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This volume contains articles published on the HETL Portal in the year 2011. It covers topics related to teaching, learning and research from a range of academic disciplines, with contributions from scholars across the world.

Patrick Blessinger and Krassie Petrova, Volume Editors
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The year 2011 saw a tremendous rise in the use of digital media and technology by higher education institutions and faculty. Hence, the theme for 2011 was University 2.0: Engaging Students. All the articles in this volume focus on how to better engage students in the learning process – as you will discover as you read the articles, there are multiple means by which to accomplish this.

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Contents

Preface

The editors are proud to present the inaugural annual volume of the *International HETL Review*, which is published incrementally online. It contains five opinion articles, four interview articles, and three feature articles published in 2011. The journal provides an international forum for educators, researchers, scholars, managers, administrators, and educational thought leaders from all over the world to disseminate their research in the field of teaching and learning or to express their views on topics germane to the field of teaching and learning. To assure we meet the highest academic and publishing standards possible, our publishing process has set a high standard of quality assurance and involves extensive peer-review from leading academics in the field. In addition to seasoned scholars and educations thought leaders, we also welcome work by promising junior academics and doctoral students.

Engaging Students: Learning, Teaching, and Research Nexus

The focus of this volume is on University 2.0, the university of the future: how to engage students and achieve a synergy between teaching and research that supports the learning experience and prepares students to become responsible, capable and active members of society. In the opening article, "Navigating Between Teaching, Learning and Inquiry", John Carfora talks about the need to promote inquiry-based learning that views research and teaching as 'synergistically complementary' and can engage students in meaningful research. In their article, "Developing Students as Researchers", Alan Jenkins and Mick Healey further expound on this teaching-research theme by reminding us that engaging students in research and inquiry is an effective way to enhance the link between teaching and discipline-based research; research needs to be integrated into the curriculum starting at the undergraduate level.

Engaging Students: Digital Technology

Lorraine Stefani in "A Plea for "E" to Excite, Engage, and Enrich" asks "How to ensure that all learners acquire the academic literacy skills that will be increasingly required and necessary for ongoing study and the employment market? New technologies and new pedagogies may be needed. The effective use of technologies in learning, teaching and research presents its own challenges: In her feature article " Real Learning in a Virtual World" Susan Oaks shows how the Web 2.0 platform called 'Second Life' can be used to incorporate a virtual learning experience in an online course that meets both the course learning objectives and the student learning needs. As with other Web 2.0 platforms, instructors will need to become experts in using the technology, better than their students says Piet Kommers in his article "Teach – Tool – Learn: Social Media as a Tribute to Lev Vygotsky". Vygotsky's ideas find another expression in Credence Baker and Jennifer Edwards' feature article "A Holistic Approach for Establishing Presence"; the authors advocate online social presence in a supportive environment as a mediator of student success.

Engaging Students: Active Learning

During the year HETL interviewed distinguished scholars, book authors, and thought leaders. They talked about how they approach teaching and learning, and about their vision for the future.

Phillip Long, in James Morrison and Phillip Long's interview article "Technology Enhanced Active Learning" tells us how an introductory programming course was redesigned to include an intelligent online tutoring system that helps engage students even if their computer background is not strong – a challenge faced by many universalities. According to Dee Fink (interview article "Creating Significant Learning Experiences"), educators today need to embrace the gamut of powerful learning and teaching approaches already developed: technology enhanced learning and active learning can be complemented by learning-centered course design, effective use of small groups, educative assessment, reflective writing and learning portfolios, among others. In her interview article "Learner-Centred Teaching" Marilla Svinicki further asserts that one needs to continue to learn about teaching by reading the literature – to find practices that can help, and also by 'reading the students' – developing an awareness of what students do in class and outside of class.

Engaging Students: Positive Change

Education at University 2.0 can make a profound difference to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. As David Goldstein demonstrates in his feature article "Feeding the Pipeline" universities have a role to play in preparing their own future students to enter the doors of academia and can be instrumental in breaking down barriers based on misperceptions regarding culture and race. This other dimension to higher education is explored by Olga Kovbasyuk in her article "Dialogue as a Means of Change". While universities focus predominantly on training competent professionals they need not neglect their responsibility to develop students as responsible human beings and active participants in shaping the future world by striving to improve the world and themselves.

University 2.0: University of the Future

The university of the future is a university that adapts to the complexities of the modern world. It is forward-looking in its view, innovative in its methods, holistic in its approach, and democratic in its ideals, while at the same time holding onto the academic pillars that academe has been founded on: 1) teaching and learning, 2) research and publishing, and 3) public and community service. Although this volume contains a range of topics in the area of teaching and learning in higher education, the articles also discuss the nexus of teaching and learning with research, publishing, and public service. For instance, the articles describe how to engage students in the learning process through the use of digital media (in and out of the classroom), through involvement in research, and through new pedagogical (teaching) methods. We hope this volume will provide all readers with a glimpse into the university of the future.

Patrick Blessinger and Krassie Petrova

Navigating Between Teaching, Learning and Inquiry

John Carfora

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When Patrick Blessinger asked me to sketch a reflective narrative around teaching and research, I did so with the intent of stimulating some meaningful discussion on a perennially debated theme. I hope you will find some meaning in this brief reflection.

Following a recent move from Northampton, Massachusetts, to Los Angeles, California, I was going through some old boxes with a certain degree of excitement, the kind one might expect from a "sixty-something" year old academic still excited by intelligent questions, empirical research and the methodology of inquiry, reflective teaching, and the meaningful pursuit of learning through the life span. I immediately recognized one box as if it were a personalized time capsule; metaphorically written across its top in familiar handwriting was: *Teaching, Learning, Inquiry*.

My Pedagogical Formula

Opening the sacred container – which I started building when I was 28 and a youthful American lecturer pursuing my craft at an English institution of higher learning – I immediately came across an engraved crystal bowl I received for university-level teaching (when I was in my 40s). Resting inside, however, I found the one key item I was especially delighted to rediscover: a postcard of the Shakespeare monument at Leicester Square (circa 1978), and a pedagogical formula I wrote to myself one autumn day while sitting at the base of the Bard himself: *Teach to navigate between inquiry and knowledge*. All these years later, I still wondered what I was truly trying to proclaim, and looking back I realize the extent to which those words launched a thousand ideas which would occupy my thinking about teaching and learning for years to come. One might say I have been thinking "outside the box" for decades.

Along with the crystal bowl and postcard were pictures from the event itself, and I readily recognized the smiles and aspirations of the students around me, holding what I now metaphorically see as a "crystal ball" of sorts. Also in the bowl was a thank you letter a student sent me in the 1980s, which ended with the following: "Throughout the course you always

respected our judgment by asking a very important question: *What do you think, and how best would you state it?*"

When I first began lecturing as a postgraduate assistant in England, I worked closely with a well-known professor at the London School of Economics, who one day responded to a question I put to him – specifically, what is your secret to good university-level lecturing? – by quoting Kahlil Gibran (Note 1) as if he was speaking his own words: The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind.

Years later, and not too long before he passed away, we were talking about "transformative teaching," and he reflectively stated: Lectures should be interesting and inspiring; classroom dynamics should be sophisticatedly managed, should never be a place for uninformed improvisation or entertainment, and should take place in an environment where learners can engage learning in an exhilarating and intelligent manner. For those of us committed to teaching and who seek to perfect our pedagogy every time we lecture and help guide student development, our skill is measured by the degree to which we help create and sustain that environment.

In the early 1990s I was invited to speak at a European university on a particularly attractive if somewhat broad theme: The intersections and integration of learning, teaching, research, and scholarly formation. The title I chose for my presentation was *Navigating Between Teaching, Learning and Inquiry*. The talk generated a lot of interest, and several months later I was asked to make a similar presentation at an American-based university, and chose the same thematic title. This talk also generated interest and was equally well-received. In this later case, however, I found myself somewhat frustrated when it became evident to me that some attendees were hoping to use the occasion to revive old intra-institutional debates about teaching having primacy over research, as if the two were mutually exclusive. As I overheard one faculty member declare to another: We are a teaching institution, not a research-intensive university where teaching is not as important. This episode left me somewhat dispirited, so I decided to explore my own position around the intersections of teaching, research, scholarship, and learning.

I began by meeting and speaking with two noted academics – Dr. Arthur W. Chickering (Goddard College) and the late Dr. C. Roland Christensen (Harvard University) – both of whom assured me that, to paraphrase the substance of our discussions*: Good teaching and scholarly research should work in unity – and not against each other – and both should encourage and support independent thinking among students. The learned teacher-scholar is proficient in* ***both*** *teaching and research, and recognizes that scholarly research informs good teaching the same way that good teaching clearly integrates meaningful research and the craft of research. Indeed, research has a comfortable and honored place in university-level teaching, and the academy thus recognizes the extent to which effective and meaningful teaching fully encourages and supports independent thinking based upon scholarly inquiry.*

Consonant with the above, I recently wrote with my friend and distinguished colleague Dr. Arnold Shore about the Responsible Conduct of Scholarship (RCS), and the following quote

from our work together certainly reflects my current – if somewhat "applied thinking" – on the intersections of teaching, research, scholarship, and learning:

RCS can usefully represent our commitments as a community of scholars to the highest standards of pedagogy and teaching, creative activity, and research, where the last can take many forms – from synthesis of bodies of classical literature to comprehensive quantitative studies to the collection and analysis of empirically-based qualitative interview data. The ground rules in all cases of scholarship are essentially the same. They are the standards of honesty and care with information, respect for animate subjects, the hewing to standards of analysis and interpretation that allow others to replicate our studies through a rereading of literature or the reanalysis of data or the rerunning of experiments and construction of new data sets (pp. 68-69, Note 2).

And so for almost four decades I have been committed to helping myself and others (in the USA and abroad) create classroom-based learning environments and experiences where teaching, empirical research, and inquiry-based learning intersect inside and outside the classroom. Indeed, such learning environments can help students become increasingly involved in meaningful research, and can support and nurture settings where teaching and research are viewed as synergistically complementary, and not in competition with each other.

The Reality of Inquiry-based Learning

What might then the aforementioned narrative look like in action? To begin, however, I would like to share several points en route to an answer. First, as faculty we initially encounter students who register for our classes wanting (perhaps a bit reluctantly in some cases) to partake in the very classroom learning environments we have crafted with thoughtfulness and care. The university makes our course outlines available to the student community, and ultimately we will help create such learning environments in collaboration with our students.

Second, as teacher-facilitators we must pay critical attention to our lecturing from the start, for the classroom represents a formative marketplace of ideas where students come to engage classroom-based learning, along with the science of research and the art of communication. In truth, many (if not most) students may come to us from previous classroom-based educational settings where inquiry-based research may not have been taught in a meaningful manner.

Third – and by way of an answer – teaching is thus the ultimate medium through which we as faculty can and should introduce students to the world of inquiry, empirical research, and scholarly based knowledge production. Not all students will enjoy these delights of course, but they should nevertheless be quite familiar with such delicacies.

Food for Thought and Discussion

As stated earlier, effective learning environments can help students become increasingly involved in meaningful research, and can support and nurture settings where teaching and

research are viewed as synergistically complementary, and not in competition with each other. How might one graphically capture this relationship? **Thoughts and ideas appreciated.**

Finally below you will find - a very small, but nevertheless broad list of works I recommend, particularly for younger faculty, remembering that there are many more just waiting to be discovered.

John M. Carfora

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Notes

1. Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931): A renown Lebanese-American writer and artist. Source: http://www.library.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/gibrn.htm
2. Shore, A. R., & Carfora, J. M. (2011). *The art of funding and implementing ideas: A guide to proposal development and project management.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

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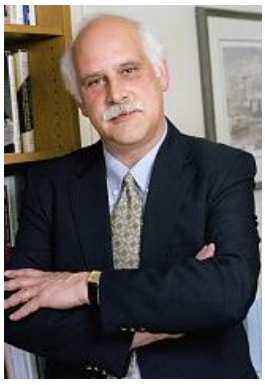

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Dialogue as a Means of Change

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When Patrick Blessinger offered me the opportunity to submit an opinion article to the HETL Portal, I thought I would write about meaning-centered education, which has been my research interest for a number of years**.** Then I decided I would also share my experience on global learning, which became a source of inspiration to my students and me since I returned from a Fulbright Fellowship I had in California in 2005.

Last week, a colleague and I were working on the chapter "The Changing Environment of Higher Education" for the book *The Strategic Management of Higher Education Institutions*, when I realized I tended to emphasize the importance of DIALOGUE in teaching and learning. This reflection served as a turning point for my choice of the topic for this narrative.

Figure 1, Symbols of Russian culture: orthodox Russian church located in a typical wooden house, birch tree, and girl wearing "babushka"

In fact, dialogue underpins the theory of meaning-centered education, which I advocate as a scholar, as well as the global learning activities that I have been engaged in as a practitioner. Dialogue represents my personal and professional credo in life. My whole self resonates when I anticipate the possibility of a true dialogue occurring in a professional or a personal setting. I consider having a reflective dialogue with my inner world critical to my professional and personal self-development. Dialogue would rarely occur within a traditional oppressive educational system, which I experienced when I was growing up, but dialogue repeatedly occurs in my classroom now… and I can see the positive change it provides.

With my reflections on dialogue as a means of change, I hope to contribute to the current debate about the changing environment of education in general and higher education in particular. Very often, dialogue is perceived and interpreted as the formal exchange of messages and/or ideas, but such exchange can hardly be called a dialogue. The world could have escaped many troubles had people learned the art of true dialogue. In education, we often have a monologue with each other and with our students because when we exchange ideas (although on the surface it could look like we communicate dialogically). My teacher, the esteemed professor Lydia Kulikova, would name this kind of communication and interaction as one that goes "along the formal counter of a human being" (Kulikova, 2005, p. 74) thus failing to foster meaningful teaching and learning. She taught me "to hear the strings of the human heart" (Kulikova, ibid, p. 30) when in a classroom.

According to M. Buber and M. Bakhtin, dialogue entails such quality relationships between interlocutors as mutuality, responsibility, engagement and acceptance. The existential interpretation of dialogue holds that it is only in true dialogic relationships that an individual is able to unfold and experience self as personality. Personality is different from individuality. While individuality can be described by a unique combination of individual characteristics and attributes, personality is defined by the human capacity to become the subject of one's life - the one who is able to take full responsibility for one's own actions in life.

Personality is characterized by her/his inner world, which cannot be understood by another personality unless both are engaged in a true dialogue with each other. Consequently, one is able to cognize her/his own self when engaged in a dialogue with someone different from her/himself. That is why Freire called dialogue "an existential necessity" and Bakhtin referred to dialogic interaction with self as the major factor of self-creation: "Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education" (Freire, 2004, p.93).

Traditional school is knowledge-oriented and places an emphasis on the formation and upbringing of students to meet the expectations of society, rather than supporting the individual's self or educating the whole personality. Knowledge can be tested but the inner world is personality's sovereign space that cannot be measured by numbers and tests. Progress in students' learning entails understanding and therefore is difficult to measured. An understanding is a transfer of meanings, but not a transfer of knowledge. "I can't teach you, but I can only hope you understand me. Understanding cannot be predicted, but may occur as a result of transfer and re-construction of meanings." (Leontiev, 2008, p.233)

As educators, we should consider that, like every transformation in general, personal transformation entails not linear progress but some points of regression and even stagnation as we progress. In fact, students should learn to welcome confusion and chaos as a transitory state between their prior convictions and new personal perspectives. It can also be viewed as a reversible process of quantitative and qualitative transformations of psychological attributes and states, which add to one another in timely reformations.

A true dialogue is open-ended; interlocutors may be unaware of conclusions they reach at the end. In the process of a truly dialogic interaction, it requires courage from those engaged in a dialogue to admit the possibility of change and re-construction of one's views and perspectives. Consequently, the possible change and transformation within self may serve as a criterion of a truly dialogic interaction. Regrettably, we often tend to oppose a true dialogue, because we are often reluctant to change. It is easier to remain rigid than to admit the possibility of change. In such a way, we block our capacity for exploring new possibilities and ideas.

In education, dialogue entails partnerships between students and teachers. "Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students, and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers" (Freire, *Ibid*, p.80). The dialogic position of students and teachers constitutes their independence, freedom, and responsibility. True dialogue requires developing "efforts towards others" (Bakhtin), and consequently facilitates meaningful interaction between people and cultures.

As educators, we face some controversies about how to educate generations in order to better prepare them for dealing with the complexities and conflicts arising from interconnectedness and interdependence between cultures in the contemporary world. Conflicts and xenophobia in the world arena suggest the inability of people to construct dialogic interaction, but in contrast show their inclination to negate the existence of different views and opinions. The challenge of being tolerant is the ability to recognize and accept different realities. Intolerance comes when people consider only one truth, and if someone adheres to a different truth, she/he has to be "taught".

