THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Anne Kelsch (OID Director)

This fall’s Reflecting on Teaching Colloquium revolves around “The Future of Higher Education.” I began thinking about this subject after a heated discussion in the Alice T. Clark Mentoring program two years ago. Attending an AAC&U national conference a few months earlier, I heard Ken O’Donnell, who works in Academic Affairs at the Office of the Chancellor of the California State University (CSU), give a keynote entitled “Betting on Gravity.” Addressing higher education in the context of the changing nature of society, culture, work, and technology, Ken gave an engaging and thought provoking presentation that incorporated both a historical perspective and current data. Ken’s rich analysis of demographic and economic trends that influence university decision making—and therefore have a direct impact on teaching and student learning—was thought-provoking. I brought some of his findings back to the mentoring group, and was startled by the strong reactions new faculty had to the developments that Ken documented. We need, I realized, to have more conversations about where higher education as an “industry” (a term that led to some contention in our ATC discussion) is headed and how that reality affects our classrooms and our professional lives.

If you check the Teaching Thursdays blog you will find a link to that AAC&U “Betting on Gravity” presentation. Perhaps you will be struck, as I was, by the reality that higher education had progressed further down a path of change than I had fully grasped. Just one example: I knew transfer was increasingly important. But the complex nexus of issues surrounding it were well beyond my conceptualization of transfer in terms of course equivalencies and administrative details. Ken’s presentation shifted my thinking to a consideration of the impact that transfer has on how we teach and what our students learn. Notably it made me aware of the magnitude of fundamental changes in our midst, yet still left me with cause for optimism about our ability to do well for our students despite the shifting environment. Ken ended the presentation by expressing his belief that it is a “very privileged moment” to be engaged in higher education.

Ken has a unique vantage point from which to consid-
er higher education’s trajectory. California State University encompasses the world’s largest public system of four-year universities, enrolling over 400,000 students on 23 campuses. Situated between open-enrollment community colleges and the selective UC system of research universities, CSU is billed as “the state’s engine of economic growth and upward mobility,” making “high-quality education affordable and accessible.” Many of its students are underrepresented minorities, economically disadvantaged, or the first in their families to attend college. Most graduates—as is increasingly the case for public institutions—are transfer students. Ken’s daily work is in Academic Programs and Policies, working with faculty and administrators throughout the system to deliver engaging, student-focused pedagogy and curriculum.

We know our students need to be prepared for professional lives of adaptation and reinvention. In addition to teaching students required knowledge, we need to foster self-directed learning and the ability to analyze complex, realistic scenarios and synthesize information from multiple sources. But the challenges of providing a first class education to an increasingly mobile student population, more often than not attending multiple institutions and taking classes in various formats, means we cannot do that in isolation. As keynote speaker at this year’s Reflecting on Teaching Colloquium, Ken will address the question of how to create deep learning in an increasingly mobile student population—an issue that confronts us here far more than we realize. His Saturday workshop “Building Bridges for Better Learning Across and Within Colleges & Universities” will help faculty develop a more comprehensive view of student learning and the capability to see what is “off-screen” in order to build a better learning experience for students in our courses and majors. Given the collaborative nature of this work, attendance at the colloquium by faculty from across North Dakota’s 17 private, tribal and state institutions is especially valuable. These colleagues will be joining us as the ND General Education Council Statewide Summit is meeting in conjunction with the Colloquium.

We hope you will take the time to reflect on teaching—take in Ken’s keynote and workshop, attend presentations by UND faculty, and enjoy the opportunity to meet colleagues from across campus and the state. In addition to a full schedule of events, the Colloquium offers many opportunities for informal discussion and conversation over breakfast, lunch, and the concluding “High Impact Practices in North Dakota” poster presentation and reception at the North Dakota Museum of Art. We will need a headcount for food-related events, so please register through the on-line form on the OID web site by September 21, letting us know you plan to attend. You will find the schedule of events online as well. Online registration helps with planning and is greatly appreciated, but if you won’t be joining us for meals or the reception, registration will also be available onsite.

MEET THE FACULTY INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (FIDC)

The Faculty Instructional Development Committee (FIDC), elected by the University Senate, provides support for course and curriculum development that goes beyond the means of the individual faculty and academic units. The committee is responsible for all decisions having to do with FIDC Travel Grants, Materials/Software/Minor Equipment Grants, Developmental Leave Supplements, traditional and online Summer Instructional Development Projects, and Summer Mini-Project Grants. The committee also advises the OID Director on other matters.

