities and challenges" of engaging students with diverse backgrounds, identities, and levels of preparation. The topic of our final meeting of the year was "Balancing Teaching, Service, Research, & Life." As part of that workshop Dean of the Faculty Roger Brooks fielded questions and provided suggestions for dealing with the challenges faced by untenured faculty. Based on the topics the 2011-12 faculty participants chose, the Teaching Seminar explored issues of (and studies on) student motivation at Connecticut College; national and Connecticut College-specific Wabash Survey results; effective grading practices; making the most of student evaluations and feedback; and teaching different types and levels of classes.

When I asked 2011-12 participating members about their experience in the Class of '57 Seminar, one member commented that it became a useful "space for asking stupid questions (which often turn out to be not so stupid), a space for figuring out what it means, at this particular institution, to be a good colleague, a good teacher, a good researcher." Another participant added that "having participated during my first year at Connecticut College and now serving on the Organizing Committee, I find that the community that forms is tremendously valuable. The workshop gives us the time and opportunity to discuss matters important to new faculty as well as specific pedagogical topics that we address each month." — *Ann Marie L. Davis, History Department*



Class of '57 Seminar discusses "Balancing Teaching, Research, Service & Life" with Dean Roger Brooks.

Talking Teaching Notes: HELICOPTER PARENTS AND HOTHOUSE STUDENTS

THE PHENOMENON OF “helicopter parents” was the topic of a CTL Talking Teaching seminar in November 2011. Faculty members and College counselors discussed close parent-child relationships, and their impact on teaching and learning at Connecticut College.

Popular parenting philosophies since the 1980s have stressed encouragement and comfort, often to the exclusion of challenge; defined well-being as being “better than everyone else”; and inadvertently fostered insecurity by providing endless praise.

But the discussants noted that not all parents subscribe to these philoso-

phies, nor are they necessarily supportive. Faculty must take into account the shifting demographics of today’s college students, assessing their students’ resources and skills individually.

Educators also need to be mindful of their students’ previous educational experiences. High-stakes testing has made education an alienating experience for many students. Furthermore, parents may set high expectations for educators, and intervene on their children’s behalf when they believe those expectations are not met — i.e., when affirmation is not forthcoming — thus imbuing a distrust in “the system” in their children.

The challenge for faculty is providing the proper level of support for students, so that they enable learning and growth without the “culture of affirmation” in which some students have been raised.

Discussants listed a number of actions they have found helpful in responding to students’ expectations of affirmation and parents’ expectations of close contact. These included the following:

- **Provide peer reviews.** This can help students learn to accept criticism as the faculty member shares

Connecticut College faculty and administrators were joined by deans from other New England small colleges for this special Talking Teaching session.

the “parent role” with other critics.

- **Distinguish between diagnostic and evaluative assignments.** Show students how to use diagnostic assignments to perform well on evaluative assignments.
- **Explicitly state and model how students can wrestle with ambiguity.** Many students in counseling are anxious about their performance or are accustomed to being micro-managed. If the faculty member acknowledges that the course requires imagination and judgment, students can be liberated to think more creatively, especially if there are clear standards for evaluation.
- **Name student mistakes and show them how to cope with their errors.** Many students have no idea how to “cure themselves,” having experienced failure only as ending opportunities, instead of stimulating problem solving.
- **Meet parents at Fall Weekend and other formal events.** This can provide considerable insight.
- **Structure office hours** to create opportunities to talk and build a faculty-student connection, while avoiding the extreme of over-consultation.
- **Alert students to the stresses that will arise in your course.** Put this information on the syllabus and be explicit — for example, state the amount of time that assignments will require. Deans, meanwhile, can educate students and parents about the stresses of the semester and academic year by sending regular emails, with FAQs and a continuing message that students need to take responsibility for their actions and educations.

■

The challenge for faculty is providing the proper level of support for students, so that they enable learning and growth without the “culture of affirmation” in which some students have been raised.

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Reflections from some of our **AWARD-WINNING TEACHERS:** **Simon Feldman, Hisae Kobayashi, Joe Schroeder and** **Cathy Stock**

EACH YEAR the John S. King Memorial Teaching Award is given to one faculty member recognized by his or her peers for outstanding teaching at the College. We recently asked several past winners of the King Award to reflect on what makes their teaching so memorable and effective. Below are excerpts from their responses.

1. What's your most effective teaching strategy and why do you think it works?

Simon Feldman: Sometimes the best classes are the ones where I abandon all hope of getting the conversation back to the point of the day and somehow something way more interesting happens. But I find it really hard to know when to cut my losses and let it go like this. ... I think one of the most impressive things about good teachers is that they can make their methods seem almost transparent...: How, exactly, to facilitate moments like this is a tough one. But thinking about learning on the model of a conversation has helped me.