I believe that the global learning, incorporated in academic studies, facilitates recognition of different cultural perspectives. As a Stanford University student wrote in his evaluation essay: "One of the outcomes for me is a more critical understanding of Russian youth (and female) culture. The videoconferences allowed me to see and recognize the perspective of a group of students in Russia that I would not have been able to see otherwise. I was specifically struck by the students' conceptions of happiness and their focus and perceptions of gender roles which were so different from my conception".

My experience indicates that meaning-centered education encourages learners to actively seek, express and negotiate meanings in dialogues. Such dialogues have the potential of fostering value-oriented relationships and appreciation for the diversity of the world, as well as the potential of developing students' critical self-reflection and collaborative skills. What is unique and resourceful about meaning-centered education and why it can provide the common basis for global learning, is that it facilitates people's capability for constant self-developmental growth, which is innate to being a human. It is holistic because it embraces all aspects of personal growth.

Regrettably, much of higher education today is still more directed towards the training of a professional who is capable of performing certain functions and responsibilities, rather than nurturing a personality who makes the maximum effort to become a full human being. I hold that education should support developing the personality rather than to just help her/him acquire professional attributes; striving to become involves striving for intelligence, self/world-improvement, and professional competency.

In reality, what can we do to introduce dialogue as a means of change in teaching-learning environments? There might be a variety of ways for each of us to put it in action. I hope to hear different perspectives on the issue from colleagues around the world.

I would point out just a few to summarize my own perspective:

- Priority of personal meanings over "educational requirements"
- Priority of the evolution of increasingly better questions, as in Bloom's Taxonomy
- Priority of shifting through a variety of micro and macro perspectives

- Priority of thinking about thinking (metacognition)

- Priority of thinking about the processes of knowledge construction

What would you add to the list?

Olga Kovbasyuk

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Endnotes

Professor Lydia Kulikova taught Philosophy of Education in the Far East State University of Humanities in Khabarovsk, Russia, for 40 years.

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Real Learning in a Virtual World: Incorporating Second Life in a Professional Communications Course

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Abstract

Second Life has been used as a tool for post-secondary education over the past few years. A virtual world such as Second Life adds the ability to enhance learning through interaction and exploration, ways of learning that are important to Net Generation learners. Second Life offers the chance to create a rich, constructivist approach to learning about professional communications as it supports interaction on a visual, emotional level that is appropriate to a course that deals with communication. Most importantly, Second Life offers a visible, concrete way of presenting abstract communication concepts that students traditionally struggle with, concepts such as "audience" and "communication context." This paper examines the decision to include a Second Life experience in a professional business communications course as a way of learning about communication theory in action and discusses key issues related to implementing Second Life in this course re-design.

Introduction: What is Second Life?

Second Life is a virtual world in which users create avatars and interact via those avatars in real-time, in a variety of environments and ways. Many types of environments have been constructed by Second Life users to support these interactions: college campuses, performance venues, science labs, and businesses.

In addition to creating campus locations for students and faculty to gather and interact, educators have used Second Life for simulations, virtual tours, and other visual and group-based learning activities (e.g., science and medical simulations, a tour of Hamlet's castle, and a pilgrimage to Mecca).

Essentially, Second Life allows users to create a persona (human, animal, or something in between), locate that persona in a specific environment, and communicate with others who are in that same environment at the same time. The persona is visually represented by its avatar.

A study by Bowers et.al. (2009) asserted that "across all uses of Second Life in their curricula, most instructors reported an above average level of perceived enhancement in student learning" (p. 47). Kolowich (2010) quotes Douglas Hersh, an instructor who studied visual and aural presence in online courses, who found that "students feel more satisfied in their online courses when they feel engaged through human presence design….students who find intrinsic satisfaction in their human presence courses tend to complete them at higher rates and with higher levels of academic success."

Despite the positive results of these studies, there are potential problems with using Second Life as an educational venue. It's not intuitive, especially for users who are not technically inclined. It contains many types of environments, some of which (e.g., adult-themed) are inappropriate for educational and professional uses. Non-student avatars may appear in student locations, and some of those avatars manipulate and even act aggressively toward others, similar to what might happen in a video game. Young (2010) detailed some of the problems with Second Life in an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education.*

As we considered Second Life, we decided to try to deal proactively with these potential problems. We identified some appropriate places to visit and stated clearly that there were inappropriate places. We embedded user information and constructed Second Life activities within the course, and we hired an on-call "expert" in Second Life to help students who wanted to use this medium. Because Second Life offers human presence through participants' avatars, it seemed to offer an interesting way to help students learn about communication theory in action. We felt that this was worth exploration.

This paper discusses key issues related to thinking through and incorporating a Second Life experience in a re-designed online course in business communications. These include: 1) instructor purpose and student learning needs, 2) usability and scaffolding – how to make the virtual world accessible, and 3) technical support.

Instructor Purpose and Student Learning Needs

The course for which Second Life seemed appropriate was Communications for Professionals, an introductory-level business communications course. The course had been offered for years, with its content evolving as modes and styles of communication have evolved in professional environments. The purposes of the course are many – to teach basic communication theory, to make students more familiar with current communication media that they might encounter on the job now and in the near future, to help students understand that communication is a collaborative process, and to help students better understand the more abstract concepts related to the communication process such as "audience" and "communication context" (concepts with which students in the course have traditionally struggled).

Second Life appeared to offer one way to address these purposes, especially the last two of collaboration and audience /context. The hope was that students would understand the abstract concepts of audience and context more easily when dealing with them in a visual, concrete, immediate way, rather than

through asynchronous text. We also hoped that the visually interesting, playful way of collaborating offered through Second Life would support students partnering on a project. Traditionally, it has been difficult to get students to work together, and one of the course purposes was to foster collaboration on communications, thereby developing a valuable workplace skill.

In choosing to experiment with Second Life, we also looked at our audience of learners. Empire State College, part of the State University of New York, mainly serves adult students. Many students are in their mid-30s, and the online program at the college's Center for Distance Learning attracts students who generally understand and use basic computer technology at work and at home. Although many of our students have not yet investigated Second Life, they often have used some sort of social media or played interactive computer games. As they are among the first wave of the Net Generation, born in the mid-to-late 1970s and early 1980s, they are comfortable with the asynchronous course format that is the standard mode of delivery for most of our online courses.

Courses, though, need to take into account the Net Generation's needs as learners, as described by multiple authors referred to in Oblinger and Oblinger (2005). Roberts (2005) focuses on the need to use technology to highlight important concepts, and "the ability to customize the class using the current technology available." Windham (2005) explains general characteristics of Net Generation learners: interaction, exploration, relevancy, multimedia and the desire for online instruction. Brown (2005) explains that "Net Generation students are achievement and goal oriented. Their question is not 'What does it mean?' or 'How does it work?' (as previous generations were inclined to ask), but rather 'How do I build it?'. This predilection maps to learning theory's emphasis on active learning. Discovery, exploration, experimentation, criticism and analysis all represent active learning, a style that suits the Net Generation well."

Second Life had the possibility of adding the interactive, exploratory elements important to Net Generation learners. Second Life contributed immediacy and emotional and visual elements to the learning space, elements that are present in real-time professional communications at work, but that are difficult to deal with in an active, applied way within the context of an asynchronous, text-based course. As stated in The Horizon Report (2007), "virtual worlds offer an opportunity for people to interact in a way that conveys a sense of presence lacking in other media. These spaces…combine many of the elements that make Web 2.0 really exciting: social networking, the ability to share rich media seamlessly, the ability to connect with friends, a feeling of presence, and a connection to the community" (p. 18). So, the choice of a virtual world such as Second Life was logical, given student learning needs and instructional purposes.

Choosing Learning Activities and Making them Usable: Scaffolding and Learning in Second Life

The questions then turned to emphasis and accessibility. How much of the course should be devoted to teaching using this one technology? How accessible would the technology be to students? How can communication concepts come to the forefront while the technical aspects of

Second Life are downplayed, so that learning about communication remains the emphasis in the virtual environment? And just what learning tasks would make sense?

As Middleton and Mather (2008) state,

…media intervention methodology…encourages academics to view digital media objects as simple resources deployed with the intention of promoting active, student-centered learning designed to set challenges, seed ideas, or illustrate problems so as to quickly engage and affect the learner (p. 208).

Middleton and Mather also assert that using digital media successfully depends upon "ease of production and integration" (p. 208).

Two publications helped in thinking through these questions and concepts on a more concrete level, 1) Conklin's *101 Uses of Second Life in the College Classroom* (2007), to spark ideas about feasible activities, and 2) *Understanding Learning Archetypes for 3D Learning* (n. d.), to verify purposeful activities given the learning goals of the course.

In *Understanding Learning Archetypes for 3D Learning*, eight archetypes are identified specific to the learning context of virtual worlds: 1) classroom emulation, 2) role-plays, 3) treasure/scavenger hunts, 4) guided tours, 5) conceptual orienteering, 6) operational application, 7) co-creation, and 8.) critical incident. Of these, conceptual orienteering, co-creation, critical incident, and operational application are appropriate to the learning goals of the communications course – to learn how to create actual communications appropriate to audience and context, and to learn how to collaborate on these communications.

Further, conceptual orienteering is defined as:

…providing the learner with examples and…allowing the learner to determine the attributes that describe the concept….The process of side-by-side comparison allows learners to recognize and apply concepts in a variety of different environments….The goal is to provide a visualization of the differences to the learner who can then determine what attributes apply to the concept and what attributes do not. The learners can visually see attributes and do a mental comparison through the ability to instantly move from one location to another (Conceptual Orienteering section, para. 1-2).

One early Second Life activity is to have students read about the concept of culture as the context within which communication occurs, have them consider various real-life cultures of which they are a part, and then introduce them to Second Life to enhance the concept of cultural context. Students are introduced to Second Life by watching a video and by reading articles about Second Life groups and cultures. Students are asked to debate whether Second Life fits their textbook definition of "culture." By actually seeing the differences between "real" and Second Life groups, and by seeing the differences among groups within Second Life, the hope is that students will more immediately understand that there are multiple contexts within which

communication occurs. Discovering and remembering the concept of context, introduced by a consideration of culture, can be more real to the student because of the visual impact of Second Life.

Operational application, in which "the learner is challenged to apply rules to specific situations…. is 'learning by doing' in the virtual environment…. It is practice for what happens on the job." (*Understanding Learning Archetypes for 3D Learning*, n.d.) Students in the course are asked to learn by doing – to apply their understanding of culture and context to communication assignments throughout the course. Students are required to do a situational analysis for each communication task, identifying their audience and communication context for each piece of communication. Additionally, students who pursue the Second Life option are asked to learn Second Life by completing a number of small tasks for which there is help both within the course (in written form) and through personalized staff support as needed.

The last two archetypes in (*Understanding Learning Archetypes for 3D Learning*, n. d.) are 'co-creation' and critical incident '. Different types of learning activities culminate in a critical incident, the archetype in which:

…the learner is placed into an environment or situation similar to the real event in which they [sic] must use their [sic] prior knowledge to solve a problem….The learning in this environment would be within both the affective and cognitive learning domains (Critical Incident section, para. 16).

While co-creation occurs throughout the course as students collaborate on various writing tasks, a critical incident occurs toward the end of the course via a three-week project that asks students to plan and host a real-time Second Life arts event showcasing the creative work of students in an online photography course. The Communications students are expected to identify the communications they need, create appropriate messages, contact participants, coordinate the event, market it to various groups within Second Life who may want to attend the event, and get background on the art works and artists so they can help host the event. Their work culminates in a portfolio of professional communications that are germane to this activity. Learning objectives relate to planning and coordinating, motivation, and teamwork, as well as communication. Again, students need to articulate collaboratively and apply concepts of audience and context in order to create and host a successful event.

A decision was made *not* to offer the entire course in Second Life, because that required more of a focus on the technology rather than on communication concepts at the start of the course, and because one of the course purposes was also to have students become familiar with a variety of communication media. So a blog, wiki, and presentation tools (such as VoiceThread) were chosen for various collaborative and presentation work. Instead of a complete course in Second Life, students initially get involved in this virtual world on a very introductory level, as they investigate the concept of cultural context, and then have the choice of doing relatively quick, concrete learning activities if they choose the Second Life track throughout the course.

Most importantly, the activities in the Second Life track are simple, concrete, and structured so that students can work through them relatively easily. They culminate in an authentic learning experience, the real-time art show. Based on the work of Martinez and Matias (2009), who were the first to adopt Second Life in an Empire State College course, Second Life learning activities we designed moved from static, to more active, and then finally to interactive activities. We designed eight modules over the 15 weeks of the course to enable students to develop the skills to work on the final project in Second Life. These were:

1. Everyone - View a YouTube video on the educational uses of Second Life, to get a sense of the look of the virtual world without having to learn how to navigate it. Read about the option for doing a Second Life group activity – the art show – during the last module/last three weeks of the course.

2. Everyone – Read short articles about Second Life and discuss the concept of Second Life culture/s in terms of the text's definition of cultural context.

3. Optional Second Life activity – Install Second Life and get your Avatar.

4. Optional Second Life activity – Create a profile in Second Life, go to the college's location, and take a picture of your avatar there. Add the photo and profile to the Introductions blog in the course.

5. Optional Second Life activity – Visit selected locations in Second Life and share the results in the course blog.

6. Optional Second Life activity – Interact with others in Second Life and share results in the course blog.

7. Optional Second Life activity – Attend an event in Second Life and share results in the course blog.

8. Optional Second Life activity – Collaborative work on the art show showcasing the work of students in an introductory Photography course. Create all communications needed to organize and advertise the event, and be present as informed hosts at the event.

Throughout the course, students pursuing the Second Life option also have the opportunity to gather and meet in Second Life.

All of these learning activities are appropriate to the purpose of and audience for this professional communications course. But can the Second Life learning activities succeed in this structured format, given both the instructors' and students' need to learn Second Life's specific technology? Technical learning is a real concern, especially for students at a distance who have very different levels of expertise. Faculty as well have different comfort levels with technology,

and are also not expected to answer technical questions or solve technical problems. So the need to address the technology question always was present.

Technical Issues and Ways of Addressing Them

In order to cut down on technical support, a decision was made to standardize support material as much as possible. Martinez and Matias (2009) created documentation accessible and geared toward our student population. In addition to creating documentation for the structured learning activities, Martinez and Matias created a comprehensive Orientation to Second Life document, which includes sections defining Second Life, a Quick Start Guide, a Second Life Lexicon, Second Life Basic Skills, a Second Life Help Option, and documents on Second Life's Life Styles, Behavior, and Cautions. All of this documentation was placed in a Resource section within the course. Additionally, they also created a cyborg tour to help students walk through the simple tasks they need to learn in Second Life. The hope is that the abundance and easy availability of help, along with the targeted and accessible nature of that help, will cut down on technical emergencies and walk students through the activities they need to learn with a minimum of real-time support.

For students who opt to do the final project in Second Life, we are using an art presentation space built for the college, with pre-set frames for photographs and documentation enabling students to mount a photograph in a frame with a few "clicks." Students are not expected to build in Second Life, or to deal with more complicated technical tasks. They are only expected to learn the basics – to get their avatar, find a location, take a photo, and interact with others. The emphasis, again, is on the learning and application of communication concepts in an emerging communication medium, which is just one medium of many.

In addition to building Second Life into the course and in consideration of students' individual learning styles and technical expertise, students can also choose to pursue comparable learning activities that require a lower level of technical expertise. For example, students may opt to work on a real professional or community project individually or collaboratively, using asynchronous communication tools. They may opt to do a similar group project using other visual media, and not Second Life. The instructional task is to choose comparable course activities for equity of learning opportunity and assessment - for example, by offering traditional communications (mostly written text), new media learning activities (blog, wiki, a VoiceThread presentation, social media Web sites such as FaceBook), as well as Second Life learning activities.

Conclusion

This paper detailed the thinking behind a decision to implement Second Life in a communications course. We are just starting to gather data on its use. The hope is that Communications for Professionals will successfully address student learning needs and instructor and course learning goals through a rich online learning environment that incorporates the virtual environment of Second Life. According to Whitton and Hollins (2008),

…immersive virtual learning environments can provide the opportunity for learners to explore and navigate worlds using a range of media types, with authentic and purposeful contexts for practicing learning that can be transferred to the real world, and they can present a context for problem-solving and interaction with others (p. 222)

Second Life provides an opportunity to incorporate real-time, social and professional activities into asynchronous online course activities, which can address some students' preferred ways of learning. The hope is that Second Life can support the learning goals of the course by offering a rich constructivist environment.