The members of the 2011-12 committee are: John Bridewell (Aviation), Matt Cavalli (Mechanical Engineering), Joan Hawthorne (Assessment and Regional Accreditation), Lynda Kenney (Technology), Robin Runge (Law), Kari Chiasson (Teaching and Learning), and Brett Goodwin (Biology). If you have questions about FIDC funding, contact any of the members for more information.

FIDC proposals are due to OID by noon on the 1st business day of the month. Funding deadlines for fall 2011 are: September 1 (Thursday), October 3 (Monday), November 1 (Tuesday) and December 1 (Thursday). Deadlines for summer funding take place in the spring. You’ll find complete information on the OID website.

Teaching Thursdays

The Teaching Thursdays blog launched in the spring of 2009. One hundred and twenty-six posts and 20,000 hits later, it is going strong! The goal of the blog is to provide another venue for campus-wide discussion of teaching. We accept contributions about teaching of all kinds, at all levels, and from all parts of the University community. The most popular recent blog posts include discussions of “Technology and Pedagogy,” “Strategies and Tips for Scholarly Writing,” “First Year Reflections,” and “How to Spot a Bad Professor.”

Visit us at teachingthursday.org
CLA in the Classroom Performance Task Academy is Coming to Fargo November 3 & 4

Register Now

Building on the work of the Undergraduate Learning Working Group and the “Exceptional UND” focus on enriching the student learning experience, UND is partnering with NDSU to bring the CLA in the Classroom Performance Task Academy to Fargo on November 3rd and 4th. This is a rare opportunity to bring a nationally noted faculty development program to our region. OID will cover all costs for UND faculty, including the academy’s $600 registration, meals and transportation, to attend the two day workshop (Thursday from 9-5 and Friday from 9-3).

Each academy participant will develop a performance task and a rubric with which to quantitatively score their performance task. A performance task is a performance based assessment of student learning in an academic setting. This active learning technique 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.

Academies are conducted by the national non-profit Council for Aid to Education. Faculty members who complete their performance task and accompanying rubric can submit them for review to be included in the national data base of such performance tasks completed by other faculty members across the United States.

Contact Anne Kelsch (anne.kelsch@email.und.edu or 7-4233) or Joan Hawthorne (joan.hawthorne@email.und.edu or 7-4684) by September 15 if you wish to attend.

The following is an abbreviated sample task that gives faculty a sense of what performance tasks ask students to do. Like all performance tasks, this might be used to assess information literacy, written communication, or critical thinking in addition to content in an introductory business or aviation course, and could be done in class or as homework, as an individual assignment or as group work. Students receive these directions:

You are the assistant to Pat Williams, the president of DynaTech, a company that makes precision electronic instruments and navigational equipment. Sally Evans, a member of DynaTech’s salesforce, recommended that DynaTech buy a small private plane (a SwiftAir 235) that she and other members of the sales force could use to visit customers. Pat was about to approve the purchase when there was an accident involving a SwiftAir 235. You are provided with the following documentation:

- Newspaper articles about the accident
- Federal Accident Report on in-flight breakups in single engine planes
- Pat’s e-mail to you and Sally’s e-mail to Pat
- Charts on SwiftAir’s performance characteristics
- Amateur Pilot article comparing SwiftAir 235 to similar planes
- Pictures and description of SwiftAir Models 180 and 235.

Please prepare a memo that addresses several questions, including which data support or refute the claim that the type of wing on the SwiftAir 235 leads to more in-flight breakups, which other factors might have contributed to the accident and should be taken into account, and your overall recommendation about whether or not DynaTech should purchase the plane.
JOIN A FACULTY STUDY SEMINAR

Faculty Study Seminars allow faculty with common interests to learn more about a teaching-related topic. This fall the Office of Instructional Development will offer three. Each group meets four times a semester, at times mutually agreed to by participants, to read and discuss a teaching-related book (books provided by OID). Your only obligation is to read and to show up for discussion. To sign up for a group, e-mail the facilitator noted below with your contact information (e-mail and phone) and a copy of your fall semester schedule (noting the times you cannot meet). You will be contacted once an initial meeting date is set.

*Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* by Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa (University of Chicago, 2011)

From the buzz its publication generated, including reviews in the Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Ed, and The New York Times, it is clear that this is an important book for academics to understand and take into account. Arum and Roksa followed 2,300 students at 24 universities over a four-year period and analyzed their results on the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)—both of which are administered to UND students by Institutional Research. In the most reductionist sense, the book argues that students don’t study very much and therefore don’t learn very much. This should not surprise faculty who have been complaining for years that students don’t spend enough time doing course work. On the other hand, the scope of the problem is surprising: for example, the authors observed “no statistically significant gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing skills for at least 45 percent of the students in our study” during the first two years of college and over one third of students who complete four years of college show no improvement in critical thinking skills. Arum and Roksa also postulate that a lack of rigor and low faculty expectations are part of the problem.

