

The Center for Teaching and Learning



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Our Mission

Dedicated to building a learning-centered community, and to improving student learning by supporting faculty in ways that make teaching a more satisfying, and productive activity, the Center for Teaching and Learning coordinates, consolidates, enhances, and expands existing faculty development services at Western Oregon University. The Center offers:

- Individual assistance and confidential consultation to faculty.
- Campus discussion groups and workshops to promote a multidisciplinary exchange of insight.
- Practical advice on the integration of innovative pedagogies designed to improve instruction.
- Support for research, scholarship, and creative activities, as well as other related professional development activities.
- Support for joint student-faculty research and the scholarship of teaching.
- Assistance in integrating instructional technology to improve teaching.
- A collegial environment of shared purpose and mutual support to cultivate a conversation about teaching and learning on campus.

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Sharing Our Success

by Niki Young, Director, Center for Teaching and Learning

Greetings! I hope your fall quarter was rewarding and that you enjoyed the winter holiday break. I am delighted to welcome you back to campus in this sesquicentennial anniversary year. A new year offers new and exciting opportunities. The Center for Teaching and Learning will be offering new workshops and seminars this quarter. Our focus this winter and spring will be on celebrating and sharing our success.

This issue of the CTL newsletter celebrates several successes through faculty led innovations in teaching and learning. Guest columnists from the College of Liberal

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Book Group Fosters New Dialogue With Community

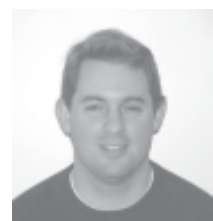
by Amanda Smith & Mark Girod

The College of Education and members of Central School District have launched a new learning community focusing on teacher education program design. In September, Hilda Rosselli, Dean of the College of Education, broadcast an invitation to faculty, staff, and local school district administrators to join a book club examining *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do*, edited by Linda Darling-Hammond and John Bransford. This compendium text discusses the latest research on multiple facets of teacher education programs.

The book group looks and acts like other book groups, meeting bi-monthly during the lunch hour to discuss one chapter per session. What makes this learning community unique, however, is that it fosters a new dialogue between faculty in teacher education programs and the administrators from the local district in which many of our graduates serve.

The Dean and faculty from all three divisions in the College of Education are taking part in this innovative offering. Community members participating in the

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In this essay Assistant Professors Mark Girod and Amanda Smith, in the Division of Teacher Education, share some reflections on a newly formed learning community. Girod and Smith organized a book club that brings together faculty from the College of Education and administrators from Central School District for stimulating conversations about contemporary research in teacher education.

Collaboration and Transformation: Renewing Our Teacherly Selves

by Katherine Schmidt & Emily Plec

When we began this project last summer we had no idea where it would take us or how successful this experiment would be. Creating a truly collaborative seminar is challenging and requires a substantial investment of time. Committing sufficient time to align and scaffold the courses, to talk about teaching, share our pedagogical philosophies and experiment with curricular innovation were keys to our success.

Our collaboration emphasized connecting not only the course content in our two disciplines but, more importantly, fusing our pedagogy. We jointly selected challenging readings and together determined which methods of inquiry worked best with the texts. We discovered that students could and did take ownership of the course material. We incorporated real life situations that fostered the critical thinking and problem solving abilities of every student. Offering clever invitations to students allowed us to slow down and step back to let the students guide the discussions. Utilizing blogs allowed students to continue the in-class conversations outside the classroom and documented the transformational learning occurring in our courses.

Teaching side-by-side gave us the opportunity to examine and revise our teacherly selves in rather profound ways. For example, one of us learned to appreciate a teacher's use of silence during challenging discussions, and the ways silence places more responsibility on the students to provide answers to their own questions. The other learned how small bursts of "quick-writes" provide for richer discussions and promote greater whole class participation. Ultimately, the integrative



In this essay, Katherine Schmidt (Assistant Professor of English and Director of the Writing Center) and Emily Plec (Assistant Professor of Speech Communication) illustrate the transformational learning that occurred through their integration of the study of composition (WR 135) and speech communication (SP 111). The seminar in Humanistic Inquiry (HUM 199W) became a site of collective exploration of identity, language, philosophy, art and religion as articulated through the practices of writing and speaking.

seminar experience gave us a truly unique opportunity: we not only began to embody the learning practices with which we engage our students, but we also began to acquaint ourselves with the nuances of collaborative teaching and learning—to put it simply, we learned to renew our teacherly selves.

SAMPLE BLOG ENTRY

23 November 2005 10:16 a.m. posted by Ashley

I can't believe how much I learned from this past set of speeches.