Hisae Kobayashi: The most important thing for me is to help my students create a good rapport with one another in a class. ... Then I also help them develop a close relationship with upperclass students. ... They need to help one another in class and some help as well as encouragement from the upperclass students because the upperclass students know what is happening.

Joe Schroeder: Adopting an atmosphere of mutual respect in the classroom. I tell students on the first day that if they take the stated goals of the course seriously and take responsibility

for preparing for class and learning the material, they can expect to be treated as mature, actively engaged scholars.

Cathy Stock: I let my students “in” on my thinking as a prof — what am I trying to do, accomplish — even if it sometimes means admitting defeat!

2. When it comes to teaching, what are your most difficult challenges?

Simon: A huge challenge is teaching writing. I give really detailed paper-writing instructions, rubrics that explain what I'm looking for, how to edit, how I grade. I even include a meta-discourse on what I think is objective and subjective about the writing and evaluation process. But, in the end, I think all this is mostly useless and the learning curve with writing is pretty much all a matter of trial and error. Yes, we are robot-zombie-paper-commenting-machines. I give some rules, they submit their papers, I “correct” them, we all do it again. And again. Resistance is futile. Not pretty. But maybe it works, kind of.

Joe: Coming up with innovative ways to keep students and myself engaged in the material. If I teach a course two or three times the same way, it becomes stale.

Cathy: I have had the most difficult time dealing with a student in class who volunteers information or comments that are just wrong or inaccurate or poorly conceived or articulated.

3. What motivates you to stay engaged with your teaching?

Simon: Mostly terror. Or, really, just that sense of how bad a bad class can

be. I'd sell my left kidney to avoid those dead classes.

Hisae: I like watching their progress, seeing them overcome their weaknesses, and maturing into responsible grownups.

Cathy: I have thought recently that the real “secret” to my success as a teacher is simply that I really like my students — and not just the really high-achieving ones. I also really enjoy bringing along a student who might not think of him- or herself as a “student” or at least as a student of history. When a B student comes back for another semester (and maybe gets a B+), I feel I have achieved something just as important as when an A student asks me to advise an honors thesis.

4. What's your favorite assignment and why?

Simon: The assignment is to do a formal “conceptual analysis” of something. ... I think it's a really valuable one that has broader pedagogical implications. The project is to try to define something by identifying the necessary and sufficient conditions for its being a thing of a certain kind. The classic example is the analysis of “bachelor.” So, for example, it seems like being male and romantically unattached are necessary conditions on being a bachelor. But male babies aren't bachelors so we've got to add “adult.” If the Pope is not a bachelor, we've got to add some further necessary condition(s). Of course these conditions don't settle much because the project is recursive. What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for being “male”? What is an “adult”?

What is “romantic attachment”? Is the term essentially heteronormative? We’re quickly deep into philosophy. But I find the exercise useful because it shows how hard it is to have a clear understanding of many of the concepts we take for granted. It also shows how hard it is to be clear and rigorous, even when we are trying our best to be.

Hisae: My favorite ones are to create something helpful for those who will study Japanese the following year (JPN102’s assignment), and to present/explain how Japanese communication is different from that of English (JPN201’s assignment), and to create a movie in Japanese with English subtitles. My classes are very structured and I ask them to do some assignments that encourage their creativity.

Joe: The Ice Cube Addiction assignment. ... Following class discussions about the psychology of addiction and the effects of common drugs of abuse, students learn firsthand about the process of addiction including withdrawal and craving by mimicking the behavior of addicts using ice cubes as their drug of choice. This unique experiential learning exercise is a favorite among students because of its effectiveness at mimicking addiction. Learning is a function of reflection of personal experience rather than digestion of text material.

5. How do you balance teaching, research, service and your personal life?

Simon: I guess I don’t really think of the four domains as entirely distinct. Teaching, research and service are personal. And I’m also lucky to have colleagues who are actual friends (or is it vice versa?), who contribute to what I do in all of these domains. Maybe that’s just the good fortune of not being alienated from my job. That really doesn’t suck.

Hisae: Most of my time is spent for teaching and service. But I do keep my personal life outside the College, which is totally different from teaching. Dur-

ing the summer, I use my time mainly to do some research or a project.

Joe: I view research at a small college as an avenue for teaching and training junior scientists as well as a way to contribute to my field. I have realized that contributions to the field are the cumulation of many small student projects that take much longer to materialize compared to the research I took part in as a post-doc. ... I try to incorporate my research into my classroom teaching as often as possible and use the results of students’ projects as teaching material.

6. How has your teaching changed over your career?

Simon: I actually think it’s changed pretty radically, but I’m not sure it would look that way from the outside. It’s mostly that I’ve just become so much more conscious about what I’m doing, how I’m doing it and what the stakes are (thanks, CTL!). I’m starting to feel like I’ve faced most of the “bad” things that can happen in class (silence, crying, crazy racist comments, a passed-out freshman), and so I’m never too shocked or at a total loss about how to handle a strange moment. Overall, becoming more conscious has given me more confidence and one benefit of this is that I’m also less self-conscious, somewhat less risk-averse, more willing to scrap a class plan that isn’t working.

