

Fall 2009



Teaching and Learning Fall 2009 Newsletter

Treating Each Student as an Individual with a Unique way of Learning

By Barbara Penprase, Ph.D., RN, CNOR, Associate Professor, School of Nursing

In 1979, I became one of the first graduates of the RN-BSN from Oakland University School of Nursing. I have been teaching in the School of Nursing since 1996. I have taught at all levels of the nursing program, from the traditional Bachelor in Nursing (BSN) program to the Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) program. However, the program nearest to my heart is the Accelerated Second Degree Nursing Program (ASDN). I developed and implemented this program, and I have served as its Director since 2005. I feel a special personal bond with the students and faculty alike—even as we have grown from a small cohort of 50 students to three cohorts of over 150 students this year. My interaction with these students goes far beyond just teaching. I frequently talk and meet with them throughout their time at OU, and this relationship constantly reminds me that I serve as one of their primary role models for nursing. Thus, I strive at all times to be what I expect my students to become—an outstanding Oakland University bachelor prepared registered nurse (BSN-RN). I hope that my passion for nursing carries over to my students and helps them become exceptional registered nurses dedicated to serve people in need.

My teaching philosophy has always focused on the individual learner and not on the group. I strongly believe that each student learns in a different way and will strive to meet my high expectations if I provide the right learning environment. My goal as a teacher is to reach each student according to his or her own unique way of learning. Trying to reach each student can be very challenging and demands extra time from both the faculty and students. I have found, however, that students are willing to meet these challenges when I demonstrate my commitment to them as individuals and my passion for the content that we are studying.

Besides lectures, I offer several other venues for students to learn the necessary content to succeed in my classes. I offer any student one-on-one tutoring for any content I teach. If a student needs this type of assistance, together we design a schedule and have specific times we meet during the week to review the content I have discussed in class or from the re-

quired readings. I usually meet with the student once or twice a week, depending on the individual need.

I offer review sessions once or twice a week after the lecture periods. These sessions are approximately one hour long and review the recent lecture content. I review each slide with the students and discuss what I stressed as important during the lecture, giving students more time to understand difficult content. I believe the immediate review of the lecture content helps students to comprehend any content that might have been confusing.

In addition, I offer what I refer to as breakout sessions to all the students in my class. After class or at a scheduled time I will join any study group and help them as they study and review the content I am teaching in class. I will answer questions, offer suggestions, and participate in their review of the content. I have met students at all different times including weekends and evenings. I try to be as flexible as possible in meeting the group's needs since many students have outside obligations that they are trying to balance with studying.

I follow up with chat room sessions at least once a week. During the chat rooms, which last approximately 1 ½ hours each, I ask numerous questions related to the lecture content. Students participate by answering the questions. If an area is particularly confusing I will go back and review, but for the most part, the chat room sessions are focused on asking questions and having the students answer them. My questions build upon student answers to the previous questions until I feel they have a thorough understanding of the content.

Students can choose to attend all of the above sessions, or none of them. They may select any venue that is best suited to their learning style. I emphasize to them that learning the content is the important thing.

To encourage student-based learning, I offer extra credit points for students who post complex questions on the Moodle website regarding the content I discussed that week. If the question is one that

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E-Learning and Instructional Support Moves to Library

By Cathy Cheal, Ph.D.

Assistant Vice President of e-Learning & Instructional Support

E-Learning and Instructional Support (e-LIS) moved its operations from 207 Varner Hall to Suite 430 Kresge Library in May 2009. E-LIS offers support to faculty, staff, and students in teaching and learning online and in the development of custom web solutions for academic needs. In addition to new offices, a computer lab for workshops, a faculty lab, and a conference room, there are now 3 Scantron rooms and a small media lab for private podcasts and video construction.

Faculty can call 248-370-4566 to book an appointment with an instructional designer, reserve space in the Scantron or media rooms, or to use the workshop learning lab for a couple of classes (24 seats). Faculty may also walk-in anytime, M-F 8 am to 5 pm, to use one of the Scantron rooms or the Faculty lab.



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2010 Teaching Excellence Awards—Call for Nominations

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS!

The Senate Teaching and Learning Committee is pleased to announce a call for nominations for the 2010 Teaching Excellence Awards. Two awards will be made for 2010: 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 14th Annual Faculty Recognition Luncheon, tentatively scheduled for mid-April, 2010.

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 announce this nomination process in all classes.

Nominations will be accepted through **December 11, 2009**. Nomination forms should be completed on-line using the online nomination form.