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Teach - Tool - Learn: Social Media as a Tribute to Lev Vygotsky

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In the late seventies social scientists were focused predominantly on making education more democratic and more emancipatory. It is interesting to observe that so far almost all educational methods have ended in creating tools for the learner, ultimately helping build a learning attitude. An example is presented by the so-called "Intelligent Instructional Systems" that were based upon models of expert knowledge and models of the initial student knowledge.

However, the paradigm of optimizing teaching by reconciling the expert-novice gap was left behind as we found out that learning is not a simple extrapolation of the previous learning of experts. What was kept though was the notion of meta cognitive representation: "What do we know about what we know?" and "What are the elegant and transparent representations that may trigger our imagination about what could be learnt next?"

Conceptual schemes became the default format for negotiations among learners, and between learners and teachers. Concept mapping became even a candidate for analternative assessment method. In my book *Cognitive Support for Learning*, the concept-mapping paradigm was elevated to the level of "learning attitude": Becoming aware of one's conceptual boundaries and of cross-disciplinary links provides the learner with a scaffold to help articulate their intuition. Somewhat similarly we saw simulations and modeling tools that started as expert tools gradually becoming tools directly assisting learners.

Social media are a mere artifact created by enthusiasts who could not accept that mental social networks were the best. Nowadays teachers ask themselves: What could social media actually bring to the field of education? The best estimation is to excavate Vygotsky's claim that intellectual learning rests upon social awareness and that social awareness rests upon language. Interestingly enough it is not an easy message as teachers just went through the phase of accommodating the transition to web-based teaching and learning practices. How to proceed? We can see two trends developing simultaneously:

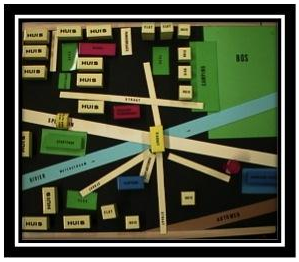
1. Increasing and urging societal demands to develop a socially active education – including for example social commitment and citizen's awareness.
2. Positioning education as a knowledge transfer organization.

The first trend may seem overly ambitious: How can schools penetrate the arena of social norms and etiquette, while even parents may find themselves in a divided society? Still we may expect

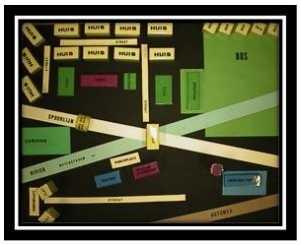
education to move along the first rather than the second trend. The reason is that the informational component has become available to youngsters via access to various media (e.g. mobile communications and virtual presence). It means that the critical focus has shifted from information to attitude.

Teachers' roles have already absorbed many of the characteristics of the first trend. What is the consequence with respect to the further integration of media-based learning in school settings? The key answer can still be based upon the ideas of Vygotsky, Luria and Leont'ev underpinning activity theory.

The essence of activity theory is the mutual dependency between the mental operation/ imagination, the tool and the language for negotiating its meaning with others. In this constellation the newly arrived social media take a unique position in the sense that the tools, the language and the social reconstruction have become inextricably intertwined. The remaining question is if and how stakeholders such as parents and teachers may intervene in the process. Let me bring some examples from my earlier work on collaborative learning and its socio-cognitive determinants.



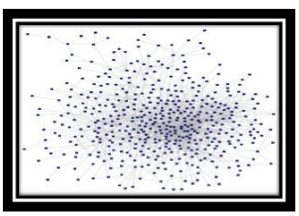
The typical underestimation of learners in formal school settings is the belief that reasoning and analysis only arrive after the conceptual stages have arrived (Sutton-Smith, 1966). However the patterns in urban planning solutions by 10-12 year students show how versatile the student-generated solutions can be. Hastie and Dawes (2010) explain that it is not so much the process of reasoning but rather it is the lack of ingredients (knowledge) that forces learners to exploit meta strategies. The striving towards certainty is labeled "hedonistic".



We have recently observed that youngsters can cope with complex social networks more easily when there are tools available. Social networking sites attempt to articulate human relationships and their structural aspects.

As indicated by the set of icons below, it is the awareness of systems that give you access to social networks, even when you don't feel happy to reside in larger groups.

We expect social network sites to become helpful in mitigating the combinatory explosion that can be visualized when tracing interacting persons is represented as "linking pins". The diagram below visualizes the np-complexity of a social network taking into account the 2nd and 3rd order relationships.



While expressing his early ideas on self-regulation and private speech, Vygotsky may have been fascinated by structural operations – operations

that learners can control nowadays. And most importantly - the educational notion that learners are not like bonsai trees that should be pruned into "nice" shapes.

Soon we will see students orchestrating social networks via social media and accessing experts who would exceed the mastery of their teachers. This is the moment to stimulate teachers to undertake social networking, before students excel first.

Piet Kommers

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Endnotes

For the origins of the activity theory and its creators (Vygotsky, Luria and Leont'ev), see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Activity_theory

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Opinions expressed in this article are those of the author, and as such, do not necessarily represent the position(s) of other professionals or any institutions.

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Technology Enhanced Active Learning in the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Department at MIT

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I had the opportunity to interview Professor Long at the 2008 Campus Technology Conference in Boston. The initial part of the interview, published in the April/May 2009issue of *Innovate*, presented some of the outcomes of iCampus, a MIT/Microsoft Research collaboration that focused on building technologies that enabled more effective learning (Morrison & Long, 2009). In the remainder of the interview we focused on how the electrical engineering and computer science curriculum redesign project facilitated technology-enhanced active learning at MIT.

James L. Morrison [JLM]: Phil, tell us about the electrical engineering and computer science department at MIT.

Figure 2, MIT, 2008. Photo credit: Scott Beale/Laughing Squid, laughingsquid.com

Phillip Long [PL]: Programs at theSchool of Engineering at MIT are consistently ranked among the top programs in the world. The Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) is no exception. The introductory class in this department, known as 6.001, The Structure and Interpretation of Computer Programs, is based on a very successful introductory textbook that's been translated into over 140 different languages. (The book is freely available online from MIT Press.) It is an unusual department in that it integrates computer science and electrical engineering. Graduates from this program are disproportionately represented among the faculties of the top schools of engineering around the world. Hence, the impact of the department is widespread and influential.

JLM: When we talked earlier, you described the decision by the EECS faculty to redesign their entire curriculum in order to foster technology-enhanced active learning strategies. As I understand it, the courses produced by this department are among the most widely accessed and downloaded on MIT's OpenCourseWare (OCW) initiative used by many institutions around the world as a model for teaching the fundamentals of computer science and electrical engineering. Why are they revising such a successful course of study?

PL: The original course was a traditionally structured lecture/lab/recitation course. Faculty thought that a more hands-on, engaged course would lead to better outcomes than one based on a preponderance of passive learning. Secondly, there was a recognition that this was an electrical engineering and computer science department. Separating the logic associated with understanding programming in computer science from its implementation and interaction with the physical world (which is electrical engineering) was doing a disservice to the students, who were in a joint, combined program. As a result, faculty began the process of redesigning the course. The new 6.001 was piloted and had its first major, large-scale implementation last term. We are just completing the analysis of student evaluation data for that term.

To address the issues they saw in the original course, faculty decided to have students program robots and deal with the messiness that this involves. The outcome of programmatic logic development is to make a robot, which is a physical device that has gears and motors and everything associated with 'doing things'. A robot doesn't behave like programs behave. When you tell a program that it has to iterate sixty times, every time you tell it to do that task, it does it exactly sixty times. If you tell a robot to go sixty meters forward, it doesn't go sixty meters every single time. It goes 59.8; it goes 60.3. It's not perfect. That feedback and that recognition of the complications of implementing a logical construct into a physical reality and dealing with the messy translation that results is important for students to grasp.

They also wanted to harness the powerful learning that takes place in peer-to-peer learning environments. One of the signature aspects of this course was that it had a one-to-four mentor-team ratio even though 260 students were registered in the pilot implementation. How? The course uses a four layered teaching model: senior faculty, graduate teaching assistants, learning lab assistants (undergraduate upper division students), and guest lab assistants (peers in the course who attend four hours of intensive instruction on a Wednesday night in preparation for the lab that is going to be taught on Thursday). Guest lab assistants teach as peers, as mentors to their team, on the assignment associated with that lab. The result is that every four students get a mentor or an assistant for the lab.

It was fascinating to watch the pilot course. Any new course development process is messy and sometimes stuff doesn't work. Teaching staff had to fix the problems they found on Wednesday night with the lab that they were going to teach the following morning; the guest lab assistants were members of the team who were figuring out how to teach it. This is an incredibly powerful shift in perspective for those students, moving from being the recipient of the instructional process to working as a co-participant in its design and delivery. It opened up opportunities to scale a much more intimate small-group interaction that is otherwise not possible in the large-course delivery context.

In the data we collected during the first implementation last semester, we found that the guest lab assistants did not fare as well as graduate students in the eyes of other students in terms of the quality of instruction that they provided and their background, although the differences were not large. We consider this encouraging because the guest lab assistants never had any formal training. They participated in helping configure the lab in those Wednesday evening sessions, but

no one had the time to consider the right approach for guest lab assistants to take with their peers.

One other thing that emerged from the preliminary data on the course outcomes was a positive correlation between prior programming experience and perceived success in doing coursework. This is an issue in part because, as the first course in the EECS curriculum, this class was designed with the hope that it would draw a wider spectrum of students to the discipline. If success in coursework is closely aligned with prior programming experience, we face a continuing challenge in meeting the goal of engaging those who haven't arrived with strong computer science backgrounds.

JLM: How is the class technology enabled?

PL: With funding from the iCampus project sponsored by Microsoft, EECS faculty developed XTutor, an online intelligent tutoring system that provides students with carefully structured sets of questions that require students to write code. The core of the system consists of problems developed by faculty for students to work through. Students type in parts of computer code, subroutines for example, that represent the answer to a question posed by the problem. The system evaluates the response and provides immediate feedback, but not just a "right" or "wrong" response. If the response is wrong, XTutor supplies hints that attempt to correct misperceptions so that the student can amend the solution and resubmit the answer. Ultimately, how well the student does, how many hints he or she needed, and the student's final assessment of the problem are all captured by the system for the instructor to use in evaluating student performance. By the way, although XTutor was specifically designed for this course, there is a layer of online tutorial capability that is accessible to anyone from around the world, as well. OCW provides the full content of the Structure and Interpretation of Computer Programs, Course 6.001.

The robots also add a technology dimension. Students use a variant of the Python programming language to write routines to control the robots, which are provided by the department. They have to control the robot's behavior and get the robot to perform a set of project tasks. Course robots are programmed from students' laptops. Students work on developing algorithms, routines, and processes that have to be implemented on the robot. It is very much a hands-on project.

JLM: You are talking about the redesign of the introductory course as opposed to the whole degree program.

Figure 3, MIT - Stata Center by Frank Gehry Photo credit: Scott Beale/ Laughing Squid, laughingsquid.com

PL: This is the first course in a sequence. The entire program is being redesigned. The next course in the sequence, which is now being taught in an active-learning, team-based studio, is going to present an interesting contrast to the first year program. While the first year program is very discovery oriented--there are assignments and such, how the students implement assignments is entirely up to the teams; the second course will be taught by a professor who has a set of materials that he wants students to learn and a particular approach that he

wants them to follow. So, while the course shares in the active learning and collaborative design approach, there is much less student-initiated discovery. We will be curious to see how that approach marries into the sequence and what the student reaction to it is.

JLM: Phil, to put this in perspective, say that I accessed the introductory course via MIT's OpenCourseWare initiative. What differences am I going to see in the course before and after the redesign?

PL: The original course was in a relatively traditionally organized course format. In the original 6.001 OCW course, you would see a series of lectures distributed in PDF from the course website. You would have available a set of narrated PowerPoint slides accessible to you from the XTutor intelligent tutoring system. Students taking the course at MIT met in twice-per-week recitation sections of 30-35 students to work on problem sets, ask questions, and generally get support on the course content. Finally, students worked on six major programming projects across the semester. In the early days of this course, there were experiments with eliminating the in-person lecture attendance and encouraging students to watch the lectures wherever they were from the XTtutor system. Interestingly enough, the students rebelled against that, saying, in effect, "By gosh, we came to this institution. We expect to see someone down at the podium. Where is that person? We are in the EECS department with all of these well-known, internationally recognized figures. I want to see them." The compromise then was to have six to eight classroom lectures by star professors and everything else online. Eventually, the course design moved back to a regular lecture-recitation approach.

The redesigned version of 6.001 is heavily problem based with many more problem solving questions. We haven't produced an OCW version of the redesigned course yet, since the first iteration only happened last term. However, in an OCW version, the viewer might see lectures on each topic, but of the five hours a week of class time, they will see only an hour or an hour and a half of a talking head. OCW users will see the problem and lab assignments and the materials associated with those activities. And that is going to be it. The transition to a more active learning approach is less amenable to online distribution, because we can only provide outlines of what we intend to happen; we can't include what really goes on in the extensive period of team problem solving. The difference is that the expectation in the new 6.001 is that students must engage beyond problem sets, quizzes, and tests to produce code that programs the robots to perform certain tasks, and there is not necessarily a right way to do that. What happens and what makes the course work is the dialectic interaction that goes with those students working together to solve those problems.

JLM: I can see where professors could benefit by the original course lectures and materials in designing their own courses. How can they use the materials from a course that is based on an active learning problem solving approach? Will MIT professors take the time and energy to describe the logic, structure, and rationale of their course designs?

PL: This is a good question. The more interactive and discovery based the conduct of the course, the more the openly distributed materials must necessarily be guidelines and signposts. The faculty at MIT are keen on sharing their work in both research and teaching, but they have limits

on their time, as well. More likely, as the course converges on a steady state, the artifacts that have gone into the planning and development of the course will be made available and a wider array of individuals knowledgeable about the program will be able to respond to initial inquiries about it. I think the people involved in this particular course are dedicated to sharing their work through OCW and other outreach efforts that characterize the open approach to sharing good teaching and research practice at MIT.

JLM: So MIT faculty actually view their courses as resources for the world?

PL: It's one of the many interesting and wonderful characteristics of this place. When faculty here design a class, they don't simply think about how they are going to do this class well. They think about how do they can do this class the best way that a class like this will ever be done and how to do it in a way that it can represent something of value to the world. It is remarkable, and it sounds amazingly egocentric, but you have to be in the room to hear the conversations to recognize that it is a really thoughtful and intentional way of approaching a course or curriculum design. They know that a lot of the courses taught in these departments are going to set standards or be looked upon as benchmarks. That is the way it's been the last forty or fifty years. That is the way it is now; I expect that will continue.

JLM: So you are telling me, Phil, that in the courses that are available to the world, the professors take time to explain their pedagogical rationale for what they are doing so that other professors can have a grasp of the logic of the course design?

PL: The OpenCourseWare Initiative presents a particular faculty member's point of view about how a course is taught. If you go to OCW and look at an introductory chemistry course, for example, you will see by its structure, by the way it is put together, by the content and everything else the ideas that the faculty member used to construct this course. You won't see a parallel vetted description and narrative, "As I was doing this, thinking about this course, this was my intention." There are, however, lots of projects around MIT that have dissemination as their goal, and that activity happens within those projects.

JLM: What's next for the EECS department at MIT?

PL: The EECS curriculum revision effort is a major undertaking. Its goals are to provide more flexibility for students to design their own degree programs; to put a stress on the interactions and interfaces among foundational aspects of EE and CS; to provide more hands-on experiences to motivate students and contextualize the material; and to provide an opportunity for students to explore a selected set of topics in greater depth than in the past. After the completion of the introductory course sequence, the students are expected to take three courses selected from a set of foundational subjects: applied electromagnetics, circuits and electronics, signals and systems, computation structures, principles of software development, and introductory algorithms. These courses are all being reconsidered in the light of the themes mentioned above. So next up are pilots of newly redesigned courses for foundation subjects. Finally, the recognition that students will be working in a much more globally interconnected world means a new emphasis on

summer internship and outreach experiences in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Central America. Exciting times are ahead!

JLM: Phil, we greatly appreciate this insider's view of how a first rate department is using technology enhanced active learning instructional strategies to enhance the educational experiences of their students, and, thereby, provide an exemplar for other departments. Thanks!

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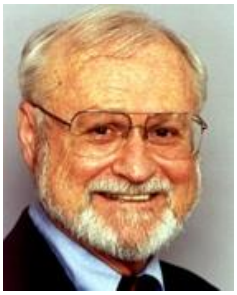
Since Professor Long's interview on July 30, 2008, the introductory course in the Department of Electric Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) at MIT has been re-named "Introduction to EECS 1" and re-numbered 6.01. Several changes to the course have been implemented based on assessment studies, and the enrollment for the course has increased to approximately 500—nearly half the number of undergraduate students admitted to MIT in a given year. It should also be noted that the assessments cited in Professor Long's interview were conducted by educational researchers associated with the MIT Teaching and Learning Laboratory.