To participate in this FSS, please contact Anne Kelsch at anne.kelsch@email.und.edu or 777-4233.

*Successful Science and Engineering Teaching in Colleges and Universities* by Calvin S. Kalman (Jossey-Bass, 2006)

This book offers broad, practical strategies for teaching science and engineering courses and describes how faculty can provide a learning environment that helps students comprehend the nature of science, understand science concepts, and solve problems in science courses.

The student-centered approach focuses on two main themes: reflective writing and working in collaborative groups. When faculty incorporate methods into their courses that challenge their students to critically reflect, collaborate, and problem solve, students gain a better understanding of science as a connected structure of concepts rather than as a simple tool kit of assorted practices.

Contents include reflective writing, writing to learn, constructing student knowledge, selected methods for using collaborative groups, changing students’ epistemologies, training students to solve problems, and using technology to aid your teaching.

To participate in this FSS please contact Kathleen Vacek at kathleen.vacek@email.und.edu or 777-6381.
The SGID (Small Group Instructional Diagnosis) process, facilitated by a trained faculty colleague, is a method of soliciting student perceptions about the progress of their learning. Learn more about SGIDs at oid.und.edu

To request an SGID, contact Jana Lagro at 777-4998 or jana.lagro@email.nodak.edu

Get Midterm Student Feedback on Your Teaching

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Good Mentoring: Fostering Excellent Practice in Higher Education by Jeanne Nakamura and David Shernoff with Charles Hooker (Jossey-Bass, 2009)

Mentoring students is an important part of our role as faculty members. We mentor students both formally and informally through our interactions, but what messages are we passing on to the next generation of scholars? Nakamura and Shernoff studied three different successful academics that had been deemed to be “good mentors.” The authors studied not only the academics but also several generations of their students to understand what ideals and practices had been passed on and how these traits were communicated. This book presents a way of looking at mentoring more objectively, and is a good jumping off point for discussing our own mentoring practices. Although the lead academics chosen for this book are all in the natural sciences, with a focus on graduate mentoring, the ideas discussed are applicable to most disciplines and to both graduate and undergraduate mentoring. Other specific mentoring topics that could be explored include gender roles in mentoring relationships and the challenges of placing boundaries in the age of social media.

To participate in this FSS, please contact Gretchen Mullendore at gretchen@atmos.und.edu or 777-4707.

Outstanding Faculty Award Nominations due October 14

Each year at the UND Founders Day Banquet, individual faculty and departments are honored for their outstanding teaching, advising, research and service. The Outstanding Advisor Award is coordinated by the Academic Advising Committee and research awards are coordinated by RD&C. The remaining seven awards come under the auspices of the Outstanding Faculty Awards Committee (OFAC), appointed by the Provost and coordinated by OID. Individual awards are given for undergraduate teaching, graduate or professional teaching, and service. Departmental awards honor teaching and faculty development or service. The prestigious Outstanding Faculty Scholar award honors a faculty member who has a demonstrated record of excellence in teaching, research/creative activity, and service to the university, the profession, and/or the community.

Please consider nominating a colleague or department for an award. As faculty we often witness their best work. We benefit from having their students in our classes and from candid talks in the hall. We have knowledge that is often less evident to others: they teach multiple independent studies without compensation and work intensely one-on-one with various students. We observe their work on graduate committees and on assessment reports. We perhaps have the best vantage point from which to fully understand and evaluate the full nature of their contribution.

Nomination forms are on the OID webpage under the “Awards” link.
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ON TEACHING
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JOIN A FACULTY WRITING GROUP
Join 6-10 faculty from across the disciplines who meet for an hour once a week to respond to each other’s academic and professional writing. To learn more contact Kathleen Vacek at 777-6381 or kathleen.vacek@email.und.edu

Upcoming On Teaching Lunch Seminars

Demanding Tyrant or Enabling Pushover?: Impressions on Teaching from an "Occasionally" Compassionate Therapist Wednesday, Sept. 21, 12:00-1:00 p.m. (register by Monday, Sept. 19 at noon)

Supporting Undergraduate Research: How and Why to Do it Tuesday, Oct. 18, 12:30-1:30 p.m. (register by Friday, Oct. 14 at noon)

Project Makeover: Redesigning Student Assignments Wednesday, Nov. 16 12:00-1:00 p.m. (register by Monday, Nov. 14 at noon)

Lecturing Best Practices - What the Research Tells Us Tuesday, Dec. 6, 12:30-1:30 p.m. (register by Friday, Dec. 2 at 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@email.und.edu

On Teaching is published six times a year as a service to UND faculty.
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