

Fall 2011



# Teaching and Learning Fall 2011 Newsletter

## Become a Master Teacher

By Mary Bee, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Biomedical Sciences  
Recipient of 2010-2011 Teaching Excellence Award

In 1999 I stood on the doorsteps of OU with a box full of books and heart full of dreams, ready to change the world one semester, one class, and one student at a time. I was standing on the right doorstep, as OU granted me the resources, guidance, and incredible opportunities that have helped form who I am today. As I reflect on the lessons that I picked up along this journey, I find that some lessons were easy, while most were rather difficult. It's these "lessons learned" that I'd like to share with you.

The phrase "Master Teacher" describes it all—the true inspiration for professors to grow. I've taken each letter from the title "Master Teacher" to describe what I feel are the most important characteristics that we, as faculty, should embody.

**M** is for the word *Mentoring*. *Mentoring* your students is an incredible experience and each opportunity for this should be embraced. Share your thoughts and ideas, trials and tribulations with them. Explain your successes and failures in hopes that students will learn from them. Help them visualize their future. I remember one time in graduate school, when my work was not going well, I was wondering if all the hard work was truly worth it. It would have been easy to go back to my previous job. I passed a faculty member in the hall and as if he knew, he looked at me, nodded, and said "Good afternoon, Dr. Bee." I was still a graduate student, and I had never heard that before. Moments like these can inspire and change a student's life forever. In such an instance, the "M" could also stand for "motivation."

Being *approachable* to students will make the teaching and learning process more efficient and enjoyable. I've seen many teachers try to warn students about the difficulty of the course in hopes that this would inspire them to work harder and succeed. I'm sure you have heard the speech, "Look to your left and your right, one of you will not be here at the end of the semester." However, this frequently does not work, rather it sends a message that these students are doomed to fail the course. It's

important that the prevailing message - that you *want* them to succeed, and are there to help them to succeed- is not lost in the process of inspiring them.

**S** stands for being *student oriented*. This means - know your students. Try to learn each student's name and something about them. For example, if they play the violin, tell them about a violinist that you like or may know. Be inspired by the things that inspire them. A simple ice breaker exercise could have a tremendous impact on the work they will put into the course. Another approach I employ is to ask the students about their career goals. Then I make certain to discuss related topics that apply to each of those careers to further inspire them as they move toward their desired career. Each student has their own dynamic story, they have come from the ends of the earth to sit in your classroom. Let them know that you are glad they are there.

**Technology** can assist you with your teaching goals, so learn it and let it help you. There are some amazing people working at e-LIS to guide and assist you. Sign up for Moodle classes and use the system to your benefit. For example, last semester I learned how to rank my students in order of the last time they accessed our course Moodle site. I simply clicked on the students who hadn't accessed the site for over three days and sent them an email to see if they had any questions or concerns. They were delighted to find that their professor had taken such an interest in them and vowed to use the system more often. I had the fewest number of fails in that class that semester.

**Engaging** the students helps them learn and become more involved. It doesn't take much time to actively engage your students. Surprise them with a unique interactive activity. To engage students try approaches like: think-pair-share or team based learning. They will remember this for years to come.

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## 2012 Educational Development Grants: CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The Senate charge to the Teaching and Learning Committee is "to promote the teaching and the learning process." In accordance with this charge, the Committee invites the Oakland University faculty and staff to apply for grants in educational development. Funding may be requested for projects whose primary purpose involves one or more of the following:

- Development and/or use of new teaching techniques.
- Development of a new instructional approach.
- Faculty development related to curricular responsibilities.
- Investigation of a teaching/learning problem.
- Evaluation of a method of teaching.

Individual awards will not normally exceed \$750. Student labor in conjunction with preparation of teaching materials may be funded. The Committee will not fund preparation for accreditation or program reviews nor will it fund faculty salaries or travel costs. The cost of food, food services and photocopies will not be funded. The grant is not intended to support the purchase of software or hardware unless it is incidental to the development of the educational process.

**The deadline for applications is 5:00 P.M. on Friday, March 16, 2012.**

Completed applications should be emailed to Rob Sidelinger, (sideling@oakland.edu). The form should be downloaded from the Teaching & Learning Committee website, filled out electronically and sent as an attachment.



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# 2012 Teaching Excellence Awards—Call for Nominations

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## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS!