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Dr. Phillip Long, the immediate past associate director of MIT's Office of Education, Innovation, and Technology, is now serving as Professor of Innovation in Educational Technology in the Schools of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering and Psychology, and Director, Center for Educational Innovation and Technology, at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia. In his former role at MIT, Dr. Long worked with faculty members and technologists to integrate innovative approaches into the MIT learning experience and provide support for the dissemination of these innovations around the world. Dr. Long continues to work at MIT as a visiting researcher in the Center for Educational Computing Initiatives, led by Professor John Belcher**,** who developed the TEAL initiative at MIT.

Navigating Between Teaching, Learning and Inquiry: Developing Students as Researchers

Alan Jenkins and Mick Healey

Oxford Brookes University, UK and University of Gloucestershire, UK

The research universities have often failed, and continue to fail, their undergraduate populations, thousands of students graduate without seeing the world-famous professors or tasting genuine research. Boyer Commission (1998, pp. 5-6)

We applaud John Carfora's aim to explore how "teaching, empirical research, and inquiry-based learning intersect inside and outside the classroom." Our argument, in the article below, is that a central way to achieve this is to focus on the student experience of the curriculum. In contrast to Carfora, we would point to the research and policy perspectives that demonstrate that research and teaching often clash and or fail to connect in the student and faculty experience of higher education (Jenkins, 2004).

Relatedly we share Michael Theall's perspective that "engagement in scholarly and creative activities can inform good teaching, I do not think the connection is automatic." However, we would point in addition to the key importance of the need for structural changes at national, institutional and departmental levels to make such connections; including, as Michael indicates changes in the faculty reward culture. In a range of publications we have explored how these connections can be made to benefit both students and faculty. In particular we argue that departments and course teams need to re-engineer the undergraduate curriculum to bring students into the worlds of research.

Developing Students as Researchers

… universities should treat learning as not yet wholly solved problems and hence always in research mode. (Humboldt, 1810, as cited in Elton, 2005)

Teaching and research are correlated when they are co-related. … [One way to achieve this is to] exploit further the link between teaching and research in the design of courses. (Brew & Boud, 1995, p. 272)

We want all students to access the benefits exposure to teaching informed by research can bring. ... We believe an understanding of the research process – asking the right questions in the right way; conducting experiments; and collating and evaluating information – must be a key part of any undergraduate curriculum. (Rammell, 2006, p. 3)

Figure 4, Faculty researcher with students. Retrieved from http://www.flickr.com under Creative Commons use.

Our argument can be simply stated: *all* undergraduate students in *all* higher education institutions should experience learning through and about research. This applies to all students in higher education, including those taking higher education courses in community colleges. While recognising that there are other goals the curriculum should support (e.g., student employability, civic engagement), students learning in 'research mode' should be *central* to the curriculum. In many national systems funding and support for research has both devalued the importance of teaching and effectively moved many undergraduate students and academic staff out of the worlds of research. Refocusing the undergraduate curriculum on bringing students into the worlds of research can both ensure that what they experience is *higher education*, but also assist faculty and support staff (e.g., librarians to work in a scholarly research environment). Our argument is more fully developed with a wide range of international case studies in Healey and Jenkins (2009).

Our interest in developing students as researchers originated through our explorations over the last few years into ways to enhance the linkage between teaching and discipline-based research. Our experiences suggest that one of the most effective ways to do this is to engage our students in research and inquiry; in other words, to see them as producers not just consumers of knowledge. However, for us the key to mainstreaming undergraduate research is to integrate it into the curriculum.

Is Undergraduate Research for All Students?

Your answer to this depends on how you define undergraduate research. If you restrict it to the creation of new knowledge, often through working with staff, such as part of a laboratory research team, then the experience is likely to be limited to a few select students. However, if you conceive undergraduate research as students learning through courses, which are designed to be as close as possible to the research processes in their discipline, then it can be for all students. The focus then is on student learning and on being assessed in ways that mimic how research is conducted in the discipline, for example, through undergraduate research journals and student research conferences and exhibitions. In these cases, what is produced and learned may not be new knowledge *per se*; but it is new to the student and, perhaps more significantly, transforms their understanding of knowledge and research. In terms of Figure 1 the emphasis is on the student learning in 'research-based' and 'research-orientated' modes.

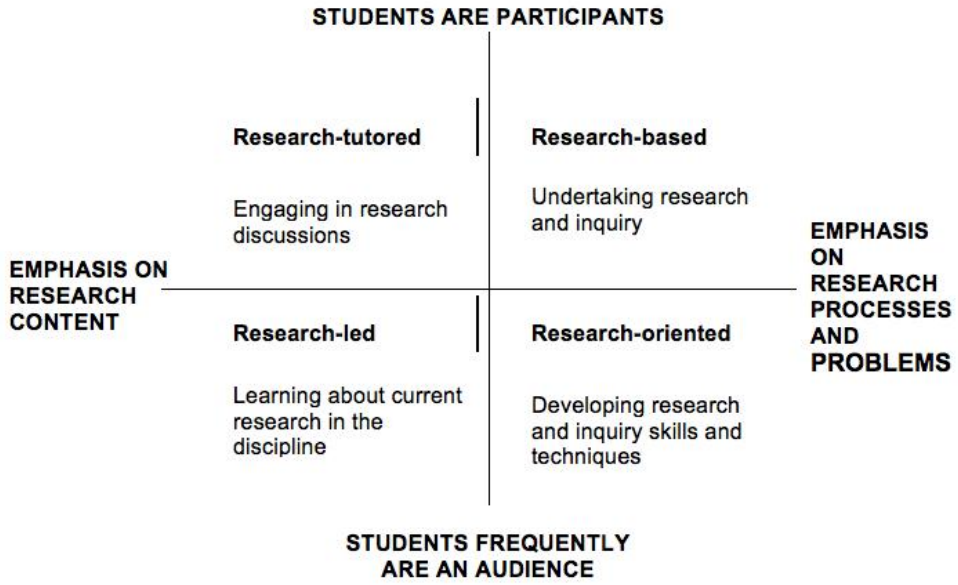

Figure 1. The nature of student research and inquiry. Source: (Healey & Jenkins, 2009, p. 7).

The argument as to whether undergraduate research is for all or selected students is in part a political question - to whom and for what, do national systems and institutions allocate resources, in particular faculty time? But for us it is largely an educational and/or philosophical question as to the nature of *higher* education. We are persuaded by the arguments of those, such as Ron Barnett (2000), that what distinguishes *higher* education is the emphasis on helping students to live in a super complex world and that the curricula task is for "lecturers (to) adopt teaching approaches that are likely to foster student experiences that mirror the lecturers' experiences as researchers" (p. 163).

The Research Evidence

There is growing international research on teaching and discipline-based research relations. In brief this shows that the asserted close interconnection between research and the curriculum is professed more than it is delivered, and in Brew's (2006) powerful phrase too often undergraduate students are "at arm's length" from the worlds of university research (p. 52).

Particularly important to our argument here is the research of Baxter Magolda. Based on a detailed interview-based study of students' intellectual development during and after university, she has argued that university curricula need to support student and citizen development from

...absolute knowing *(where) students view knowledge as certain; their role is to obtain it from authorities (to)* contextual knowing*(where) students believe that knowledge is constructed in a context based on judgment of evidence; their role is to exchange and compare perspectives, think through problems, and integrate and apply knowledge. (Baxter Magolda, 1992, p. 75).*

However, too often curricula "frame learning as the passive acquisition of knowledge" (Baxter Magolda, 2008).

We have gathered a large collection of 'interesting' international examples of mainstreaming undergraduate research from a range of disciplines, institutions and national systems (Healey & Jenkins, 2009). A small selection is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of 'interesting' curriculum interventions

Coordinated interventions in zoology at University of Tasmania, Australia

Years Two and Three

- All invited to participate in Student Research Volunteers program (http://www.zoo.utas.edu.au/Staffpg1/summvolunteer3.htm). Volunteers are matched with mentors, usually Postgraduate or Honours students, for short-term, in-house research placements that may offer either laboratory or field experiences.

Years One, Two and Three

- 'Reach into Research' seminars held several times each semester (www.zoo.utas.edu.au/rir/rir2&3.htm). Speakers from industry, collaborating institutions and PhD students present their research, and then all non-undergraduate audience members, except the facilitator, leave the room.

Source: (Edwards et al., 2007).

Miami University Ohio, US, are embedding inquiry into the largest courses

They have instituted a Top 25 project in which over a four-year period the largest recruiting courses, mainly at first year level, are being supported to convert to inquiry-based learning.

Source: (Hodge et al., 2008).

Undergraduate research at University of Gloucestershire begins at induction

In 2007 over 650 students in the Faculty of Education, Humanities and Science undertook discipline-based inquiry projects during induction week. This involved them working in small groups to collect information from the library and in the field, analyse it, present it to tutors in novel ways, and receive formative feedback. For example, the human geographers and the sociologists researched the experience of Gloucester residents of 'the Great Flood of 2007'. The biologists and the psychologists investigated primate behaviour at Bristol Zoo, while English Literature students visited an arboretum and explored the use of trees in literature. Social and

academic activities were integrated, the students had fun, and, importantly, they made friends. The approach was developed, and initially supported, by the Centre for Active Learning (http://resources.glos.ac.uk/ceal/pre-induction/index.cfm). It has proved a significant staff development activity both for the many academic tutors and the library staff who changed their approach to library induction to support the specific student research projects. Over the next two years other Faculties in the University are developing their versions of developing undergraduate research as part of induction.

Academic journal writing in geography at Oxford Brookes is part of course requirements

The geography programme at Oxford Brookes has developed a set of linked requirements that support all students learning to write research articles. In the second year all students undertake field-based research in a range of venues. A third-year compulsory first semester course 'Geography Research and Practice' has as its main assessment students writing an article of up to 4,000 words from the data collected in the second-year fieldwork (http://www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/social/geoversity/index.html).

Source: (Walkington & Jenkins, 2008).

Undergraduate research programmes at University of Michigan, US, support racial diversity and widening participation

While the University had been successful in recruiting Afro–American students from inner-city Detroit their dropout rate was high. Special programmes were targeted at these students in years one and two to enhance their integration and academic success with significant positive impacts.

Source: (Huggins et al., 2007).

Where next?

We know of many examples of interesting practices for engaging students in research and inquiry in individual modules, but far fewer cases where undergraduate research has been mainstreamed across a course, department, institution or national system. More strategic interventions to reinvent the curriculum, such as Miami University Ohio is attempting, are needed.

We believe that undergraduate research and inquiry should be an important part of the curriculum from the day students start studying at University, and perhaps before then, as the example of the University of Gloucestershire suggests. Undergraduates should be included in the research community, as happens with zoology students at Tasmania, and not kept 'at arm's length' from the worlds of research.

Finally, we echo the perspectives of Angela Brew (2007)

For the students who are the professionals of the future, developing the ability to investigate problems, make judgments on the basis of sound evidence, take decisions on a rational basis, and understand what they are doing and why is vital. Research and inquiry is not just for those who choose to pursue an academic career. It is central to professional life in the twenty-first century. (p. 7)

In other words, as David Hodge (2007) President of Miami University, says, "undergraduate research should … be at the center of the undergraduate experience" (p. 1).

Acknowledgement

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Professor Alan Jenkins has long taught and researched in the fields of geography and contemporary China studies in the UK and North America. He was a founding editor of the international *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*. He is now an educational developer and researcher on higher education and Emeritus Professor at Oxford Brookes University, UK. His current main area of expertise is on the relations between teaching and discipline-based research and on the

related topic of adapting and mainstreaming US style undergraduate research programmes. He has given workshops and done consultancies on these issues in the UK and internationally and has researched undergraduate and postgraduate views of academic staff research and academic staff experience of teaching and research relations. He is a Reinvention Fellow at The Reinvention Centre for Undergraduate Research at Oxford Brookes and Warwick Universities. Professor Jenkins can be contacted at alanjenkins@brookes.ac.uk.

Dr. Mick Healey, Ph.D., has a long history in higher education and is a higher education consultant, researcher, Emeritus Professor, and former director of the Centre for Active Learning (CeAL) (a nationally funded Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning) at the University of Gloucestershire, UK. In 2000 he was awarded a National Teaching Fellowshipand in 2007 he was made a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Since 1995 he has given over 350 presentations and keynotes in Australasia, Europe, North America and Southeast Asia. Since 1995 he has given over 350 educational workshops, seminars, keynotes and conference presentations in several countries. He has written and edited over 150 books and articles on teaching and learning in higher education. He is also the co-editor of the *International Journal for Academic Development*. Professor Healey can be contacted at mhealey@glos.ac.uk or at his website or via his LinkedIn profile.

A Holistic Approach for Establishing Social Presence in Online Courses and Programs

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Abstract

In this feature article, a case study of the holistic efforts to foster social presence and student success in online courses and programs at a mid-sized rural university in central Texas are described from an instructor's point of view as well as from an administrator's point of view. Specific instructional and support strategies are described. These synergistic efforts are used to foster an atmosphere of support and success for students enrolled in online courses and programs.

Keywords: Online learning environment, learning management systems, instructional design, instructional support, social presence theory, social networks.

Introduction and Background

The Internet has transformed the way in which people relate and feel close to one another - all without the necessity of close physical proximity. This was not always perceived to be the case for online learning environments, as early critics believed that the absence of social cues would interfere with teaching and learning (Berge & Collins, 1995). However, this stigma of a sterile online learning environment has diminished with the development of complex social networks and virtual worlds, advanced online instructional tools, and the prevalence of high-speed Internet connections that allow for meaningful real-time connections. Researchers are now beginning to move beyond the question of whether the online learning environment allows students to feel connected, and are now delving into how the connections students form relate to learning (Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, & Fung, 2010; Dow, 2008; Kehrwald, 2008).

The shift in perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the online learning environment as a communication medium is attributed to a better understanding of behaviors (instructor/student) in the environment as it relates to feelings of connectedness, and in part to the improvement in the tools that are inherent to most Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as asynchronous discussions and synchronous chat tools. When used appropriately, these tools allow students and faculty to interact in a way that closely mimics face-to-face interaction. Even still, students and faculty have to log-in to an LMS and navigate to several different locations in the course to engage in discussion, collaboration, and sharing, thus the communication is sometimes forced out of the day-to-day, hour-to-hour, and minute-to-minute experience (Dunlap & Lowenthal,

2009). Many instructors are now leveraging tools that are *outside* of the LMS to find ways to keep students connected to the course and the content. The current popularity and growth of web-based social networking tools is prompting educators within organizations and institutions, including higher education, to consider how these tools can enhance online learning (Salaway, 2008; Weekes, 2008; Wexler et al., 2008; Young, 2007).

Another shift of perception has to do with the support structure and online learning community that develops as students and instructors co-navigate through typical roadblocks (i.e. technical, how-to, and informational) inherent to online learning. Providing both instructors and students with a strong support structure throughout this process is vital to the development of social presence in an online course or across an online program of study. Positive integration of student and faculty support, as well as the use of effective technology encourage meaningful interaction between students and college professionals, and can provide a successful model for effective teaching and learning that helps to ensure student success (Floyd & Casey-Powell, 2004).

A theory that connects both the need for intentional instructional strategies for communication and intentional support strategies from the institution for building community is Social Presence Theory [i]. The conceptual underpinnings of social presence in online learning environments were derived from Garrison, Anderson, and Archer's (2000) community of inquiry model and have been described as the feeling that group members communicate with people instead of impersonal objects. As communication channels are restricted, social presence may decrease. When social presence is low within a group, group members often feel disconnected and cohesion levels are low. When social presence is high, however, each group member has the feeling of joint involvement. Aragon (2003) noted that the overall goal for creating social presence in any learning environment, whether it be online or face-to-face, is to create a level of comfort at which people feel at ease around the instructor and the other participants. Without this goal being achieved, the learning environment can turn to one that is not fulfilling or successful for the instructors and the learners. While research is rich with regard to broad instructional strategies that can be used to foster social presence, practical strategies and examples for faculty and the institution to use are lacking in the literature. The purpose of the two case studies presented here is to describe specific social presence related instructional and support strategies used to foster an atmosphere of support and success for students enrolled in online courses and programs in a large rural university.

Figure 5, Tarleton, Cushing Library (Credit: Texas A&M University Archives, 2009)

With slightly over 7,500 students, the university is a member of the Lone Star Conference and is classified as a Carnegie Master's Large institution. While most of the students who attend are Caucasian American (83.4%), 7.5% of the students are Hispanic American, 6.3% are African American, 1% are Native American, and .9% are Asian American. Over 21.3% of the students have part-time enrollment status and 35.8% receive Federal Pell Grant funds (Educational Trust, 2007). Within a four-year time frame (Fall 2007 to Fall 2010), the number of online courses offered has increased 138% from 266 in 2007 to 634 in 2010 (<University's Institutional Research Office>, 2010).

