



Teaching Notes

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Welcome to Our New CETL Faculty Fellow

Dede Yow, Professor of English CETL Faculty Fellow for Diversity in the Curriculum

Dede graduated from Agnes Scott College in 1970 with a B.A. in history and earned her M.A. (1973) and Ph.D. (1980) in English from the University of Georgia. She taught English in Developmental Studies at UGA from 1981-82 and came to Kennesaw College (now KSU) in 1982. Her teaching and scholarship are in the areas of regional literature of the South and gender studies. She teaches courses in Myth, Race, and Religion in the Literature of the South, Women Writers of the Short Story, and Southern Humor. For ten years she has team taught a course on Georgia Writers with Tom Scott's Georgia History, embedding materials that reflect the diversity of this region in its multicultural literature. She has done Directed Studies with students on The Role of Women in Society: Voices of Various Cultures; Gender, Race, and Voice in Selected 19th and 20th Century American Novels; Works of Carson McCullers and Truman Capote; and Voices of Southern Black and White Women in 19th and 20th Century Novels. She has published essays on Southern writers Mary Hood, Bobbie Ann Mason, and Larry Brown. She is currently working with Tom Scott on a history of KSU, conducting oral histories with winners of Distinguished Faculty Awards, a project co-sponsored by CETL.

Special Kudos to Our "Retiring" CETL Faculty Fellows!!

Gary Roberts 2002-2005 CETL Faculty Fellow for e-Learning

After 3 years of outstanding contributions, Gary Roberts, founding CETL Faculty Fellow for e-Learning, has decided to return to his departmental home full time. Gary's energy, enthusiasm, and innovative initiatives have been a mainstay of CETL since 2001. I deeply appreciate not only Gary's contributions to the enhancement of online teaching and student learning at KSU, but most particularly his deep personal commitment to building faculty communities of learning through innovative programs such as his popular WebCT Drop-in Workshops and the Dinner & Poetry gatherings at CETL each semester.

Val Whittlesey 2002-2005 CETL Faculty Fellow for Diversity in the Curriculum

Val, who was also a founding CETL Fellow, is stepping down after 3 years of service in CETL. During her term she offered numerous workshops on incorporating and assessing diversity education in the curriculum. One outstanding contribution was her founding of the biannual national conference on diversity, Stepping Up to The Plate: Best Practices in Diversity Education. Held in 2003 and 2005, the conference drew a national audience and she anticipates helping organize the third one in 2007.

Running Around in CIRCLES

Laura Davis & Ellen Taber
Co-Directors, KSU English Department CIRCLES Project

"How oft, amid those overflowing streets, / Have I gone forward with the crowd, and said / Unto myself, "The face of every one that passes by me is a mystery!" --- William Wordsworth, "The Prelude"

Wordsworth's famous lines conjure up images of crowded cities filled with the blur of passing strangers, hustling off to their own mysterious lives. Recently, however, the poetry brings us to our own doorstep: the hallways of our English building at KSU. Rushing through the chaotic corridors with increasingly busy schedules, lately we consider good colleague interaction as a hand waved in one another's direction above the ocean of bobbing heads. If we are lucky, we have a brief moment when our eyes meet sympathetically with those of a colleague, essentially a stranger, before we are again pushed along in the current. We know we are not alone, but how to solve such a dilemma with crowds pressing and the clock ticking?

Though we have little opportunity to visit other departments as often as we would like, we are sure that KSU's enrollment growth has at times led those colleagues to feel similarly overwhelmed and isolated. In fact, many universities are struggling with the same question: how do we continue to provide exemplary teaching when departments grow at explosive rates, large numbers of new full-time and adjunct instructors are a necessity, and strict time and budget constraints increasingly limit faculty training and meaningful interaction?

