

Insights & Ideas for Teaching and Learning

a publication of the Oakland University Senate
Teaching and Learning Committee

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Insights & Ideas Returns

The Teaching and Learning Committee, with Howard Schwartz as chair, began meeting in September. EDF grant applications are in, and the faculty lunch series is under way. The committee, for a third year, also offers this newsletter to provide OU faculty with a broader form for dissemination of ideas related to college teaching.

Insights & Ideas for Teaching and Learning includes short articles by committee members or other faculty. Some are practical or informational. The University is steadily seeking ways to effectively address multicultural issues in the academic arena as well as the social sphere of the University. For the next issue diversity at Oakland University will be the focus. What are your thoughts on this topic? You are encouraged to submit an article for publication.

--Virginia Allen, editor

Teaching and Advising: A Useful Resemblance

In College: The Undergraduate Experience in America, a major research report for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Ernest Boyer writes about the role of advising in under-

graduate education:

The successful college offers a well-planned program of advising for all students, one that provides support throughout the entire freshman year. This is the goal, and yet we found advising to be one of the weakest links in the undergraduate experience (Boyer, 1987, p. 51).

The need for advising begins at freshman orientation; the need becomes more urgent as students select majors and advance academically and as institutions work on retention. Advising resembles teaching in many important ways, and should be one of the strongest, rather than one of the weakest links in the undergraduate experience.

In my experience, my best teachers were also my best advisers. My positive learning experiences with them in class set the stage for different, but equally positive learning experiences in advising sessions. These advisers share several key characteristics: since I intended to teach at a college or university, all were role models for me. Although not every excellent teacher is necessarily interested or willing to be an adviser, good advising, in my experience, resembles good teaching in essential ways which show that successful teachers can and should be highly successful advisers.

While at many institutions advising is a regular part of a faculty member's job, many do it grudgingly; however, teachers can and should make a much deeper commitment to advising. They are good at many of the skills advising requires, and are already doing many advising-related tasks in the ordinary course of teaching. Teachers also have the best and most direct access to students, and so are the closest resource students have available.

Since the similarities between teaching and advising are so strong, advising becomes another form of teaching. Teachers who serve as advisers are clearly adept at providing information, serving as mentors for students and helping students learn to read well.

The central qualities that make for successful teaching can be simply stated. Boyer stated that the best teachers have the following qualities: command of the material to be taught, a contagious enthusiasm for the play of ideas, optimism about human potential, the involvement of one's students, and--not least--sensitivity, integrity and warmth as a human being. When this combination is present in the classroom, the impact of a teacher can be powerful and enduring (Boyer, 1987, p. 154).

These traits are similar to the traits of the best advisers. And when these qualities are present, advisers make a powerful and enduring contribution to students' education. As things stand, teaching and advising do not have nearly enough stature in higher education. Both teachers and institutions can and should correct this flaw, and give advising, like teaching, the more central place it deserves in undergraduate education.

--Alice S. Horning

Editorial Information

Insights & Ideas for Teaching & Learning is published twice a year, in the spring and fall, by the Oakland University Faculty Senate Teaching and Learning Committee, Office of the Provost, Oakland University, Rochester, MI 48309-4401. The newsletter is distributed free of charge to Oakland University faculty. Send all letters, news, and requests for additional copies to the above address.

Things They Don't Always Teach You in Graduate School

In our quest to finish graduate school and ultimately achieve tenure, we often come to equate journals with scholarly research. We sometimes forget that there are journals available that discuss pedagogy in addition to publishing actual in-class exercises and suggestions. These journals can provide the instructor with alternative ways of delivering course material or suggest solutions for a current problem.

In the Department of Management and Marketing, faculty have actively published in both the *Organizational Behavior Teaching Review (OBTR)* and the *Journal of Marketing Education*. Both of these journals are excellent sources for classroom innovations. While some articles may be discipline specific, topics are covered that have widespread applicability. In the last several years for example, the OBTR has published articles on:

assigning scholarly articles in introductory courses, dealing with "bullies, whiners and martyrs" in class project groups, setting up exam appeal procedures, and analyzing the compatibility of humor and education.

If a teaching oriented journal geared to your discipline is not available in our library, you may wish to consider browsing through some others. The concerns, problems and potential solutions offered by another discipline may be applicable to your classroom. I recommend both journals mentioned earlier. If other faculty have had positive experiences with other journals, perhaps they could detail this for a future newsletter or discuss it at a future Teaching and Learning Committee sponsored lunch.