Hisae: Probably my teaching has grown in some ways, but I cannot articulate it. I can handle students much better than before. Probably I became a better person through teaching.

Joe: I think I have become more relaxed and flexible when it comes to adhering to a syllabus and worrying about covering all of the material I planned for a course. Realizing when students are responsive to a specific subject and adjusting class time to explore it further pays dividends that outweigh the losses from not covering other material. — *Anne Bernhard, Biology Department*

bright ideas

I bring in relevant op-ed articles from time to time, distribute them in class, have each student read a paragraph and then discuss. It really works to change the momentum in the classroom.

— *Caroleen Sayej*

Have you published an article on your teaching? Are you planning to present a paper on teaching at a conference? If so, let Michael Reder (reder@conncoll.edu, x2122) or Sufia M. Uddin (suddin@conncoll.edu, x3659) know. The CTL is interested in your scholarship on teaching.

For more information about the Joy Shechtman Mankoff Center for Teaching & Learning visit our website: <http://ctl.conncoll.edu/>

A visit to a COLLEAGUE'S CLASSROOM

INITIALLY, I visited a colleague's classroom through the CTL's Class of '57 Teaching Seminar for Incoming Faculty. As part of the seminar, we were asked to observe a colleague's classroom, have them observe our own classroom and then have lunch together afterward to discuss teaching. This experience was enjoyable and helpful for the same reasons that I have found by visiting several of my other colleagues' classrooms through the Open Classroom initiative.

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I've found that taking an hour or so out of my time to visit a colleague's classroom followed by an informal conversation about teaching over lunch or coffee to be worthwhile.

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Namely, class visits give me a chance to: 1) listen to interesting lectures by respected colleagues in one of their areas of expertise; 2) spark my thinking to develop my own new in-class activities; 3) observe different teaching styles; 4) glimpse Conn students engaging with controversial or contemporary course topics remarkably different from (or intersecting with) my own field; and 5) get to know one of my colleagues a bit better over coffee or lunch through insightful conversations, swapping teaching tips, lessons learned about various pedagogical approaches, and learning about another's area of interest in their scholarship, artistic

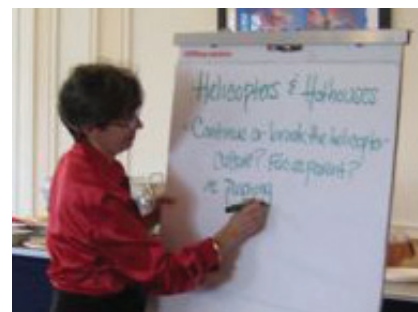
domain or research.

Perhaps because of my view of teaching as an art, I plan to continually hone my teaching craft over the rest of my career and seeing my colleagues engage in the art of teaching has been both instructive and rewarding. While we all have very busy schedules and plenty of work to attend to in the areas of scholarship/artistic production, service and teaching, I've found that taking an hour or so out of my time to visit a colleague's classroom followed by an informal conversation about teaching over lunch or coffee to be worthwhile. — *Dana Wright, Education Department*

TALKING TEACHING NOTES

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- **Set rules and standards regarding parental contact.** Coaches in particular advocate this action. For example, coaches tell their players to meet with them about their concerns, including playing time, rather than asking parents to intervene. — *MaryAnne Borrelli, Government Department*



MaryAnne Borrelli, Talking Teaching Coordinator, takes notes during "Helicopter Parents and Hothead Students"

TALKING TEACHING PROGRAM FOR FALL 2012

Wednesday, Sept. 19 11:50am – 2pm	Lunch General Education and the Majors: Ideas for College-Wide Curriculum Innovation
Friday, Sept. 28 8:30 – 10:15am	Breakfast Blended Learning and the Liberal Arts: The Role of Online Learning at Connecticut College
Tuesday, Oct. 9 8:30 – 10:15am	Breakfast First-Year Seminars: How Are They Going?
Wednesday, Oct. 10 8:30 – 10:15am	Breakfast First-Year Seminars: How Are They Going?
Wednesday, Oct. 17 8:30 – 10:15am	Breakfast Teacher-Scholars and Classroom Advocacy
Friday, Nov. 2 11:50am – 2pm	Lunch Gender Identity in Teaching & Learning
Wednesday, Nov. 14 8:30 – 10:15am	Breakfast Assessing the All-Campus Evaluation

Please save the dates; if you are interested in attending any of these events or serving as a featured discussant, please contact MaryAnne Borrelli at mabor@conncoll.edu. A complete description of the Fall 2012 Talking Teaching events is available from the CTL as a separate document.