The rest of the article is organized as follows: the two sections following present in detail the experiences and practices of the authors with regard to infusing social presence in the online learning environment. The concluding section provides recommendations and directions for further research based on the findings.

Infusing Social Presence in the Online Learning Environment: A Faculty Member's Perspective

As a faculty member for five years, student services practitioner for four years, and a millennial college student who took a plethora of online courses, Dr. Jennifer Edwards has a view of the online teaching environment that many faculty may not possess. Over the years, learning management systems have changed, but the online teaching practices/methods she's incorporated have generally remained the same. It seems that the faculty members who strive to remain socially present with their online students are more successful than their counterparts who do not strive for social presence. In the online learning environment, Dr. Edwards strives to establish social presence in the courses she teaches by employing the following practices: providing virtual office hours, sending weekly checklists and grading rubrics, utilizing social media websites for announcements and for forming professional relationships with students, and developing students' online collaboration skills.

Providing Virtual Office Hours

Traditional office hours are usually restricted to times and days that accommodate the professor's teaching and research schedule (Wallace & Wallace, 2001). Students who enroll in online courses might not live on campus and this provides an opportunity for online instructors to support these students by hosting virtual office hours (Edwards & Helvie-Mason, 2010). Virtual office hours provide opportunities for students to communicate with their professor without the constraints of traditional office hours. In addition to the student benefits, professors can conduct their office hours from virtually any location (e.g. , while on vacation) and through a variety of communication media (e.g. smart phone, iPad®). These benefits are support mechanisms for both professors and students to communicate with one another in real-time while working, on vacation, or while completing an assignment/paper on their computer.

Since 2007, Dr. Edwards has provided virtual office hours for students in both online and face-to-face classes facilitated by Yahoo® Instant Messenger. She hosts five virtual office hours per week and usually has two to three students communicate with her during this hour-long period. Most students like having the option to communicate with their professors during virtual office hours in addition to traditional communication methods (Edwards & Helvie-Mason, 2010). The 81 students who were enrolled in four past classes during the Spring 2009 semester contributed 51 favorable responses regarding virtual office hours. The following response categories emerged: easier to contact professor (15), increased opportunity (11), virtual office hours are more convenient (22), virtual office hours provides students with an immediate response (3). Virtual office hours provide support for all students who need real-time help from their online instructor without actually having to visit their office.

Sending Weekly Checklists and Grading Rubrics

Checklists and grading rubrics are additional practices that online instructors can adopt to support their online students. Every Monday, Dr. Edwards sends a checklist of items (action items) that need to be completed by the following Friday (the day that all online assignments are due). In the e-mail, Dr. Edwards forms check boxes by each of the "action items" and their locations on Blackboard® (the platform used by the university LMS). Most of the online students print this check list and post the list on their computer or refrigerator. Checklists provide students with an easy mechanism to see the pending assignments for the week and the due dates and make them aware that the professor is keeping up with their required activity from week to week.

Grading rubrics also provide support for students by enabling them to become familiar with the grading criteria for each assignment when it is assigned. Usually utilized for online assignments and discussion questions (Penny & Murphy, 2009), grading rubrics can be used for all assessment types and online presentations. Online evaluation tools (grading rubrics) are usually available in content management systems such as Blackboard®.

Using Social Media for Announcements and Forming Professional Relationships

Online instructors can use Twitter® to send announcements and form professional relationships with their students. "Twitter®, a micro-blogging service, has the potential to function as a teaching tool which can bring students and professors together in real-time applying classroom content to current events" (Helvie-Mason & Edwards, 2010, p. 35). In her online courses, Dr. Edwards embeds a Twitter® widget on the Blackboard® course homepage. This widget enables students to see each of the professor's tweets without having to create an account. On average, she sends over 250 tweets per semester. Most of the tweets are focused on announcements, grading updates, and student encouragement.

Collaborative Group Assignments

Figure 6, "Faculty At Work". (Credit: UoB Special Collection, 2006).

Google Documents® provides faculty and students with a wealth of collaboration opportunities. In an upper-level undergraduate course taught online, Dr. Edwards developed an activity which required groups of four to five students to write a group research paper using Google Documents®. This assignment enabled these students to learn how to use Web 2.0 software (Google Documents®) and how to remain accountable to each other. She spends an average of four to six hours a week managing and grading the group documents. This time investment provides the students with critical social interactions that serve as an essential part of a student's educational foundation (Roschelle & Teasley, 1995). Computer-mediated communication and collaborative learning equips students with interactive abilities and problem-solving skills within small groups.

Infusing Social Presence in the Online Learning Environment: An Administrator's Perspective

Dr. Credence Baker has worked with online students and faculty for over seven years in various support roles, and now serves as the director of a central university wide support structure - the *Center for Instructional Innovation.* Like her colleague and co-author, she comes from the millennial generation of college students, and has taken online and hybrid courses throughout her undergraduate and graduate studies. Her focus from an administrator's perspective is to provide faculty and students with holistic support in the online learning environment. Thus, she believes it is critical to provide faculty and students with technical, how-to, development and liaison-type support in order for them to be successful and to feel connected to the online learning community. The staff at the *Center for Instructional Innovation* seek to foster a sense of "online learning community" among students and faculty using the LMS by applying the strategies such as a dedicated helpdesk, creating communities with the LMS, personalized welcome messages, training and development services, and obtaining and acting upon faculty and student feedback.

Supporting Students - A Centralized, Dedicated Helpdesk

A centralized helpdesk serves as the communication hub for faculty and students to get help with the LMS and all of the university's online instructional tools (among them, TurnitIn®, Web 2.0 tools, e-Portfolio software). Helpdesk services include technical support, password help, and "how do I" questions. In the last long semester, the helpdesk assisted users with ten different instructional tools via 4198 support calls, 1095 remote sessions, and 1420 support e-mails. Because of the helpdesk's mono-focus on online instructional tools, faculty have come to trust its personnel as a source of information and reliable form of support for their students, who can get help over the phone, via remote desktop support, or via e-mail. Social media channels are also used at the university for communication purposes, and include Facebook®, Twitter®, and YouTube®. Another part of the success of the helpdesk has been the in-depth online training and FAQ materials developed with student needs in mind. These materials can be utilized no matter what stage a student is at in using the LMS, and are updated each semester.

Supporting Students - Opening E-Mail

Just before a new semester, 1200 online students receive a personalized e-mail from the helpdesk welcoming them to the online learning community and pointing them to resources/assistance. It has sections for logging-in, getting to know the LMS, course availability, and getting help. The e-mail is designed to be warm and welcoming, and has been well received by students at the university.

Supporting Students – Online Learning Communities

The helpdesk has set up over fifteen different student and faculty learning communities for academic and non-academic programs where students can utilize the LMS as a forum for information and resources related to their specific interests and research areas. Some of these learning communities last throughout a students' entire academic program, and allow students to remain connected even when a semester has ended. The hope is that students will begin to view the LMS as a place to collaborate, rather than just a place to take online classes.

Supporting Faculty - A Centralized, Dedicated Helpdesk

The same centralized helpdesk that is available for students is also available for faculty to contact for help with the LMS and its ancillary tools/plug-ins. Services for faculty include technical support, account creation, "how do I" questions, multi-media creation, test bank requests, etc. Faculty can also get help over the phone, via remote desktop support, or via e-mail. Online FAQ materials were also developed for faculty, and serve to supplement the face-to-face and remote desktop training offered in both group and individual sessions.

Supporting Faculty - Faculty Training and Development Services

Besides extensive "how-to" training offered online and in group settings, faculty have access to development services in the areas of teaching and learning through an initiative started in 2009. These services include faculty round table discussions, faculty learning communities (online and hybrid models), instructional mentoring, and event/conference offerings. The idea is to provide faculty with a trusted place to discuss the very private issues of improving teaching methods, thus all services are offered on a voluntary basis. Two faculty fellows were selected to lead the initiative, and work closely with the help desk to find out what kinds of issues faculty and students are running in to.

Continually Improving Support – Getting Faculty and Student Feedback

Figure 7, "eLearn". (Credit: Wolfgang Greller, 2006).

The support services provided for faculty and students have evolved with the increase in the number of faculty and students using online instructional tools not only for online courses, but for hybrid and face-to-face component courses as well. Since 2006, the university has seen an increase in fully online courses from 102 per semester to 570 per semester, and for hybrid/component courses, an increase from 162 per semester to 828 per semester. Staffing for the services has grown from one full-time equivalent (FTE) position and a graduate assistant, to five FTE positions, two graduate assistants, and four part-time student technicians. Funding for the growth in staffing was provided through distance education fees generated during the exponential growth in enrollment. The *Center for Instructional Innovation* has been strategic about infusing a climate of customer service and respect for the user, whether they are a faculty member or a student. In order to continually meet the needs of our users, feedback is solicited from both faculty and students each year via an online satisfaction survey. While it is very encouraging to see that the results are consistently in the 98-99 percentile in terms of satisfaction, the open-ended questions about suggestions for improvement and ideas for innovative new tools are perhaps the most beneficial. Giving users the chance to provide input into where the university heads with regard to instructional technology only enhances an overall sense of inclusion and community.

Concluding Remarks

Creating an atmosphere where online students feel supported and connected to both the institution and their instructors as a framework for promoting social presence and student success

is a shared and interconnected responsibility. Faculty need to feel confident that they can rely upon a support structure that assists their students, is a trusted liaison, offers instructional tool training and support, and provides avenues for exploring best practices. When the latter points are met, faculty can focus on incorporating strategies for more effective online teaching. It is important to note that the strategies mentioned in this article are not comprehensive and are continually evolving, and each instructor and institution is different. Future research regarding social presence theory and establishing social presence in the online learning environment and about holistic approaches of providing students with a more connected experience should be explored, including which specific strategies of mutual responsibility between faculty and the institution are related to student success and learning.

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A Plea for "E" to Excite, Engage and Enrich the Student Learning Experience

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Many years ago, a lecturer came to the Centre in which I worked to discuss 'putting his course online'. It didn't take too long to discern that this lecturer's conception of an online course was simply for us to take his notes and 'put them on the web'. The lecturer could almost be forgiven for having this poor conception of online learning because there was at the time no Learning Management System (LMS) in the university under discussion, up-skilling academic staff through professional development opportunities was in its early stages and the thinking about how technology could be effectively embedded into learning and teaching was not hugely advanced. In his own way this lecturer was being innovative at the time.

In the 21st century however, uploading lecture notes and PowerPoint presentations into the institutional LMS so that students can access them 24/7 is good but hardly justifies the investment in technology being made by higher education institutions and it does not constitute much of an e-learning experience for our students. However, it is still the case that many academic staff are reluctant to consider the potential of technology to engage students in authentic learning experiences, empowering them to become co-creators of new knowledge.

Taking the issue of the student learning experience as a starting point, the prevailing rhetoric is that we must engage students in the learning process and encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning. This seems quite reasonable until we interrogate the concept of 'engagement' as applied to university level learning. George Kuh, a highly respected educationalist states that:

The engagement premise is straightforward and easily understood: the more students study a subject, the more they know about it, and the more students practice and get feedback from faculty and staff members on their writing and collaborative problem solving, the deeper they come to understand what they are learning and the more adept they become at managing complexity, tolerating ambiguity, and working with people from different backgrounds or with different views (Kuh, 2009).

On one hand this is an excellent definition. On the other hand it assumes, firstly, that students enter into university already knowing their responsibilities in the learning and teaching contract and secondly, it assumes that the university is a more perfect place than it actually is. We only need to look at data from student surveys to know that the questions relating to receiving timely and meaningful feedback that enables students to achieve higher attainment levels almost always receive a poor score. That students are consistently asking for meaningful feedback on their work

which will enable them to enhance their current attainment levels; this would seem to indicate the need for a higher degree of personalisation of the learning and teaching experience.

A simple literature search will reveal many variations on Kuh's definition of 'engagement' but an interpretation of student engagement that reflects the changing nature of learning and teaching at university level in the 21st century is that put forward by Linda Deneen (2010):

"Student engagement is a rendezvous between learning and the digital tools and techniques that excite students."

This definition leads me to pose the question: what barriers are there to 'engaging' students in the processes of learning in a 'digital age'?

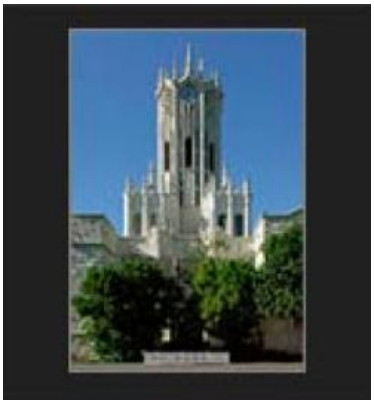
Many of the students entering into university today have grown up with interactive technology. The social networking tools available and their popularity mean that our students are content-creators not just content-consumers. Unfortunately, while we read and hear plenty rhetoric about 'the changing university' (e.g. Barnett, 2000), there appears to be nowhere quite like academia for resisting serious, sustainable change and adapting to changing circumstances. Many of today's learners arrive at university fluent in the use of technologies their teachers have yet to encounter. For the first time in history, 'digital immigrant' teachers need to learn what their 'digital native' students already know in order to engage and teach them effectively (Gunn, 2010). Learners today need to master core subjects, 21st century themes and 21st century skills, but this in turn means that academic and support staff must be proficient in 21st century approaches to facilitating student learning. As Schroeder et al. (2010) have expressed, the expectation that online learning would radically change approaches to teaching and enable colleges and universities to create new revenue streams has not materialised. The issue that universities have in general failed to grasp is that digitization of the face to face delivery mode not only invites a radical shift in our approach to facilitating student learning, it demands a conceptual shift and a rethink of pedagogy, curriculum and instructional design.

It is a challenge to 'engage' students of today if we live in the past ourselves using predominantly what students consider to be outdated modes of teaching. Part of the challenge in developing and providing an e-learning environment and learning experience which is designed to excite and engage students in learning is to address the silo-ed and hierarchical nature of higher education institutions. Too many institutional strategic plans still treat the learning and teaching strategy as a separate entity from e-learning, whereas e-learning should constitute an integral aspect of the overall learning and teaching strategy. There is insufficient communication between different stakeholders in the educational enterprise. Often the institutional culture results in the selection of technologies the technologists favour rather than the business case being made for technology solutions which fit with the institutional culture, vision and mission. This is not a matter of centralized versus decentralized services within an institution, rather the real discussion on IT and digital issues needs to be about demand planning

and service delivery, and where those activities most appropriately belong to achieve maximum benefit at both the institutional and local levels. Instead of feeling complacent about enabling access to lecture notes, outlines and presentations 24/7 we should be thinking big about the "e" in e-learning. "The "e" in e-learning means much more than "electronic" when applied to e-learning — think instead of a big "E" for "exciting, energetic, engaging, extended" learning" (Deneen, 2010).

The starting point for any e-learning capacity building strategy begins from the perspective of the pedagogy. Most staff working in the area of academic development share the fundamental belief that pedagogy should drive learning environments, and not the other way around. Technology should not be used for the sake of technology. We need to engage more with the curriculum for any programme of study and use technological solutions that will improve teaching and learning. It is necessary to bring the scholarship of learning and teaching to the forefront to develop pedagogically sound 'learning objects'.

Within any e-learning team, the role of Learning Designer is critical to putting pedagogy before technology. Learning Designers need to have knowledge and understanding about student approaches to learning, have expertise in instructional design and be engaged in evaluative research into the effectiveness of their practice. For these reasons the position of Learning Designer should be an academic one rather than as it is often conceptualised, as a technical or administrative role. Within my own institution I have successfully made the case for many of the roles associated with building e-learning capability and capacity, including Learning Designers, to be academic positions.



An ongoing issue to be addressed is the skills level of academic staff in embedding e-learning in a meaningful way into their courses and programmes. For some faculty, the idea that they should use technology in teaching in effective ways is seen as an add-on to their workload, but with a generation of digital natives arriving at university with their increasingly sophisticated personal digital tools and mobile devices, this will present major challenges for universities promising to provide an excellent learning experience for their students and different modes of curriculum delivery appropriate to the digital age.

Building e-learning capacity and capability across large, complex, universities is no easy task. There often appears to be a dislocation between investment in the digital infrastructure, including hardware and software and the funding available to support staff in rethinking pedagogy and conceptualising a 'digital curriculum' As is evident from the current budget cuts impacting heavily on academic development centres in the UK and Australia, academic development is not overwhelmingly supported within universities. We can argue that this is precisely the time when academic development should be central to the institutional mission, signalling to stakeholders in the educational enterprise that we are committed to continuous enhancement of the student experience and the continuing professional development of staff to adapt to a rapidly changing world.