The Committee will contact the nominees and chairs of their departments to request additional information. 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.



http://www2.oakland.edu/misc/teaching_award.cfm

Fall 2009 Faculty Luncheon

Best Teaching Practices

Join us for soup and a discussion of best teaching practices. Come share your tricks of the trade and learn from your colleagues!

We'll provide Zoup soup, bread and drinks. You provide a 3-5 minute explanation or sample of your favorite proven teaching techniques. Possible areas for discussion might include: eliciting student participation, use of social networking sites, improving writing skills, improving reading skills, improving study habits, use of multi-media resources, fostering a sense of community.



WHEN: Tuesday, November 17, 2009, 12:00-1:00

WHERE: Oakland Center, Gold Room C

For questions and RSVPs, please contact Fred Hoffman at hoffman@oakland.edu or x4978.

An Interview with Linda Sisson, from the Office of Disability Support Services

Author: Lisa Levinson, Ph.D., College of Arts and Sciences, Assistant Professor of Linguistics

TLC: What do you recommend faculty do if students demonstrate inappropriate behavior in class towards students with disabilities?

Linda Sisson: Ask yourself - what would be your response to any inappropriate behavior among students? Tolerating demeaning, disrespectful or critical behaviors (verbally or non-verbally) by a student or group of students toward any student in your class sends the wrong message to each student in your course. The message is clear — that they too are vulnerable to criticism by others if they risk sharing their ideas. Creating a culture that respects the diversity of everyone in the classroom is necessary for all students to learn. What would Linda do? It may be necessary to engage the offending student in a dialogue regarding the behavior. Include a statement of appropriate classroom etiquette on the course syllabus.

Students with disabilities are also capable of making inappropriate comments or dominating classroom discussions. We have worked with Disability Support Services (DSS) students who need guidelines to participate in class, i.e. the student is allowed to ask a professor two questions during class discussion. Additional questions will be submitted after class in writing or emailed for professor comments at his/her convenience.

TLC: What is the best way for faculty to make arrangements between note-takers and students who need notes that does not reveal the registered student's status to the rest of the class?

Linda Sisson: The professor should address the class that there is a need for a note-taker. State that if anyone is interested, they should please come forward after class. At that time

the interested note-taker and student will meet. We do have a few students that do not wish their note-taker to know who they are. In that case, the professor will provide the note-taker's name to DSS. The note-taker can copy and drop the notes off at the DSS office for the student to pick up. We recommend that our students try their note taker for a week or so and see if they are responsible and that the notes they are receiving are complete. At that time if the student is comfortable with their note taker then the note taker should be sent to the DSS office to be hired. Note-takers make \$150 per semester for their service to the DSS student. Note-takers are provided as "access" to the course lecture and are not required to provide notes in the student's absence.

TLC: How do you recommend faculty choose note-takers, considering the fact that

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Unique Learners

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challenges the other students to critically think through a concept, the student receives an extra credit point. The first student to answer the question, pulling in resources from the assigned reading as well as other recognized resources, will also receive an extra credit point. I have found this to be an excellent medium in which students can ask probing questions related to difficult content.

Since critical thinking is essential to mastering nursing content and applying that content to real life situations, I offer "group" examinations in which the students can discuss the questions and explore their rationale for their answers. First, all students must take an individual examination. Immediately following the individual examination, students are placed in assigned groups in order to review the examination together and fill out another individual scantron. A student can agree with the group or select the answer he or she feels is the "best" answer. After the "group" examination is completed, I collect the group scantrons and

immediately go over the answers while the students have the examinations in front of them. This gives them immediate feedback on the examinations. Students must receive a minimum of 78% on an individual examination to receive any credit for the group examination. If the student receives at least 78% then the individual score and the group score will be averaged to determine the student's final grade for the examination. However, no students can pass the course on group examination scores alone; he or she must pass the course with an average on the individual examinations of at least 70% before any group score would be considered for the final course grade.

To enhance students' own learning experiences, I assign all "new" students mentors who are students from a senior ASDN cohort. These mentors serve to support the "new" students. The program is very rigorous, and attrition within the first semester is high. I find that peer-to-peer support helps to better prepare the students without causing undue stress related to expectations. I also have

senior students assist in the first semester basic laboratory assessment classes. This has been especially effective since the "new" students can see for themselves the confidence and knowledge more advanced students have acquired. Just as importantly, mentoring helps the more advanced students come to understand how much they have learned and how far they have come on the path to becoming a nurse. It has been a very rewarding experience for all of the students involved.