The Senate Teaching and Learning Committee is pleased to announce a call for nominations for the 2012 Teaching Excellence Awards. Two awards will be made for 2012: one to a tenured or tenure-track member of the faculty; another to a non-tenure-track faculty at Oakland University. Each award includes a cash stipend and will be presented at the 17th Annual Faculty Recognition Luncheon, tentatively scheduled for mid-April, 2012.

Nominations may be made by any member of the Oakland University community, including students, faculty, alumni, administrators, and staff.

*Faculty may not self-nominate for the Award.*

The letter of nomination should address the nominee's accomplishments based on the following criteria:

- Superior Teaching
- Innovative Instructional Practice
- High Educational Standards
- Productive Learning Environment
- Demonstrated Ability to Inspire and Motivate Students

Student nominations are a highly valued component of this process. Faculty are encouraged to announcement this process in all classes.

Nominations will be accepted through **November 30, 2011**. Nomination forms

[http://www2.oakland.edu/misc/teaching\\_award.cfm](http://www2.oakland.edu/misc/teaching_award.cfm)

should be completed on-line using the online nomination form. The Committee will contact the nominees about how to supply the required materials. Previous Teaching Excellence Award winners and current members of the Teaching and Learning Committee are not eligible for nomination. A plaque with the names of previous Teaching Excellence Award winners is on display in the lobby of Kresge Library.



## Fall 2011 Faculty Luncheon

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### Integrating research tools and materials into Moodle and scholarship: Quick and Easy Techniques

**Join us for lunch and learn simple techniques for making the best use of our research tools and materials!**

We'll provide boxed lunches and drinks. Library faculty will lead the demonstration on integrating course and lesson specific materials into Moodle including the Library's Course Guide tool, how to use RSS feeds and alerts for new publications, best ways to create stable links for reading lists, and using Refwork, a web-based citation management database for group learning. These same tools can be incorporated into your scholarship work too! Participants will have the opportunity to try out the tools and get assistance using them.

**WHEN: Tuesday, November 15, 2011, 11:30-1:00**

**WHERE: Kresge Library, e-Learning & Instructional Support, KL 430**

*For questions and RSVPs, please contact Rob Sidelinger at [sideling@oakland.edu](mailto:sideling@oakland.edu) or x4126.*



### Sixth Annual International Conference on Teaching and Learning

*by Scott L. Crabill, Ph.D., Director of Integrative Studies*

The Oakland University and the University of Windsor Sixth Annual Conference on Teaching and Learning will be May 9 – 10, 2012 on the campus of Oakland University. The conference is a mixture of interactive workshops, pres-

entations by our featured speakers, keynote addresses, and concurrent sessions offered by faculty from several universities. The conference is truly international in spirit. Intended for faculty, administrators and full-time

graduate students, it explores current issues and challenges in teaching and learning in higher education. The theme of this year's conference will focus on Excellence in Teaching and Learning. A call for proposals will be forthcoming.

**R** stands for *role model*. Be the *role model* our youth, truly our nation, so desperately needs. As John Adams wrote in the 1778 Constitution of Massachusetts, the oldest constitution still being used today, “In schools...It shall be the duty (not a goal or vision, but the duty), to countenance and inculcate the principles of humanity and general benevolence, public and private charity, industry and frugality, honesty, sincerity, and good humor. And all social affections and generous sentiments among the people.” What a noble statement. Let’s make this our duty.

**T** stands for *Take time to stay organized*. This is not a piece of advice, this is the key to survival. I suggest you set aside 30 minutes after every class to go back to your office, make changes that need to be made to your lecture or exam, and file them so that next time you teach that same lecture you are ready to go. These 30 minutes will save you the additional 2 hours of work the following year when you try to remember what it was that you wanted to fix.

**E**volve! Our knowledge, like a fine wine, should continue to evolve. What has changed in your field? What is the current research on the topic you are teaching? Stay up to date on what is going on in your field and inform your students on new discoveries. This may seem to be a daunting task, but many professional organizations have this available on their websites, it’s just a click away.

**A** stands for *awe*. Let your students see the *awe* you feel and the wonder you have for the topic. Tell them why you love learning about a concept and the reason why you find it fascinating. It’s truly contagious.