In this context, it is a challenge to ensure that all learners acquire the academic literacy skills that will be increasingly required and necessary for ongoing study and the employment market. Academic literacy skills are the key to applying discipline specific knowledge in professional practice contexts. An emergent stream of practice uses e-learning tools and strategies to embed academic literacy skills in course and curriculum design, thus offering unique opportunities to ensure that standards do not fall as enrolment numbers rise (Gunn, 2010) but it will require significantly more investment in learning and teaching enhancement to ensure all staff involved in facilitating student learning do themselves have these skill sets. Universities are being very slow in responding appropriately to the urgent need to rethink their overarching role in society and their contribution to global economic wellbeing and recognising that a holistic response to providing an engaging, 21st century learning journey for all students is required.

We should be asking serious questions about the return on investment in new technologies, but the questions we ask should relate to: the necessity to rethink pedagogy in a digital age, the student learning experience, particularly with respect to engagement and attainment; the proficiency of staff, both academic and academic related in maximising the potential of the technologies available; the challenges and constraints associated with the effective use of technologies in learning, teaching and research. We should also be asking questions about institutional leadership and the extent to which the leadership itself understands the concept, and the potential of e-learning, and the rationale for and objectives of institutional investment in new technologies.

A plea for the 'e' in learning to provide an exciting, engaging and enriching learning experience for students and staff invites us to challenge the status quo, to take hold of the reins and restate the relevance and importance of universities in the 21st century.

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Feeding the Pipeline: Helping Students of Color Write College Entrance Essays for the University 2.0

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Abstract

Race as a factor in college admissions through affirmative action programs is declining rapidly in the United States because of public and political pressure and court decisions. Diversity on college campuses, however, benefits student learning outcomes and, more importantly, helps address persistent civil and socioeconomic inequities recognized as global issues in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This essay traces the landmark legal decisions that have led to significant restrictions on the use of race as a factor in college admissions, discusses the disadvantages of alternative preference factors such as socioeconomic status, and advocates a "pipeline" approach to improving student body diversity. In a "pipeline" approach, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including students of color, receive assistance in becoming college-eligible so they can be admitted "through the front door," without any admissions preferences whatsoever. The essay describes one tactic in a pipeline strategy: a workshop to help high school students prepare effective personal statements for college applications.

Keywords: race, admissions, higher education, affirmative action, narrative, rhetoric

Introduction

Figure 8, Photo by deltaMike under Creative Commons use: http://www.flickr.com/photos/deltamike/2982826572/

Colleges and universities overwhelmingly recognize the value of diversity among their student bodies, as has the United States Supreme Court. However, ways of achieving that diversity continue to be hotly debated, and will need to shift in the new climate of the "University 2.0," which transfers privilege from the institution itself to the students and the society it serves, and whose policies must reflect this paradigmatic swing. Rather than bemoan the decline of affirmative action, the University of the Twenty-first Century should seize this historical moment to move away from racial preferences in admissions and toward a strategy of more equitable access through a "pipeline" approach: helping students from disadvantaged backgrounds become college-eligible and matriculated.

In the last half-century, affirmative action programs have generally improved diversity in American colleges and universities. As Ginsburg and Merritt (1998) point out, affirmative action policies—similar to "positive action" in Europe and "reservations" in India—aim to further two complementary goals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: to "redress the historical and lingering deprivations of the basic civil right to equality" (a civil rights goal), and to improve the condition of "groups and communities that disproportionately experience poverty, unemployment, and ill health" (an economic rights goal). This international intention to "promote the health and welfare of humankind" (ibid, p. 194) clearly pertains to the realm of higher education, in that a college degree represents a ticket to a better life in virtually every nation.

In the United States, though, the progress in more equitable college admissions achieved through affirmative action has come with backlash, controversy, and increasing attacks in the courts and on the ground. Rightly or wrongly equated with racial quotas and "reverse discrimination," particularly in the radically individualistic United States, affirmative action based on racial preferences is probably gone forever.

Most people in higher education continue to seek fair and equitable admissions policies and procedures, however. Some have advocated shifting to preferences based on socioeconomic status rather than race, to which we shall return in a moment, but this approach has its own problems and outspoken detractors. Instead, tactics that help students from traditionally disadvantaged groups gain admission to college "through the front door," without admissions preferences at all, sidestep the political minefield of affirmative action. This strategy focuses on the "pipeline" of potential college applicants, engaging them in high school or even earlier to help them become eligible for college under preference-free admissions standards. One tactic in that strategy involves providing direct assistance to prospective applicants from disadvantaged groups who are writing their increasingly important personal statements or admissions essays. A brief review of the constriction of affirmative action will help contextualize the forthcoming description of one such essay-writing assistance program.

Affirmative Action: Limits and Alternatives

Affirmative action programs for higher education, in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement and the Brown v. Board of Education decision of 1954, clearly increased the numbers of students of color in colleges and universities. According to a report prepared for President Bill Clinton, only 4.9 percent of college-aged students were African American in 1955. After federally mandated programs were instituted in the 1960s and 1970s, the proportion increased steadily, such that the figure was 11.3 percent by 1990, only slightly below the proportion of Americans who were black ("Affirmative Action" 1995), more than double the rate forty to fifty years ago. Mills (2010) offers another, more recent way to look at it: In 2007, 55.7% of African American high school graduates and 64.0% of Latino high school graduates went to college, compared to 69.5% of white high school graduates. By 2009, the college attendance rate for African Americans rose to 69%.

Through a number of U.S. Supreme Court decisions, the scope of race-based affirmative action in higher education has narrowed considerably, especially in the last twenty years. In Gratz v. Bollinger in 2000, the Court upheld the principle that the State of Michigan had a "compelling interest" in pursuing racial diversity at the University of Michigan and so its consideration of race in admissions was permissible. The Court reaffirmed that stance in 2003 in Grutter v. Bollinger, a case involving the University of Michigan Law School. The Court stipulated that race may be considered as part of a holistic consideration of an individual's application, but that race cannot be used in a "mechanical" way, such as awarding points for minority status. However, noting that "the number of minority applicants with high grades and high test scores has indeed increased," Justice O'Connor wrote in the majority opinion that "we expect that 25 years from now, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary to further the interest approved today" (Grutter v. Bollinger, 2003, p. 31), suggesting that the Court does not expect to indefinitely support race-based affirmative action, even in the context of a holistic consideration of an individual's college application.

At five to four, the Grutter decision was a narrow one for the Court, a split that reflects the bifurcated attitudes of the American public. Few challenge admissions preferences given on the basis of athletic ability or legacy status, but many bristle at admissions preferences given on the basis of race. Espenshade, Chung, and Walling (2004) have found that the "athlete admission 'advantage' has been growing, while the underrepresented minority advantage has declined" in the nation's elite colleges. Those institutions "extend preferences to many types of students, yet affirmative action—the only preference given to underrepresented minority applicants—is the one surrounded by the most controversy" (p. 1422).

Although the Court, to date, has preserved affirmative action in college admissions, a shift in the Court's composition could change that precedent. Moreover, opposition to affirmative action is likely to increase as yet another post-Civil Rights generation comes of age. It seems clear that any form of perceived preferences based on race is on its way out. As Johnson (2004) observes, the Court's Gratz and Grutter decisions "virtually guarantee that the debate over affirmative action will rage again in the not-too-distant future" (p. 171).

Colleges and universities must therefore find other ways of encouraging student body diversity. In the 1990s, some tried to capture racial diversity by using socioeconomic status instead, based on the logic that Americans of low SES are disproportionately persons of color. Young and Johnson (2004) found that such an approach not only would lead to a more diverse class of admissions at selective colleges, but that the class would have stronger academic preparation than they have under current admissions policies. Others, such as Carnevale and Rose (2003), advocate using SES in addition to race among admissions criteria, noting that using SES alone will still leave students of color underrepresented. If, however, race becomes a forbidden factor in the near future, relying solely on SES, even as a proxy for race, will yield inadequate and inequitable results.

Another approach—the virtually automatic acceptance of the top, predetermined percentile of a graduating high school class—also reproduces racial inequities. A study by Long (2004) found that such an approach, ostensibly based solely on "merit," disproportionately favors white

applicants because students of color are underrepresented in the top tiers of high school graduating classes for historical and socioeconomic reasons. Moreover, Long notes that most students of color who were admitted to selective colleges that used this system would have been admitted under almost any system. Ultimately, this approach has failed to restore diversity to the freshman class.

Clearly, race as a factor in college admissions is vanishing. Yet these and other studies have shown that other approaches to diversifying student bodies—such as using SES as a proxy for race, or admitting a certain percentage of a graduating high school class—are inadequate in accomplishing what affirmative action has achieved. If colleges and universities want diverse student bodies, they need to find alternative approaches.

Feeding the Pipeline

Many colleges and universities, recognizing the value of holistic admissions in which more than raw grade point averages and SAT scores are taken into consideration, are relying more heavily than ever on the entrance essay or personal statement. Students who have little or no access to assistance with this crucial element of their applications will be at a significant disadvantage, even if they have been well-prepared academically. Some institutions, such as Tufts University, have even established an optional set of "Kaleidoscope" essays as part of their admissions process to augment their intentionally holistic review process (Vultaggio, 2009), a practice that further raises the stakes for effective essay-writing.

One tactic aims to even the playing field by assisting high school students from disadvantaged backgrounds present themselves in the best way possible, regardless of any preferences in the admissions process. The approach entails one or two hands-on workshops, conducted either in a community-based setting or at the college or university itself, that help students prepare the finest application essays they can. One example of these workshops has been collaboratively led by a high school language arts teacher and a university professor in two venues: at a community writing center for youth and on a college campus.

Community writing center

Figure 9, Photo by Steve and Sara Emry under Creative Commons use: http://www.flickr.com/photos/emry/2210651993/

Dave Eggers, the author of the bestselling novel, *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, launched a free, volunteer-run writing center for youth in San Francisco in 2002. Named after its street address, 826 Valencia, the center quickly became known as a hip place for young writers to go, whether they needed help with their school composition homework or yearned to produce screenplays or graphic novels. Through drop-in tutoring and planned workshops, the center has reached young San Franciscan writers from all parts of the city. Soon, regional chapters opened in New York, Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles, and Ann Arbor,

Michigan, all called "826" in a (somewhat confusing) tribute to the original center at 826 Valencia in San Francisco.

826 Seattle opened in 2004. Shortly afterward, as individuals interested in writing, the welfare of young people, and equity and diversity in college admissions, a local high school English teacher and a university professor began to offer two-hour college essay workshops for high school students. The need was clear. Students from all over the city and beyond got rides from their parents or took the bus, sometimes traveling for a couple of hours, to attend the workshops. Some arrived with rough drafts; most arrived with no idea how to approach the essay, and, in fact, with little knowledge of the application process itself. Since then, the pair of teachers has conducted several of these workshops, primarily in the fall for students working early on their applications and again in early winter for students inspired by the application deadline pressure.

Campus-based workshop

Another approach is to offer such workshops at the college or university. Campus-based workshops have advantages: Visiting a higher learning institution carries its own inspiration for students, many of whom might never have set foot on a college campus, and the school can serve as its own recruiting advertisement. Moreover, the facilitators can draw from the campus's resources, from infrastructure to photocopying. Some institutions provide another significant advantage. The University of Washington, for example, runs a highly successful program called Making Connections, which each year forms a cohort of a hundred high school girls from disadvantaged backgrounds—mostly from families of color and/or immigrant families—with the goal of getting them ready for and admitted to college. Most are first-generation prospective college students; some are even first-generation high school graduates. By tapping into that established, organized, and networked group, workshop facilitators could focus less on publicity and more on workshop content and hands-on assistance. The Making Connections cohort that graduated from high school last year achieved an astounding college placement rate of one hundred percent (Making Connections, 2011), representing an outstanding example of the pipeline approach to college admissions.

Whether held in the community or on campus, the essay-writing workshop content is essentially the same. The facilitators begin by having students introduce themselves and report where they are in the process, where they plan to apply, and what their specific goals are for the workshop—what they hope to have as they walk out in two hours. The leaders then divide the students into smaller groups, usually one for students who are just starting to think about their applications and one for students farther along in the process.

For students who arrive with rough drafts, or at least have made progress toward a rough draft, the facilitators' task is primarily to provide feedback and advice. Like most writers, students find it challenging to edit their own work, so the facilitators provide a critical reading that draws upon their own experience from the "other side" of the application process. College faculty and staff members know, in a way that the students, their friends, their families, and often even their high school teachers and counselors cannot know, what colleges want to see in an incoming freshman

class. Even for skilled writers, this perspective is invaluable, particularly for first-generation students.

The students just beginning to prepare their applications constitute a group more challenging and often more fun to work with. For them, the facilitators' task is to spark topic ideas and initiate planning for narrative structure and rhetorical strategies. They lead participants in brainstorming exercises aimed at identifying potential approaches to the admissions essay.

The facilitators start the workshop with an overview of the application process. Most students do not realize that colleges do not automatically accept the "best" students. They enter the workshop thinking that colleges care only about grades and test scores. Although facilitators certainly cannot tell students that grades and test scores do not matter, they can assure the students that colleges increasingly take a more holistic approach, and want students who add something interesting to the student body. The facilitators emphasize the point that applicants need to stand out as interesting people. Colleges will glean whatever they want from transcripts and test scores; those are now out of a student's control. What they still can influence is what they sound like as individuals. As Fred A. Hargadon, legendary admissions dean at Stanford University and then Princeton University, says, "The essay is the applicant's opportunity to breathe some life into the folder, to remind the reader that all of those numbers and letter grades and adjectives and test scores and lists of activities represent, for better or worse, yet another and different person out there" (Hargadon, 2002, p. 5).

The facilitators then provide general advice, such as steering clear of controversial topics, avoiding attempts at humor because they usually fail, and staying away from clichés like, "How I Won the Big Football Game." Having read hundreds, probably thousands of application essays, admissions officers want to see something fresh and unique. For example, a student who spent a summer rescuing sea turtles or organizing an urban food drive is likely to be more compelling than a student who expresses a vague desire for world peace.

Students often feel that nothing about them is particularly interesting or unique. To help show them that they can sound special even with an experience shared by many other applicants, the facilitators ask students to divide a piece of paper into six sections, and to place into each section a short description of one role, or one aspect of their lives, such as "trumpeter," "mother of three," "stamp collector," "frequent ship cruiser," "Libertarian," and "racquetball player." They then spend ten minutes elaborating on two of them, either explaining what one of those roles means to them or telling a short story relating to a role. The facilitators then work with them individually to develop one of those ideas into the core of an essay by helping them craft a story that conveys their personal growth, aspirations, and personality. Although they do not leave with a written essay, they depart with a plan, a direction, and a basic structure for their essay.

This kind of workshop also introduces students to two critical, interrelated issues: the personal statement as genre, and using the rhetoric of deprivation. A few hours in a workshop clearly are insufficient to address these issues, but the workshop presents an opportunity to start students along a path of critical thinking and reflection that will be crucial to their success in college. Facilitators should explain to students that admissions essays typically follow a particular

structure, which relies upon and anticipates their readers' expectations. One can hew closely to that generic structure, or one can carefully depart from it, but either way, one ought to be intentional about the choice. Providing examples of conventional and unconventional admissions essays, available in several publications, can help students make more informed decisions about how to tell their story.

The issue of the rhetoric of deprivation presents an even greater challenge. On one hand, stories of hardships—familial, social, economic, educational, etc.—often are compelling and effective. Tales of immigrating to a new country and learning a new language, or growing up in poverty, or facing prejudice and discrimination because of one's race, often lead admissions officers—particularly in the United States, where the trope of the rugged individual pulling himself up by the bootstraps undergirds the social psyche—to want to give that student a chance at college. Although it is fair and useful for students to understand this phenomenon, facilitators also must point out that such rhetorical strategies might contribute to and reinscribe stereotypes regarding race and class. Facilitators should encourage students to critically assess the potential range of consequences of their choices regarding their narratives, particularly now that those stories play an increasingly important role in admissions decisions. As Lewis (2010) points out, "new colorblind affirmative action policies call for more flexible, narrative-driven assessments of difference and disadvantage" (p. 41), which colleges and universities ought to consider carefully.

In the meantime, though, potential applicants would benefit from familiarity with the complexities of such narrative strategies to enable mindful choices. (Lewis advocates focusing on these two issues—genre and "bootstraps" rhetoric—in first-year writing courses, where students can develop further their understanding of their function and implications.) Facilitators can encourage participants with stories of personal hardship to emphasize their assets (determination, perseverance, problem-solving skills, etc.) borne of their circumstances rather than the hardships themselves.