Corey, you amaze me every time you give a speech. It used to frustrate me that athletes were paid thousands of dollars more than teachers, but I always figured that if an athlete was good enough they had the right to make that much money. I never once thought about applying the law of supply and demand to it. It was very interesting and it really opened my eyes. Thanks for giving me another way to think about it.

Dani – Finally someone has realized that the programs that are in place in schools to stop teenage smoking aren't working! Good for You! I wonder how long it would take before someone who went through the problems and still ended up smoking would stand up and say, "Hey - you might want to rethink your approach because it didn't work, and I am proof that it didn't." I would love to see you actually present your speech to a school board and see what their reaction would be like.

Nicole – I didn't even know a Deaf culture existed, nor did I think much about it until you started giving speeches about it. After the speech you gave today, I was kind of jealous that I will never get to be part of this amazing culture.

Heather – You have really opened my eyes to a new problem facing the world. Montana doesn't have a lot of cultural diversity, and so I never once encountered a situation in my schooling where there was a need for bilingual education. However, after living here and listening to you I can see how it would be a huge problem. I can't wait to see how the passion you have for this subject will show up in the way you choose to teach. Good luck!

Shelly – Your speech knocked my socks off. Some of the statistics you shared were amazing. Of course, I had heard them all before, but I think because they were coming from one of my peers I paid a lot more attention. I have never had any experience with someone who is suffering from anorexia, not that I know of anyways, but you have really inspired me to do something about it or at least to love the way I am more! Thank You.



Innovating Collaborative Solutions to Shared Problems

by Max Geier

This project started when an Anthropologist, two Historians, three Sociologists, a Geographer, a Criminologist, and a Political Scientist all sat down together to plan a collaborative course for first-year students. The goal was to re-think the way we introduce first-year students to the Social Sciences, emphasizing the ways these disciplines support and build upon each other, rather than reinforcing artificial distinctions. We envisioned collaborative teaching that did not sacrifice academic freedom or individual autonomy, and we also hoped to empower faculty to teach closer to their passion than is often the case in ordinary introductory surveys. We aimed to keep faculty-student ratios low (1:17), but we structured the proposal to allow modular expansion in the future. The project began as an effort to more effectively reach, engage, and retain first-year students, but it was also a unique opportunity for faculty to directly grapple with our professional priorities and disciplinary values, reconnecting in an interdisciplinary setting with what we, as faculty scholars, hold most important about academic inquiry.

In the end, we structured the course as a cluster of 6 small seminars (17-20 students) organized around one large lecture section (envision a wheel with one large hub and 6 spokes). Each faculty participant directs one of the seminars, and all faculty team-teach the large lecture section, introducing there the interdisciplinary framework for ideas explored in more depth in the discipline-specific seminars. The course stretches across three terms for pedagogical reasons: the first term explores the history and methodology of the social sciences, emphasizing how our disciplines provide tools for understanding our world, through



In this essay Max Geier, Professor of History, and Chair, Social Science Division, shares some reflections on the Social Science Division's experiences creating an integrative seminar (SSC 150, 151, 152 Introductory Social Science Seminar) as part of the Provost's Learning Communities Initiative for first year students. Faculty teaching in this project this year include Dean Braa, Peter Callero, Maureen Dolan, Max Geier, Shaun Huston, Bernadette Olson, John Rector, and William Smith. Faculty who helped lead the early effort to design and implement this project also included Mary Pettenger and William Brown.

the lens of 4 conceptual themes (Political Economy, Nature, Difference, and Modernity). The second term guides students through the process of bringing those multidisciplinary tools to bear on one overarching phenomenon: Globalization. The third term mentors students through the process of developing and applying their acquired Social Science skills to a research project of interest to them, in a collaborative scholarly community.



The results, so far, are mixed. Our expectations, of course, are substantially higher for this course than for an ordinary, run-of-the mill survey. We stifled our initial impulse to compare the results to our expectations, rather than to an ordinary survey course. We griped about students' inattentive reading or listening, insubstantial writing or discussion, and passive behavior. We were hyper-attentive to these common failings, perhaps because in teaching closer to our passions, we allowed ourselves the conceit that students would be equally enthused. Struggling through the first two terms, however, we learned more about the teaching methods of our colleagues than any one-time, in-class evaluation can provide. We picked up ideas from each other, morphed them into solutions to teaching puzzles we were encountering, and innovated solutions borrowed from programs at other universities where faculty confronted similar problems and circumstances. Midway through the project, we celebrate some successes: 90% of the students participating in the Fall quarter re-enrolled for the seminar in Winter, and attendance the first week of class was 100%. Faculty commit more energy to innovative presentations and structured discussions, knowing that someone else can pick up the ball the next week, thus resulting in sustained energy and enthusiasm throughout the term. Most importantly we experienced the collegial rewards of seeking collaborative solutions to shared problems that help us better understand each other as well as our students. The seminar remains a work in progress, and we are learning as much (or more than) our students.