**Cherish** the role we have in shaping the

lives of our students and the impact we have on their futures. We are so lucky to play a significant role in the lives of our future leaders. Consider this as a gift. When you truly consider the impact we can have on our student’s lives, it’s mind-blowing. Respect it and cherish it.

**Hold firm** on the rules and regulations that you stipulate in your syllabus. For example, if you publically bend the exam date for one student, then you will be expected to do so for everyone and for future exams. Unless you have only 3 students in your class I strongly recommend that you stick to your syllabus.

**E** stands for *embrace*. Embrace your toughest students, and we all know who they are—the ones asking questions in an angry voice, with that look of being angry at the world, or maybe sleeping in class—this may seem counterintuitive, but take a moment and ask them how their day is going. You may find out that they are sleeping through class because they are working 3 jobs to support their parents and siblings while they take one class a semester with the slight hope that they someday can make a difference in the world. You may find out that they are actually confused and just by taking a moment to ask how they did on the first exam, may inspire them to try harder for the second and the third. The next thing you know they are getting a graduate degree in the topic. It sounds unlikely, but this has happened to me more than once.

Lastly, be sure to *rejuvenate* yourself. Refresh, sleep well and take care of you. Read books, go on walks and take vacations. Do whatever you can do to avoid burnout.

Being a “master teacher” takes hard work and motivation. We are all shaped by the

influences of others, no one is formed in isolation. I have drawn inspiration from the professors I have studied under and try to model myself after them. Professors Hough, Jackson, and Freeman are among those who, by their example, helped shape who I am as a scientist, teacher, and human being. I always draw on them for inspiration and strength. They are part of the yardstick by which I measure my own actions and behaviors. As a student, there were times when the workload was overwhelming. It is usually at its worse when you are struggling at 3 o’clock in the morning and are facing the impossible. In desperate hours I still hear Professor Hough’s voice saying, “anything worthwhile requires effort” and it makes me smile. I knew that if I made it through his class, I could make it through anything. Be this kind inspiration to your students and you will truly be a MASTER TEACHER.

*The author would like to acknowledge the assistance of Rachael Crise and Judith Venuti.*

### **New Director hired for CETL**

Judith Ableser, PhD will be joining Oakland University as the **Director for the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning** in December 2011. She comes to OU from the University of Michigan-Flint, where she was an Associate Professor, and served as the Director of Graduate Programs in Education and the Coordinator of the MA in Special Education. Prior to that, she was an Assistant Professor at the University of Windsor. She holds PhD in Curriculum and Instruction from Wayne State University. Judy’s area of expertise, research and teaching focuses on exemplary teaching and learning practices from preschool through graduate school.

## **Continued from Page 1—Educational Development Grants: Call for Proposals**

Additionally, the electronic version must be followed by an identical, signed hard copy sent via campus mail to Rob Sidelinger, Communication & Journalism, 306A Wilson Hall. This hard copy of the application requires the signature of the department or unit head. The due date for the signed, hard copy is also 5:00 PM, Friday, March 16, 2012.

Each award recipient must file a final report at the conclusion of the project describing its purpose, activities and outcomes. The reports are due by March 1, 2013. Questions and comments may be directed to Rob Sidelinger, (sideling@oakland.edu).

## **THE SENATE TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE**

**Rob Sidelinger** (Chair), CAS, Communication & Journalism  
**Susan Awbrey**, Senior Associate Provost  
**Addington Coppin**, School of Business Administration  
**Melissa Hoag**, CAS, Music, Theatre and Dance  
**Marie-Eve Pepin**, School of Health Sciences

**Carrie Abele**, School of Nursing  
**Shaun Moore**, E-Learning and Instructional Support  
**Julie Borkin**, Program Coordinator of Integrative Studies  
**Julia Rodriguez**, Kresge Library  
**Support Staff:** Scott Crabill, Integrative Studies



# Retention and Faculty Influence at Oakland University

by Cathy Cheal, AVP eLearning and Instructional Support, Adjunct Instructor in Art History and Writing and Rhetoric

It is important for the educational mission of Oakland University to retain as many students as possible from admission to degree graduation. Withdrawing before graduation, usually, will have a negative impact on students' future, both in terms of life satisfaction and earnings. It will also have a negative effect on Michigan's economy and Oakland University's finances. Susan Awbrey is chairing the wide-ranging committee on retention at OU.

