WHAT IS A FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE AND WHY ARE WE TRYING ONE?
Anne Kelsch (OID Director)

Vous have probably seen the recent call that went out from the Undergraduate Learning Working Group (ULWG) for proposals to pilot First Year Experiences (FYE) in higher education speak). FYEs are among the well established “high impact practices” in place on college campuses across the United States and globally. When I spoke to a colleague whose research is in higher education about the pilots, her response was enthusiastic: “The data has been telling us for years that our students need these experiences.” And in fact, some of our students do get these experiences through programs such as Integrated Studies and Honors. The idea behind the pilots is to see if we can bring this kind of learning opportunity to more of them.

Loosely defined as programs that regularly bring together first year students with faculty or staff, the purposes behind FYEs can be multiple: to introduce students to the campus community, to help them forge relationships with one another and the university, to help them make a successful transition to a more academically rigorous environment, to introduce them to the process of intellectual inquiry, to foster self-sufficiency in learning – the list goes on. George Kuh, the founder of the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE), has researched and written at length about teaching and learning practices that have been tested and proven effective. Kuh (2008) notes that the “highest-quality” FYE “place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning and other skills that develop students’ intellectual and practical competencies” and that they can also involve students in “cutting edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members’ own research.” (p. 9).

The idea here at UND is to pilot several FYEs and to gather data to determine if these pilots accomplish their intended goals. UND’s priority for the pilots (which came out of the research of the ULWG and a series of listening sessions and faculty focus groups that we conducted on campus) is that they intentionally address high school to college transition issues, such as becoming a reflective and self-regulated learner, within a strong academic context. Consistent assessments will be built into the pilots and the collective data will be compared with institutional data to see if we are able to increase both student learning and retention rates. In alignment with Kuh’s high quality practices, the FYEs must address one of the Essential Studies learning outcomes, and do so within an academic seminar or within a research experience that involves students with faculty work. The hope is to get about 10% of next year’s class enrolled in a pilot course by recruiting during freshman registration this summer in the Getting Started Program.

Culminating experiences, like the ES Capstone, are another high impact practice (HIP). One of the most exciting aspects of this pilot work is that if the FYEs prove effective and are eventually adopted as a requirement for all incoming students, UND
will have “book ended” the undergraduate curriculum in approaches that are in Kuh’s words, “unusually effective.”

When done well, why do these HIPs produce greater learning gains for students? Kuh notes six common elements: such practices require students to devote considerable time and effort to purposeful tasks and to deepen their academic investment; they demand that students interact with peers and faculty over substantive matters; they challenge students to develop new ways of thinking; they provide consistent and rigorous feedback to students; they provide opportunities to integrate, synthesize and apply what they have learned; and ultimately “students acquire the intellectual tools and ethical grounding to act with confidence for the betterment of the human condition” (p. 14-15). While these are lofty goals to embrace, the fact is that most faculty already hold these goals for their students. Our hope is that these curricular innovations at UND will help faculty make their aspirations for student learning accomplishable for all students.

The call for FYE proposals is posted to the OID webpage and the deadline is April 15. If you are interested in proposing a course to be included in the pilot, please contact either Ryan Zerr or Brett Goodwin.


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**CLA ACADEMY: COMING TO NORTH DAKOTA**

UND’s Office of Instructional Development is partnering with NDSU to bring a faculty development program, CLA Academy, to North Dakota next fall. Scheduled to be held at NDSU on November 3-4, the academy provides faculty with an opportunity to learn more about teaching with “performance tasks” – an active learning technique that focuses on helping students improve higher order thinking and writing skills within the context of course-specific content. Tasks leverage learning by asking students to address muddy, real-world challenges in intellectually engaging contexts. Students address these challenges by applying critical thinking skills and content knowledge, while acquiring additional information as necessary to resolve the problem. Tasks can be applicable within virtually any academic context or course, and they can be used at any level from first-year through graduate.

The CLA Academy focuses on helping faculty identify ways in which performance tasks might be useful to engage students and stimulate learning in the participants’ own courses. Each academy participant then works toward development of a specific task which will (when completed) be incorporated directly into a class. Faculty who complete the CLA Academy and submit a performance task for inclusion in the program’s “task library” are given access to all other performance tasks that have been submitted by previous academy attendees – a significant benefit to academy participation.