As the workshop concludes, students in both groups—the beginners and the ones farther along—are invited to e-mail drafts to the facilitators as they get closer to finishing their essays. Although by experience and inclination some facilitators are willing to offer editing and proofreading suggestions—always maintaining the student's own voice, of course—one need not commit to that post-workshop assistance.

Conclusion

Although not every city is fortunate enough to have a place like 826, every city does have a public library or community center that can host workshops like these. Community-based workshops have the advantage of flexibility of venue. Volunteer workshop facilitators—most of whom have easier transportation options than the target audience—can travel to the areas in the city with the highest demand. Students also are more familiar with and comfortable in their own neighborhoods and are more likely to attend a nearby workshop. With campus-based workshops, the principal benefit is to provide advice, scope, ideas, and direction to students, knowing that education can make a profound difference, not only to that student, but to her family, to her family's future generations, to her community, and to our society as a whole.

By walking into the college's front door, without any special preferences, the student enriches the education of her classmates and breaks down barriers based on misperceptions regarding racial preferences. Helping students of color with college entrance essays, therefore, serves as one small but important step in diversifying our University 2.0 campuses through a "pipeline" model and thereby striving toward social and economic equity.

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Disclaimer

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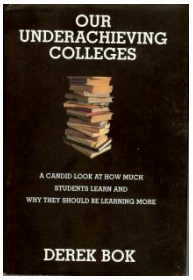
Creating Significant Learning Experiences

Dee Fink

Dee Fink and Associates

HETL: Dr. Fink, in your book *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*, you ask an important question faced by all educators who are interested in improving learning: Should we make the effort to change, or not? Some would say that major change is not necessary because the traditional model of higher education has worked well; it has helped create an explosion of new knowledge and has established a standard of living never seen before. So, why do you believe change is necessary?



Dee Fink [DF]: There are two major observations that make me believe change is necessary. The first is all the evidence, using multiple criteria, that we are not currently doing a good job in higher education. One of these is a study by Derek Bok [i], the former president of Harvard University. He did some careful research on how well American students were achieving eight kinds of learning we would all like to see in college graduates, e.g., how to communicate, how to think, how to live with diversity, preparing for a global society, etc. His conclusion for all eight kinds of learning was the same: Students are achieving each of these desirable kinds of learning to a degree but nowhere near what they *could be*and *should* be achieving.

The second source of concern is the new kinds of learning that are being identified as important in the 21st century. AAC&U (Association of American Colleges and Universities) recently asked a major set of civic and corporate leaders what kinds of learning they thought were essential today. They identified, among others: Information literacy, teamwork and problem solving abilities, intercultural knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning, integrative learning, preparing for lifelong learning. These are similar to the kinds of learning in my taxonomy of significant learning.

The problem is that most professors are so focused on communicating the content of their discipline, that they do not even see these additional, possible kinds of learning. Our students, though, are going to live their lives in the 21st Century, and it is already quite clear that life in this century is going to require more than just "knowledge of the various disciplines."

HETL: Dr. Fink, what specific types and levels of change are you referring to, and do these changes require an investment by educators?

DF: We need changes at three levels: the classroom level, the organizational level, and the national level.

At the classroom level, college professors need to learn about and use the many new ideas about teaching and learning that have been developed in the last two decades. The scholars of teaching and learning in higher education have generated a number of concepts and theories that can make a major difference in student engagement and student learning. These include active learning, learning-centered course design, effective use of small groups, educative assessment, reflective writing and learning portfolios, a deeper understanding of how people learn, deep learning, and others.

If we want our students to achieve **more powerful kinds of learning**, college professors need to learn about and use **more powerful kinds of teaching.**

For this to happen, we will need the second kind of change, at the organizational level. First and foremost, this means colleges and universities need to find ways to support and encourage college teachers in their effort to learn and use new ideas about teaching and learning. This is likely to involve new ways of evaluating teaching, evaluating faculty work, and rewarding faculty – all challenging tasks.

A third level of change must occur at the national level. Organizations involved in higher education that can influence individual universities – disciplinary associations, accrediting associations, quality assurance organizations, and ministries of higher education in the countries that have them – need to use their resources and leverage to encourage greater attention by universities to good learning and teaching.

In the USA, there is growing interest in such changes. In Europe, the Bologna Process has begun to encourage institutions to set learning outcomes for the whole institution; they call them "campus-wide competencies." In other regions of the world, I see a steadily increasing realization that better kinds of learning by university graduates are needed, more than just so many hours of seat-time and the ability to pass traditional tests.

HETL: Dr. Fink, how can resistance to change be overcome?

DF: The most effective way to deal with any resistance to change is to help people understand that a particular change is what they already want.

When working with professors, we need to recognize that they obviously do not enjoy seeing disinterested students in their courses, or the evidence of lackluster learning in the final exams. If we can help them see that new ways of teaching can make dramatic changes in both these situations, it would go a long way toward helping professors take a more positive attitude toward learning about new ways of teaching.

At the university level, we badly need a means of measuring the general quality of the educational programs at different institutions. Institutional leaders are well aware that they are competing for students, faculty, funds and prestige. If they could be "incentivized" to focus institutional attention on creating better curricula and promoting better teaching and learning

across the whole campus, this would make a huge difference in higher education, nationally and globally.

HETL: Dr. Fink, if the reward system for faculty is based upon the research they do, i.e., "publish or perish", and not specifically on the quality of teaching or on learning outcomes, then how will faculty be motivated to invest in developing student- centered learning?

DF: This is part of the institutional change that I just mentioned. Institutions need to find a reliable way to evaluate teaching, and then to give more weight to that in the overall assessment of faculty work.

Some institutions do a good job of evaluating teaching with procedures going beyond that of just collecting student questionnaires. But there also needs to be a culture-change on most campuses. When faculty vote (as is typical in most institutions in the USA) on annual merit raises or tenure questions, they need to put weight on the quality of teaching done and the learning outcomes – as well as on the traditional criteria of publications and grant dollars. To do this, they have to have faith in the way teaching is evaluated locally.

In an article published in 2008 [ii], I outlined a way of evaluating teaching that is focused on four major performance areas:

1. The quality of the professor's course design, e.g., learning & assessment activities aligned with good learning goals;
2. How well they interacted with students, e.g., enthusiasm, clarity, fairness;
3. The quantity and quality of student learning; and
4. Efforts to get better each year as a teacher, i.e., learning new ideas, changing the way they teach.

Universities would need different sources of information and criteria for each of these. Having standards for good teaching would accomplish two things. It would alert teachers that this is what they need to pay attention to if they want high teaching evaluations, and it would allow the university recognize and reward those teachers who really are performing well in these areas.

HETL: Dr. Fink, you make a distinction between a content-centered approach to course design versus a learning-centered approach. Can you briefly describe the differences between the two approaches, and why you believe a learning-centered approach is more effective?

DF: When we design a course using the content-centered approach, we basically do two things only: Identify the major topics, and then decide how much time we are going to spend on each. Our attention is focused on the relative importance of the different aspects of content.

When we use a learning-centered approach, the first thing we need to do is identify the kinds of learning we want our students to engage in. Then we need to identify the learning and assessment activities needed for each kind of learning:

- What will students need to do, to achieve that kind of learning? And,
- What will they need to do, for them and us to know how well they are achieving each kind of learning?

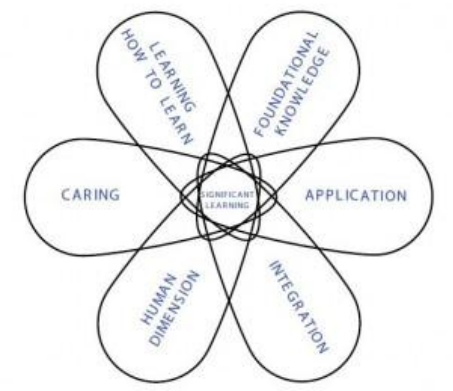
One major problem with the content-centered approach is that it tends to put teachers in an "information dispensing" mode of operation. We organize lots of information about the content of the course, and then try to "dump it" into students heads. Unfortunately, after the course is over, they often "dump it out", i.e., they have the retention problem I mentioned earlier.

Another major problem is that content-centered learning only supports one kind of learning, what I call "Foundational Knowledge": A basic understanding of terms, concepts, principles, possibly with some basic application knowledge. Students today need a lot more than that.

HETL: Dr. Fink, when you say students today need "a lot more than that", you are presumably referring to the concept of *significant* learning. What exactly is significant learning?

DF: Significant learning, as I use that term, refers to learning that meets two criteria: (1) learning that lasts beyond the end of the course, i.e., students retain the learning, and (2) learning that has an impact on their personal, professional, social or civic life, i.e., it changes how they think, feel, or act in their lives.

For several decades, I have been asking students: "Have you ever had a course that had a major impact on your lives, and when it did, what was it you learned that had an impact on your life?" When I did my own 'factor analysis' of their answers, I came up with the six categories in the taxonomy of significant learning.



Sometimes students said there was some content and basic application skills that were important. But more often, they referred to the following kinds of learning (my label for each kind of learning is shown in parentheses):

- complex application skills (Application),
- how to connect one kind of knowledge with other kinds of knowledge (Integration),
- understanding themselves and how to interact with others vis-à-vis a particular kind of knowledge (Human Dimension),
- the values and interests that can be associated with new kinds of knowledge (Caring), and
- how to keep on learning about a subject after the course is over (Learning how to learn).

HETL: Dr. Fink, you contend that traditional instructional methods are not very effective in achieving important kinds of student learning. Why do you believe this to be so and what are some of the problems faced by teachers using traditional instructional methods?

DF: First, let me identify what I mean by "traditional" ways of teaching. In general, this refers to a predominant reliance on lectures, homework and textbooks. In the humanities, this is often augmented by whole-class discussions, and in the sciences and engineering, by labs. Good things can happen with these methods, but student learning can and needs to be made even better. Here are the problems that teachers face when they cling to the traditional methods.

First, there is a serious problem with students retaining their knowledge. In one study [iii], students' performance at a "final" exam dropped 50% only two weeks after the initial taking of that exam. In another study [iv] it was found that students who had completed a particular course performed only 5-10% better than people who had never had the course (on a test on the course topic, taken one year after finishing the course).

Second, traditional teaching runs a serious danger of being boring. We see evidence of that in professors' complaints about how often their students are reading newspapers in class, or checking their email. But think about it from the students' perspective: How exciting can it be, to sit in a class day after day, where they only listen to one person and see nothing but the backs of other people's heads?

Finally, teaching aimed primarily at conveying knowledge is simply outdated in the 21st century. Students can look up all this information on their cell phones faster than we can talk about it! They need to be doing something else, both in-class and out-of-class.

HETL: Dr. Fink, what is this "something else" that teachers need to be doing? That is, if teachers accept your challenge of formulating learning outcomes for their courses such as you describe above, how can they achieve these new and ambitious kinds of learning? They have difficulty achieving their current learning goals, which are more limited than what you propose.

DF: You are absolutely right in raising this question. To achieve more powerful kinds of learning, teachers will need to use more powerful kinds of teaching. The good news is that the scholars of teaching and learning have developed an extensive set of new ideas about teaching and learning in the last two decades. Let me mention some. Some of these are theories dealing with how students learn (e.g., learning styles, how the brain works; see also the recent book on the 7 principles of how students learn [v]. Others pertain to some of the fundamental tasks of teaching:

- Learning-centered course design
- Classroom Assessment Techniques
- Service learning
- Collaborative learning
- Active Learning
- Educative assessment
- Assessment rubrics
- Learning portfolios
- Teaching strategies, e.g., problem-based learning, team-based learning, project-based learning, and inquiry-based learning.

Others deal with some of the special situations and needs in teaching, for example:

- How to deal with large classes
- How to deal with beginning students
- How to teach creativity.

Any teacher who can learn about and apply one or more of these educational ideas will see a substantial positive response from students. If they can use two or three of these ideas, the impact will be even more dramatic.

Anyone who aspires to the kinds of learning in my taxonomy will definitely need to start using several of these new, more powerful ways of teaching. And if they do, they will start to see more significant learning start to happen - and for many professors, the joy of teaching will come back. This is what many people who have read my book or taken my workshop report back to me: "Teaching is exciting again. This is why I wanted to be a teacher, to see students excited about learning."

HETL: Dr. Fink, some might contend that this approach is culture-specific. What is your experience in implementing it in countries with different cultures?

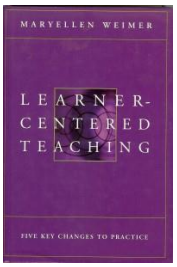
DF: One of the exciting aspects of my consulting experience have been the invitations to do faculty workshops in 13 countries around the world, in Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, New Zealand, and in several countries in Asia.

I can say, without reservation, that faculty members have responded enthusiastically to such things as learning-centered course design, small group work, and educative assessment. I have also had feedback from teachers in all these regions that, when they tried these ideas in their teaching, students responded very positively. Sometimes, especially in countries with strong traditions of lecturing, the teacher had to explain to students why they were doing what they were doing. But when they did that, students liked the new ways of learning much better. They liked the higher level of engagement and they could see the value [i.e., significance] of what they were learning much more clearly.

HETL: Dr. Fink, you state that learning should be an experience and not just a set of activities and that the teacher plays a critical role in shaping that experience. So, what should be the proper relationship between teacher and student in achieving significant learning outcomes?

DF: Obviously both teachers and students must fulfill their respective responsibilities for good learning to happen. The teacher structures the learning experience initially but it is the student who does the work of learning.

In her book [vi], Maryellen Weimer made the important suggestion that teachers can both empower and motivate students by sharing some of the decision-making power with the students.



In addition professors need to learn how to use their expertise, not just to make an organized presentation of what they know, but to formulate valuable learning outcomes, create learning and assessment activities that embody authentic tasks and standards of performance for a particular subject, and develop a positive, supportive relationship with students.

Students, the other major party in this process, need to develop a better understanding of what constitutes good learning and good teaching, and develop the skills for good learning. This will require help from their teachers and from university programs for beginning students.

It then becomes the responsibility of university leaders to find ways to encourage and support both faculty and students in the proper fulfillment of their respective responsibilities.

HETL: Dr. Fink, in summary, you contend that improving student learning starts with developing a new way of thinking about teaching and learning. How do we begin to do that?

DF: The first thing that has to happen, obviously, is that someone has to care, to care about the quality of teaching and learning in higher education. Then whoever cares has to develop a vision of what would have to happen to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Finally, whoever has this vision has to find a way to promote that vision; this generally will require both "top-down" and "bottom-up" processes.

For the bottom-up part, individual professors need to spend more time learning about the many new ideas about teaching and learning that are now available, and then use them. This is what faculty development programs are trying to achieve, where they exist.

The problem with many of these programs, though, it is often only the people inclined to be "early adopters of change", i.e., 15-20% of all faculty members, who participate. To increase the proportion of the faculty who regularly and continuously engage in instructional development, there also needs to be change at the organizational level; this is the top-down part of the process.

Campus leaders need to send a message:

"*This matters. This is not optional; faculty improving their capabilities as professional educators is essential for this institution to fulfill its educational mission*."

This can be done by promoting a change in the campus culture and/or by changing campus policies for things like evaluating teaching.

Institutions that succeed in making these changes are seeing a clear shift in the quality of teaching and, as a result of that, in the level of student engagement and the quality of student learning.

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Interview date & place: 9 September 2011 via Skype

HETL interviewers: Patrick Blessinger and Krassie Petrova

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Dr. Dee Fink currently works as a consultant in higher education (www.finkconsulting.info). In the last several years, he has led numerous workshops on integrated course design at conferences and campuses in the US, Canada, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. He served as the founding director of the Instructional Development Program at the University of Oklahoma (1979-2005). He received two awards for teaching excellence: He
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was the University of Oklahoma recipient of the national teaching award presented by the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE), the Jaime Escalante "Stand and Deliver" Award, April, 1989, and the recipient of the Outstanding Faculty Award, College of Liberal Studies, University of Oklahoma, 1992. Dr. Fink has been active for thirty years in the POD Network [Professional and Organizational Development] in Higher Education. He served as President of POD in 2004-2005. Dr Fink can be contacted at dfink40@gmail.com

Learner-Centered Teaching

Marilla Svinicki

University of Texas at Austin, USA

HETL: Dr. Svinicki, the main idea of your book centers on the need to create a learner-centered environment in and out of the classroom. You make the statement that "What is important is learning, not teaching." Are you saying that good teaching does not matter?

Marilla Svinicki [MS]: What I mean by that statement is that the purpose of teaching is to help learning happen. Teaching is not an end in and of itself. Even the best teacher cannot learn things for the students. Current learning theory places the control of learning in the hands and heads of the students. So what we have to focus on as teachers is not what we are doing. Instead we have to focus on what the students are doing to learn. In a learner-centered environment, it is the learners' actions that are the drivers of learning. So as teachers we try to provide opportunities for that active involvement in learning to occur. For example, learners might be invited to set goals for a learning session, to choose among activities that would help them meet those goals, to evaluate their own progress, and give feedback to the instructor about what they do and do not understand. The instructor would then use that feedback to offer further suggestions or activities that might target misunderstandings. Thus the instructor is acting in support of the learners rather than directing them.