Oakland University retains 72% of its students compared to 96% at University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 77% at Central Michigan University, and 70% at Wayne State. OU's 6-year graduation rate is a very low 43.7%. There are many complex social, institutional, and educational reasons for this low rate, but one of the factors that can positively affect low retention rates is the faculty/student relationship. Good personal relationships and frequent contact with others on campus, especially faculty, lead to greater student motivation and involvement in their studies, according to Arthur W. Chickering and Zelda F. Gamson, Eds, (1995), *The Seven Principles in Action: Improving Undergraduate Education*. Anker Publishing Co. Student satisfaction with university experience depends upon frequent interaction with faculty more than any other type of involvement or characteristic of the student or the institution, according to Astin, A.W., (1985) *Achieving Educational Excellence*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The 2007 National Survey of Student Engagement lists several ways that faculty can engage students that can be amplified with local examples and suggestions:

- **Be supportive and accessible.** Accessibility to students often equates to online availability. Students do like the immediacy and brevity of email and so depend on faculty responding quickly, particularly in online courses. Policies vary across departments, but boundaries can be set simply by posting a policy, such as: "Email policy--I'll respond within 24 hours M-F, but not Sat or Sun. if you send a message to my oakland.edu email."
- **Offer research opportunities.** I'm in favor of the apprenticeship model of education over the customer model. An apprentice collaborates with experts and colleagues in knowledge creation, while customers are competitive and isolated.
- **An apprenticeship model** presupposes a student becoming involved with faculty in research relationships, service learning, or real world problems in the classroom. Integrating faculty research interests into course content, where possible, usually enlivens a course because the students see knowledge building as a live process, non-static and problematic. More can be found out about service learning at OU at: <http://www.oakland.edu/asl/>
- **Give prompt feedback and talk about grades and assignments.** There is evidence that one is most open to learning just after one has been active in applying or creating with specific knowledge. One way to give prompt feedback is to use the Moodle quiz or lesson tool for teaching purposes rather than assessment of learning. An online quiz is open book and questions can focus on elaborate concepts even in a multiple-choice question. If an instructor fills out the feedback textbox, then wrong answers are corrected immediately with an explanation. Other in-class activities for prompt feedback for both instructor and students are called CATS (Classroom Assessment Techniques). Examples are one-minute papers, muddiest points, chain notes, and student-generated exams. More can be seen about CATS at <http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/cat.html> or Angelo, Thomas A. and K. Patricia Cross, (1993), *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*, Second Edition, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- **Discuss readings.** One good way to ascertain that students really understand readings is to do team-based learning sessions. David Rodenbaugh and Robert Augustyniak (OU/WB School of Medicine) explained this at a presentation in September at the Lilly Conference of Teaching and Learning. They gave the audience a page to read on how to measure capsaicin. Individuals then took a short quiz about their understanding of the reading. Then groups were formed and with discussion the team retook the quiz. Next, an application problem was given for the groups to solve based on the reading, experience, and quick Internet searches if needed. Each group explained its reasoning to the entire audience and then the instructors had a chance to comment. It worked. More can be found out about this very effective technique at <http://www.teambasedlearning.org/>
- **Discuss career plans.** Recently, Sara Maher in the School of Health Science conducted an investigation with undergraduate students who are considering a career in Physical Therapy. Students were responsible for self-selecting a specialty area of physical therapy in small groups (3 students) and creating a lecture for the remainder of the class about the topic. The topics helped the whole class discover how many different areas that physical therapists can work in besides the common areas like sports and orthopedics.
- **Interact outside of class.** Many departments on campus coordinate activities for students outside of class. For example, Tina Hall, Lauren Rinke, and Christina Fontana in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric organized the Fall Writing Marathon. Students and faculty get together to write while exploring OU's campus. A writing marathon is an opportunity for writers to be inspired by their surroundings and become part of a writing community while being set free to write anything. Following the marathon, they meet for snacks and open mic, where writers can share some of what they wrote. This type of social activity helps to bring educational content into the real world and gives the students an opportunity to get to know others on campus with similar interests. If faculty participate in their department's activities and encourage their students, it's much more likely students will attend.

Our students need to know they belong here and that there are good reasons to continue until graduation.