It is my hope, and it has been my experience, that students learn most effectively when I offer a multitude of learning opportunities. I have found that this allows me to reach each student according to his or her own unique way of learning. When I demonstrate my commitment to students as individuals and my passion for the content that we are studying, they are not only able to meet the challenging requirements of the nursing program, they can become excellent nursing professionals, capable of truly making a difference in the lives of their patients.

THE SENATE TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE

Members:

Jennifer Law-Sullivan (Chair) CAS, Modern Languages and Literature

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Students: Madison McClintock, Matthew Thomas

Matthew Ugorowski, Hawra Abogilal

Support Staff: Scott Crabill, Integrative Studies



<http://www2.oakland.edu/tlcommittee/index.cfm>

Interview with Linda Sisson

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there is no basis for knowing their note-taking skills and level of responsibility at the beginning of the semester?

Linda Sisson: The note-taking accommodation is not meant to provide a “professional” transcription of the material or take the place of the student’s own notes. It is a supplement to what the student has captured. We understand that there is no way for the professor to choose an acceptable note-taker. It will be up to the DSS student to choose one of the students that respond to your request and try their notes for a week or so. If the student is satisfied with the note-taker chosen, then they are to send them to the DSS office for hiring. If during the semester the student finds he/she is not receiving their notes in an appropriate time frame, it is up to the DSS student to notify the DSS office and the professor so a different note taker can be chosen.

TLC: Are there recommendations for how faculty can adapt assignments and in-class activities in order to be sensitive to students with disabilities? For example, how might one accommodate students with anxiety disorders in a class that normally requires in-class presentations?

Linda Sisson: Here are some suggestions for presentations:

- Have the student video tape their presentation at home and bring the video to share with the class.
- Have the student present to the professor only.
- Have the student present to the professor & videotape the presentation to share with class.

Sometimes, students with Asperger Syndrome have extreme difficulty working within a group because of expressive & receptive communication limitations.

Individual assignments may be a reasonable accommodation in some cases. The time to discuss helpful strategies, course requirements and accommodations with the student is at the beginning of the semester when you receive the Faculty Notification Letter. Professors are invited to call DSS for consultation and assistance.

TLC: What should a faculty member do if they feel a student in their class who is not registered with the DSS office might have a disability? Should the faculty member approach the student regarding the topic? If so, how?

Linda Sisson: It is appropriate for faculty to share their concerns privately with a student regarding poor academic performance. I would speak with the student about

my observations. For example, “I see that you are attending class and turning in your assignments, however, you seem to be struggling with (math, writing, etc.). Has this always been an area of difficulty?” Listen to what the student says. If they indicate that they have received services in the past, you have the opportunity to share your knowledge about the services offered through the DSS office. Perhaps the student will share other factors that may be impeding performance.

After all, the faculty member does not know that a disability exists but is in the position to know about services which might aid the student. Make referrals to the Academic Skills Center, Kresge Writing Center, Advising Resource Center, and The Center for Multicultural Initiatives where students can be supported.

TLC: Any other tips for faculty?

Linda Sisson: Add a statement to your syllabus inviting students who have disabilities to discuss their needs and accommodation strategies with you. Read the statement out loud in case students have problems with print format. Repeat the statement within the first two weeks.

Here is a link to comprehensive faculty resources for working with students who have disabilities:

<http://www.washington.edu/doi/Faculty/>

TLC: Here are some links and phone numbers for other resources mentioned in this interview:

Disability Support Services	http://www.oakland.edu/dss/	(248) 370-3266
Academic Skills Center	http://www.oakland.edu/asc/	(248) 370-4215
The Writing Center	http://www.oakland.edu/ouwc/	(248) 370-3120
Advising Resource Center	http://www.oakland.edu/arc/	(248) 370-3227
The Center for Multicultural Initiatives	http://www.oakland.edu/cmi/	(248) 370-4404

Fourth Annual International Conference on Teaching and Learning

Author: Scott L. Crabill, Ph.D., Director of Integrative Studies

The Oakland University and the University of Windsor Fourth Annual Conference on Teaching and Learning will be May 25 – 26, 2010 on the campus of Oakland University. The conference is a mixture of interactive workshops, presentations by our featured speaker, keynote

addresses, and concurrent sessions offered by faculty from Oakland University and the University of Windsor. The Fourth Annual Conference on Teaching and Learning is truly international in spirit. Intended for faculty, administrators and full-time graduate students, it ex-

plores current issues and challenges in teaching and learning in higher education.

The theme of this year’s conference will focus on Student Engagement. The conference features keynote speakers Dr. Todd Zakrajsek and Dr. Tamara Rosier.