HETL: Dr. Svinicki, you say that "Most student learning occurs outside the classroom." If this is so, then does good teaching make that much of a difference in student learning?

MS: In every novice/expert relationship, the expert has to create the environment that will facilitate learning, even if that environment is not under their direct control. Students are not in a position to decide on what they should learn. They are not prepared to suggest what the teacher has to offer, so good teachers probably have their impact in setting up the learning objectives, materials, activities and strategies that support student learning, even when it actually happens outside the classroom. I think that students do not do much consolidation of learning during class time. There is too high a cognitive load going on. It is not until they get actively into studying (which does not occur in most classrooms unless active learning opportunities are built into the session) that the actual learning occurs.

HETL: Dr. Svinicki, it seems that there has been, traditionally, a divide between teaching and research at many universities because the reward system for faculty has favored them doing research over good teaching. Are teaching and research incompatible? Can one be both a great teacher and a great researcher?

MS: Yes, the reward system in research institutions does tend to favor activities that are cutting edge research, and yet that is not because teaching and research are incompatible. Rather, research is what makes the institution's reputation, which allows it to attract students, supporters, and mostly money. But, of course, that is not what you asked. You want to know if I think research and teaching are incompatible. The only place where they are incompatible is in the zero sum game of time. The more you have to do of one, the less time you have to devote to the other. Really good teachers can be found both in the classroom and the research lab, teaching every time they interact with students. And really good researchers often find that when they are trying to explain a concept to students, they come up with ideas about moving the field forward. If we had all the time in the world, most faculty would choose to be good at both.

HETL: Dr. Svinicki, you talk about motivational theories in your book. Some say that it is not the role of faculty to be motivators. Is it important for faculty to understand how students are motivated? In other words, who is ultimately responsible for student learning? Is it the student or the teacher or the institution?

MS: Motivation, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder in current psychological theory. The motivating properties of a situation depend on the way the learner interprets what is going on. Two students can be exposed to the same educational situation and one will find it motivating and the other will not. However, that does not absolve the instructor from trying to tap into the sources of motivation that psychology has laid out for him or her. There is a lot we know about how to structure an environment to increase the probability that students will find it motivating.

For example, one interesting finding in the research literature is that students are very attuned to what we call the classroom goal structure. The goal structure refers to whether the instructor is primarily aiming for deep mastery of a topic or surface understanding, among other goals. I want to emphasize that either of these goals are legitimate for college classes. Some courses target a broad understanding while others aim for a much deeper but narrow learning. The goal structure is revealed by the way different activities are "valued" in the classroom (for example, how much time is devoted to each activity, which count in the grading structure or how the instructor interacts with the students, praising one action while ignoring others). Each of these characteristics is considered to be part of the motivational structure of the class. Students use these cues to determine what goals the instructor thinks are important.

If I were to give you three specific ideas that would support student motivation, I would say, first, take advantage of what is already motivating to the student by giving choices so that students will be able to work in ways that fit their own needs, thus putting them in charge of their own motivation. Second, I would suggest changing the goal structure of the class toward mastery by changing the meaning of making mistakes. Instead of viewing mistakes as being a bad thing, mistakes can be viewed as opportunities to correct misunderstandings by allowing students second chances to fix up their mistakes or explain how they came to make them. Finally I would suggest that we remember that students need to hear what they did right as well what they did wrong so that they can develop the belief that they are capable of learning.

HETL: Dr. Svinicki, you also talk about teaching students from different backgrounds. Some may also say that the main duty of teachers is to teach the content, irrespective of the expectations of the students. How would you respond to that view?

MS: I disagree strongly with that view. Our job is to help students learn, not fill them up with the latest content. The problem that usually brings this up is that each discipline is moving so quickly into new areas that faculty are convinced that every finding is important to everyone or needs to be understood before other findings are understood. I think we have to realize that it is no longer possible to be a fully informed adult; each of us must carve out what matters to us most and focus on that. So to expect all students to find value in everything we have to offer is naïve. Our strength is in recognizing and exploiting the differences in interest that eventually lead to wonderful new questions that would never have occurred to us if everyone knew what everyone else did and therefore never had a new idea or perspective.

HETL: Dr. Svinicki, you talk about active and collaborative learning. How possible is it to create an active and engaging learning environment for very large classes, say for a class size of 300?

MS: Well, active and engaging are not synonymous, so I cannot give you a single answer to solve everyone's dilemma. While it is definitely the case that collaborative learning is the most common way we think of using to produce engagement, active does not have to mean interacting with someone else. I can be active sitting by myself in my office reading a book – If I am actively reading that book. The same is true in large groups. Activity can be done by large or small groups or by an individual. However, sometimes what people have students do collaboratively is not really engaging them in learning. The activity we want is for learners to ask and answer questions about what they are learning. One of the most fruitful active learning strategies is for students to explain their understanding to one other person. You can certainly do that in classes of any size. Even rhetorical questions trigger thinking if the speaker would stop talking for a while and let the students think, while rote responding in a group activity does not. I think it is the type of questions or the problems that a teacher poses that foster active learning even in large classes. Of course, not all the students in a large class respond to the teacher's questions with a burst of thinking, but that is not confined to a large class; it happens in small ones, too.

Now about engaging – I know that many faculty bristle when I suggest that teachers are performers, but it is true. Mostly what students mean by engaging is enthusiastic and interested and bringing the content of the course into the real world by connecting it to the students' own experience. If you cannot do that about your topic, then you are not an expert after all. For example, "engaging" in a large class might mean bringing into the classroom real issues that are the current topic of discussion in the field and how those issues might impact student lives now or in the future. We now have the means to electronically "engage" students in classes of all

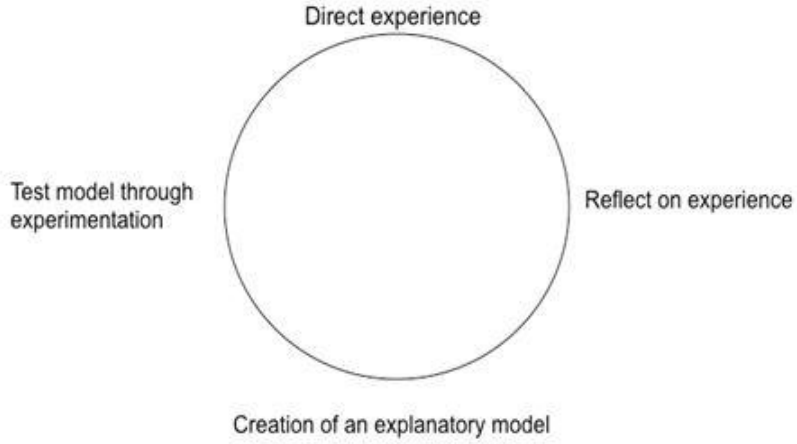
sizes. Posing a question and inviting students to use "clickers" to express their understanding or their opinion is a wonderful way of engaging students. My own students become very animated when we do this and reveal that not everyone has the same opinion. "Engaging" might mean inviting students in large classes to bring their own questions to class when something they have seen or read looks like it might be related to the course topic. This can easily be done through online discussion boards or email to the instructor, who can then bring the topic to class. "Engaging" might mean revealing our own individual thinking and motivations about the field, becoming a person to the students rather than just a source of information. None of these suggestions need to take a lot of time or effort, but they do change the focus of the course from just listening to "engaging."

HETL: Dr. Svinicki, some faculty have to deal with student problems such as emotional problems and disruptions in the classroom. How can faculty be expected to deal with such situations if they have not received any training in these areas?

MS: They should not, and at most institutions they are not expected to intervene. Most forward thinking institutions have individuals trained to work with students who are having difficulties, if they could just get in touch with them. Perhaps that is the best thing the instructor can do: get the student connected with the trained professional. If a student appears to be slipping, they often really just want someone to care enough to do something, even if it is refer them to someone who can help and then follow up later to see if they are ok. Being a concerned adult may be all we have to do, and surely we are all up to that task.

HETL: Dr. Svinicki, you also talk about experiential learning (EL) in your book. How practical is it to apply EL? Should EL be a part of every course?

MS: Absolutely! You may not mean what I mean when you say experiential learning. In reality all learning is experiential. We do something and get feedback from the situation. Therefore all courses and every part of a course should involve "experiential learning."



However, you may mean the more structured experiential learning models such as those based on Kolb's experiential learning cycle; for example problem-based learning, where students work to explore and solve problems based on real situations. It is used a lot in science and medical training. Another type of experiential learning is service learning, where students work in real world settings on problems that confront the agencies and communities in which they are placed. I do not think that structured experiential learning is possible or even appropriate for all classes and all levels of students. I think it is particularly important when students are at a level of wanting to integrate what they know. I do not believe absolute beginners should have that kind of advanced experiential learning because I am not convinced they even know what they are supposed to be learning. It takes some level of prior knowledge to benefit fully from an experience. There are small experiences that everyone can benefit from and those are something we should strive for in all courses. This is related to our earlier discussion about active learning.

HETL: Dr. Svinicki, course evaluations by students are not without controversy yet seem to be used more and more at universities. How effective are they in your view? And who should use them and for what purpose?

MS: There is so much research on this topic that it's difficult to summarize it in the space allotted. So I will just offer my perspective and invite the readers to consult the multiple articles that have attempted to do that very summarizing. In my view student evaluations are the most reliable and consistent source of data that we currently have on teaching at the postsecondary level. Many researchers have shown that student evaluations across several semesters and several courses provide a fairly stable view of student perspectives on teaching. They are especially valuable for improving one's own teaching, providing they are not considered the absolute end of information that can be gathered. Data should be gathered throughout the semester rather than solely at the end. We always say that they are best used for formative evaluation and as one of an array of data sources when evaluating teaching for summative evaluation.

HETL: Dr. Svinicki, you talk about the need to teach ethics. Some may contend that it is not the role of teachers to teach ethics. Others may argue that it serves no practical purpose because the examples of recent ethical breaches in the news show it has little effect. How would you respond to that?

MS: How can people be blind to the fact that every teacher is ALWAYS teaching ethics just by being there and interacting with the students? Their ethics are there for all to see every day in class or in office hours or even in the choices we make about how the course is structured. So some may think it is not our role to teach ethics, but it is impossible not to at least model our ethical values in all we do. We teach what and who we are by the way we behave in the day to day workings of our classes.

HETL: What would you want readers to take away from your book?

MS: Perhaps the most important thing is that the book illustrates that one can continue to learn about teaching by reading both the literature and the students. The literature, because there is literature on teaching that is grounded in research on learning and motivation, allowing us to find

practices that can help us be better teachers. The students, because as we said at the beginning of this interview, it is what the students do that matters. Being aware of what the students in one's class are doing is the best source of information to help us be better teachers.

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Interview date & place: 1 October 2011 via Skype

HETL interviewers: Patrick Blessinger and Krassie Petrova

Suggested citation

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Dr. Marilla Svinicki is a Professor and Area Chair (Human Development, Culture and Learning Sciences) in the Department of Educational Psychology and the retired director of the Center for Teaching Effectiveness at the University of Texas at Austin (USA). She currently teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in instructional psychology, learning, cognition and motivation. Her research interests include application of principles of learning to instruction in higher education and development of faculty and graduate students as teachers. In 2007, she received a lifetime achievement award from the American Educational Research Association's (AERA) Special Interest Group on Faculty Evaluation. In 2011, she received the Texas Exes Teaching Award at the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Marilla Svinicki was the editor-in-chief of *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* and is on the
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Board of Directors at The IDEA Center. She served twice as President of the POD Network. Dr. Svinicki may be reached at msvinicki@mail.utexas.edu

2011: A Year of Global Collaboration and Growth

Olga Kovbasyuk

Khabarovsk State Academy of Economics and Law, Russian Federation

The year 2011 is nearing its end….

What did it bring to all of us in HETL?
What are the achievements we can be proud of?
What do we dream of as we approach the New Year?

HETL started out as a grass-roots effort to improve teaching and learning in higher education and, in 2011, we quickly grew into one of the largest and most diverse international associations in the world, comprising over 10,000 educator-members of the HETL community from over 130 countries and from every academic discipline, function and level in higher education. We are a global association of educators by educators for educators.

Diversity, integrity, collegiality and inclusiveness constitute the core values of our association, which are so important in a rapidly changing globalized world. The HETL Executive Committee, with its Head Executive Director Patrick Blessinger, performed as a committed group of truly dedicated leaders, responsible for ensuring HETL fulfills its values, mission and vision.

We are now a certified non-profit organization, which allows us to provide more opportunities to advance the scholarship and practice of teaching and learning in the world community.

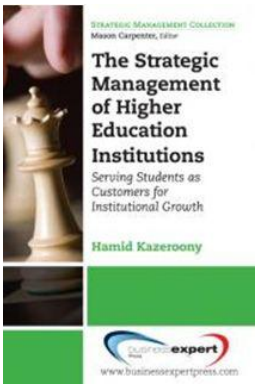
We expanded our resources…

We launched the HETL Portal and have been constantly refining and expanding its features. We publish incrementally the online *International HETL Review*, for which special thanks go to Krassie Petrova, our Editor-in-Chief, the dedicated team of editors and reviewers, and the growing number of contributors, among them distinguished scholars from every continent. The first annual volume of the Review will be published in January of 2012.

We launched Portal 2.0 in September 2011 with advanced organization of information, which has enabled us to view the portal in different languages and to submit articles to the International HETL Review in a more efficient way.

We provide an international forum for teachers, scholars, managers, administrators, librarians, counselors, technologists, and publishers from all over the world. There are more than 1,000 people now following us on Facebook and Twitter.

We will publish (Routledge) a book about Meaning-Centered Education with 13 scholars from different countries contributing their chapters on the theory and practice of a meaning-centered approach to higher education.



HETL members contributed a book chapter that will be available in December 2011: Zeine, R., Boglarsky, C.A., Blessinger, P., and Hamlet, M.T. (2011) Organizational Culture in Higher Education Institutions. Chapter 3 in Kazeroony, H. (Ed.), *The Strategic Management of Higher Education Institutions*. Business Expert Press.

We collaborate with educational institutions on research projects such as Organizational Culture, Organizational Effectiveness, and Student Research Maturation. HETL research projects are under the leadership of our Director of Research Dr. Rana Zeine.

We participate and collaborate with international organizations and conferences. In this photo you can see Dr. Cyndy Woods-Wilson, one of our HETL board members and our digital media manager, who presented a poster about HETL at the CAB III conference in Arizona, USA. The focus of the CAB III conference this year was on interprofessional collaboration which is one of the most important focal points of HETL.

We want to go further, in accordance with our mission and vision, in the next year: discuss and network, collaborate and partner, advise and consult, generate new resources in order to improve educational outcomes, and advance the scholarship and practice of teaching and learning through our discussion boards, our research projects, international meetings and seminars, and through our portal and *The International HETL Review*.

We will continue to pursue a supportive and inclusive policy that connects educators from around the world. To that end, we are sponsoring the free Edcamp Santiago conference in Chile to be held in January 2012. We will be organizing webinars, meetings and conferences such as an HETL Panel within a Mini Bakhtinian Conference in March 2012 at the University of Delaware.

We cordially thank all of you, who work with us and believe in our mission. You are a group of creative and innovative educators and we value your active participation in HETL.

We look forward to our next even more fruitful year together!

Wishing all of you warmth in heart and soul, joy and peace in your families, and a Happy New Year!

Olga Kovbasyuk

Professor Olga Kovbasyuk, Ph.D., is Professor and Associate Dean for International Relations at the Khabarovsk State Academy of Economics and Law in the Russian Federation. She is the founder of the Far East Russia Global Learning Center. In 2008, she founded a global learning center in conjunction with the 3 leading universities in Russia and the USA aimed at integrating global learning into the curriculum. Her international experience includes Fulbright International Exchange of Scholars Program at the California State University, Sacramento, USA (2004-2005), and DAAD Academic Research Program, Germany (2009); she has worked in more than 15 countries as a manager of academic exchange programs and as a consultant on managing cultural diversity for business companies (Alliance, Shell, Rostelecom). She has delivered over 70 presentations and publications in the fields of intercultural education and management.

2011

The International HETL Review

Volume 1. ISSN: 2164-3091

This volume contains articles published on the HETL Portal in the year 2011. It covers topics related to teaching, learning and research from a range of academic disciplines, with contributions from scholars across the world.

Patrick Blessinger and Krassie Petrova, Volume Editors
The International HETL Association, New York, Publisher
January – December, 2011