Details are still being worked out – but watch for more information, and an opportunity to sign up, in future issues of *On Teaching.* And in the meantime check out the CLA website at [http://www.claintheclassroom.org/academy](http://www.claintheclassroom.org/academy)

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**SAVE THE DATE**

**THE FOURTH REFLECTING ON TEACHING COLLOQUIUM WILL TAKE PLACE**

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, AND SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2011.** **WE ARE ESPECIALLY EXCITED THAT THIS FALL’S COLLOQUIUM COINCIDES WITH THE SIXTH NORTH DAKOTA GENERAL EDUCATION SUMMIT,** **AND SO A NUMBER OF OUR COLLEAGUES FROM ACROSS THE STATE SYSTEM, TRIBAL AND PRIVATE COLLEGES WILL BE ATTENDING.**
NOTES FROM TESOL 2011

Several UND faculty attended the annual convention of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

Promoting Learning through Class Activities Focused on Language
Kathleen Vacek, University Writing Program

Many of the ideas and strategies discussed at the TESOL conference could be useful to faculty teaching in any discipline. Here I share two class activities, originally designed for English language learners, which can help all students pick up language skills that will help them succeed in their coursework.

Learning Key Vocabulary: Spot the Differences
This activity comes from a course for international undergrads called “Language of Chemistry.” Kniepkamp (2011) created two versions of a chemistry homework problem by changing some of the words. Students were asked to work in pairs to find the differences and discuss the resulting changes in meaning. The focus on language in an activity like this can help all students assess their own understanding of the essential vocabulary of the concept and the concept itself.

Partner A: A column of liquid is found to expand linearly on heating 5.25 cm for a 10.0°F rise in temperature. If the initial temperature of the liquid is 98.6°F, what will the final temperature be in °C if the liquid has expanded by 18.5 g?
Partner B: A column of liquid is found to contract linearly on heating 5.25 cm for a 10.0°F rise in volume. If the initial temperature of the liquid is 98.6°F, what will the final temperature be in °C if the liquid has expanded by 18.5 cm?

Using Sources: Practice with Textual Borrowing
Textual borrowing is quite nuanced and not nearly so clear cut as handbooks make it out to be. To help students learn to use sources effectively, Tomaš (2011) offers this four-step sequenced activity. Different steps could be adapted to a range of classroom situations.

1. Students discuss the differences between four possible paraphrases of a quote. When testing this activity with her students, Tomaš tracked down an original quote that was paraphrased in a *New York Times* article. She gave the students the actual paraphrase from the article and three others she created. She asked them to guess which was the real paraphrase.
2. The real paraphrase is revealed and the class discusses the context and effectiveness of the author’s choices.
3. Students are provided a sample paper that has no source information. They are also given a source related to the paper topic. The students must improve the paper by incorporating information from the source.
4. Students evaluate their peers’ success at textual borrowing by using a paraphrase rubric to grade each incorporated paraphrase in a draft.

At the last On Teaching Lunch Seminar, we discussed ESL students’ writing and how to teach in a multilingual classroom. We concluded that the presence of multilingual students helps us be better teachers. First, thinking about the needs of nonnative English speakers in an English-medium university reminds us to be more explicit about expectations. Second, we also realize that we may need to provide scaffolding to help students succeed in writing and other class activities. I hope these ideas from TESOL 2011 will spark further creative teaching strategies here at UND.

References


Understanding World Englishes
Anne Walker, Teaching and Learning

One of my research areas and the theme of a panel presentation I did at TESOL is Global English. There were so many sessions and keynote speeches on Global English this year. Here in the United States we privilege standard American English, but the fact is that increasingly throughout the world, there is no such thing as “standard” English. Here at UND, we can expect to see more international students and faculty who speak Indian English (from India) and other World Englishes, and we need to understand that their English is just as legitimate as our American English, and that despite differences in pronunciation, spelling and grammar, they are just as fluent in English as we are. As we work with more international students, we also have to understand that Global English is not about teaching standard American or British English anymore, or even about teaching “perfect” pronunciation or grammar, but rather about teaching people to communicate with others using English as a lingua franca.
PLEASE NOTE:

The last **FIDC deadline** for this academic year (covering support for materials and travel between now and August 31) is **May 1 at noon**. The next deadline will be September 1.

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**Upcoming On Teaching Lunch Seminars**

The Nitty Gritty of Managing Students in their Co-ops/Clinicals/Experiential Learning/Field Work  
*Tuesday, April 12, 12:30 - 1:30 (register by Friday, April 8 by noon)*

Course Design for Critical and Creative Thinking in the Major  
*Wednesday, April 27, 12:00 - 1:00 (register by Monday, April 25 by noon)*

All sessions take place in the Badlands Room of the Union unless otherwise noted. Visit the Office of Instructional Development online (**www.oid.und.edu**) to register. For information contact **Jana Lagro** at **7-4998** or **jana.lagro@und.edu**.