Upcoming CTL Events

- Learning through laughter, a celebration and exploration of the lighter side of life at Western Oregon University. Thursday, March 9, 2006 at Gentle House.
- Self and Writing Teaching Circle continues this quarter. We will be reading *The Way of the Teacher*, by J.M. Haile. Contact Niki Young for more information and to reserve your copy.
- The Excellence Initiative Learning Community continues. We will discuss strategies for enlivening class discussions.



The Technology Resource Center

IT204 | 838-8965 | www.wou.edu/trc | trc@wou.edu

A unit of the Center for Teaching and Learning, the *Technology Resource Center* is a teaching and technology support lab located in IT204. Our mission is to provide technology support and resources to faculty, staff, and students. No appointment is necessary. Our equipment can be used on a drop-in basis. Some of the services we provide include:

- Consultation on instructional technology and information resources
- Individual tutoring or small group classes on various software packages
- Assistance in developing web pages and online classes
- Collaboration in the production of multimedia solutions

Staff

Scott Carter, Instructional Technologist

503-838-8848 | carters@wou.edu

- Web and WebCT support and training
- Software and technology assistance

Sue Payton, Coordinator of Productions

503-838-8967 | paytons@wou.edu

- Graphic, Web and desktop design
- Software and technology assistance

Resources

- Specialized software for doing graphics work, Web design, and digital video editing
- Flatbed, slide, 35mm film, and 11 x 17 flatbed scanners
- Digital cameras, camcorders, drawing tablets, and audio recorders for checkout
- Color printing up to 42 inches wide
- CD duplication
- Lamination, die-cuts, paper cutters, markers, paint and other tools for creating two-dimensional artwork
- Video taping rooms equipped with mini DV cameras, VCRs, and audio recorders
- VHS tape to tape duplication station
- 35mm slides from electronic files
- Color overheads
- Central campus fax
- VHS, mini DV, CD, DVD, and mini disc tape sales
- Construction paper, butcher paper, and posterboard sales

Services

- Training on a variety of software products (Dreamweaver, Excel, Photoshop, etc.)
- Academic Web design, support, and instruction
- Desktop and graphics design of academic projects (posters, presentations, etc.)
- WebCT and distance education support
- Collaboration in the production of multimedia solutions

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Arts and Sciences and the College of Education offer several models of collaborative teaching and integrative learning. Assistant Professor of English, and Writing Center Director Katherine Schmidt, and Assistant Professor of Speech Emily Plec document the transformational learning that occurred through their collaborative Humanistic Inquiry seminar. Max Geier, Professor of History and Chair of the Social Science Division shares reflections on his Division's innovative collaboration that created an integrative and thematically organized seminar that draws on the multiple and diverse talents of several faculty. Assistant Professors Amanda Smith and Mark Girod in Teacher Education discuss their success at fostering provocative conversations about teaching and learning through a biweekly book group made up of both faculty and community stakeholders.

These stories, about dialogue, innovation and transformation, are but a few of the stories that could be told about Western Oregon University, where our faculty bring enormous talent, passion and creativity to their teaching. Writing and sharing these stories and experiences stimulates all of us within the university community to examine and explore the vital role we play in helping learning grow and blossom in our students. As the writer Anne Lammott observes, "All the good stories are waiting to be told." I invite you to participate in this dialogue and share your successes with others, through workshops, seminars or by writing a column for the Spring issue of this newsletter.

(Book Group - Continued from Page 1)

learning community include Joseph Hunter, Superintendent of Central School District, as well as two district directors at Central. In addition to the learning community that meets on the Western Oregon University campus, a second group of teachers and administrators from Central is also meeting and discussion *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World*.

The business of teaching teachers was once solely the responsibility of colleges of education. Today, that responsibility is held jointly, with school districts taking greater responsibility in the induction process for new teachers. Definitions of teacher education are expanding to reflect a new understanding of professional development. Educators need to teach teachers not just in the College of Education during their professional preparation, but this support needs to continue for the first few years of a teacher's professional career.

The book group is stimulating exciting conversations about the nature and purpose of teacher education, recent and historical trends in the field, current issues within the profession, and application of the research to changes in programs within the College of Education. Participants are using the book in their classes and to engage colleagues in conversations about current issues in education.