--Lizabeth A. Barclay

Call For Nominations

Undergraduate Distinguished Achievement Award

Do you know of extraordinary undergraduate performance beyond that required for good grades? You can nominate an undergraduate for such achievements as exceptional reports, creations, or performances. Successful nominees receive a citation and \$500 at Fall commencement.

Watch your mail for the complete announcement on eligibility and criteria or call Geoff Brieger.

Group Testing

The roll of testing in Academe has

traditionally been that of multiple choice exams graded along a standard curve, taken by individual students in a sterile setting. There is growing recognition however, that doing well on such a test does not necessarily correlate with competency in the profession the course work is designed to prepare the individual for. It is recognized that in any profession, the ability to communicate and work with a team of other experts and practitioners is a "must" in order to be successful. A part of the task of the university professor is to provide not only information, but tools for using that information in the professional job market. The process of students connecting what they are learning in classes with what happens in a particular discipline can be greatly facilitated by small group interaction. This includes taking tests in a small group environment. A team of three to five students are responsible for test performance. As the team of students discuss the test items, and outline answers acceptable to the entire group, the instructor can move between groups listening to the dialogue. Students who appear to be having difficulty providing input into the discussion can be identified. The thinking processes students are using to solve the problems or tasks given to them can also be identified. As students discuss how to "attack" the test, items that need to be readdressed in class can be quickly identified. For this kind of test to be successful, several criteria should be met. First, multidimensional "real world" problems that synthesize material learned should be used. Second, to help reduce test anxiety, it is beneficial to allow open book, open note exams. Third, student responsibility to the small group should be emphasized. It must be made clear that each member receives the same score, and must share responsibility. If equal participation by

group members appears to be a problem, then each group member can negotiate "worth" of input to the problem solving effort. Last, but certainly not least, the purpose of the test must be conveyed. Traditionally, testing has measured and graded on the basis of what is not known by an individual at a particular point in time. In a world where it is impossible to "know everything", using what is "known" is perhaps a better method for assessing performance.

--Dawn Pickard

Supplemental Instruction

During winter semester 1990 the Academic Skills Center Faculty Liaison Jon Froemke, Associate Professor of Mathematical Sciences, received funds from the Teaching and Learning Committee to pilot a Supplemental Instruction (SI) Program to MTH 012, Intermediate Algebra, and MTH 256, Introduction to Linear Algebra. This program is an Exemplary Educational Program Certified through the U.S. Department of Education and administered by the Center for Academic Development at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC). The focus of SI is to identify high-risk classes rather than high-risk students and then to provide effective academic support for these classes.

Lynn Hockenberger, Director of the Academic Skills Center, and Helen Woodman, Coordinator in the Center, were both trained as supervisors in August 1989. In April 1990 Jon Froemke and Wally Andersen, the Faculty Liaison to the Center from the Department of Rhetoric, Communications & Journalism, were also trained. Jeanne Carter, the new Coordinator for math, accounting, and economics tutoring in the Center, received her supervisor training in November 1990.

The SI is structured so that Student Leaders (at Oakland these people are tutors in the Academic Skills Center) participate in twelve hours of training conducted by the SI Supervisors prior to the beginning of the semester. These Leaders attend all of the classes for the designated SI course, take notes, do the homework, and provide organized study sessions three times a week to students enrolled in these selected classes. During the study sessions, the SI Leader focuses on course-specific study skills to help students review notes, understand and apply key concepts, and prepare for tests. Attendance on the part of the students is voluntary.

With funding from Student Affairs, the SI Program was expanded this fall to include two sections of MTH 012, two sections of MTH 121, one section of MTH 122, and one section of ACC 200. The SI Student Leaders for these classes are Laurie Volmering, Ruth Drellishak, Rebecca McLeod, John Burgess, Kathy Terbrack, and Dawn Hortop. Both Laurie Volmering and John Burgess were trained to be SI Leaders for last winter's classes and so brought that experience to the sessions they have been leading this fall.

The SI Program at Oakland will continue next semester for the same courses as this fall. Some of the current Student Leaders will continue and several new ones will be trained in December.

--Lynn Hockenberger

Is there a topic you'd like to see addressed in *Insights & Ideas*? Call or write Virginia Allen, Provost Office, 520 ODH; ext. 2190.

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