Last fall, more than 40 volunteers of all teaching ranks from the English and University Studies departments embarked on a new program entitled CIRCLES to combat this issue. We hoped to increase productive conversations among colleagues and to improve the quality of our teaching. The CIRCLE acronym stands for Creating Intentional Research Communities of Learning and Experience, and the initiative is modeled somewhat after successful faculty learning communities (FLCs) on other campuses. The idea behind FLCs is similar to the philosophies behind student learning communities; teachers are placed in small groups that meet several times a semester for support and discussion. Such a program can help boost faculty morale, increase collegiality, and foster the open exchange of ideas and teaching strategies.

Specifically, our program divided participants into small groups or "CIRCLES" of six members, each led by a faculty volunteer facilitator. For our first semester, the groups' goals were simple; to meet at least twice for sharing specific classroom activities they were currently trying in their courses. In this way, members were able to learn from the "expert who teaches next"

(Continued on next page)

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door." enabling faculty to encounter new ways of teaching each course. In addition, group members were encouraged to hold "open house" days, whereby each invited another into a class to observe or participate in a particular activity of the host's choosing. Though the idea seems simple, several group members have already remarked that through CIRCLES, they have been able to meet and converse with other faculty they had never met or had not previously known well. Several teachers are now using others' strategies in their own classrooms.

The program can be particularly useful when a department has a significant increase in new, incoming faculty. Last fall, the English department hired a number of new teachers; significantly, though they were busy settling into their new jobs, almost all signed up to participate in a CIRCLE. In fact, these newcomers have been some of our most enthusiastic participants, as the groups have helped them quickly get to know a small, supportive section of the department. This in turn helped ease their transition into a new work environment. Additionally, several of our groups contain part-time teachers, and two of our CIRCLES are being co-led by full-time and part-time faculty members. This interaction provides an instant and positive means of supporting our wonderful team of part-time instructors, many of whom previously felt isolated from the rest of the department.

We have further experienced the extra bonus of getting to know colleagues from another department better. Professors from University Studies often teach general education English courses, but previously, there was no organized program for teachers from each department to communicate and share teaching ideas and strategies. The CIRCLES program has been greatly enriched by our new friendships with our University Studies colleagues.

It is of course true that our members and leaders have had to make sacrifices in order to be involved in a faculty learning community. With so many meetings and committees on campus already, we all know how difficult it is to find time for "one more thing." However, as we tell our members, when is the last time you were asked to serve on The Committee for Hanging Out with Truly Amazing Colleagues in Your Department Just to Talk about Our Shared Passion of Teaching? Luckily, they have seen CIRCLES as just that, an opportunity to spend time with great colleagues and energize our teaching.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

2005-2006 CETL Faculty Learning Communities

Do the learning communities described by Laura Davis and Ellen Taber in this issue of *Teaching Notes* sound appealing? The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) is pleased to announce funding to support participation in the newly established CETL Faculty Learning Communities Program (FLCP). The FLCP is designed to bring together small groups of faculty (no more than six) who are interested in focusing on a particular teaching and learning initiative for some extended period of time (e.g., a full semester or an academic year). Previous participants in CETL Workshops and Book Club Discussions have expressed interest in having an opportunity to explore a particular topic in more depth. Often these sessions generate some great ideas among the participants, but then the daily demands of teaching get in the way of following through with these ideas or plans. The purpose of the FLCP is to set aside some time to do just that! Faculty Coordinators and participants in the learning community will receive special funding for professional development. For more information and applications visit www.kennesaw.edu/cetl.

CETL Web Site

<http://www.kennesaw.edu>

We invite you to visit the newly revised CETL Web site. We continue to expand the resources and links available. Current and upcoming resources are described below.

KSU Faculty Development Funding Opportunities

This Website includes descriptions, application criteria, and forms, and deadlines for all current KSU faculty development funding programs. Funding Opportunities listed on this page include: CETL Travel Funds, Scholarship of Teaching & Learning Team Funding, Post-Tenure Faculty Vitality Funds (Scholarship Start/Restart and Enhancement Leaves), KSU Incentive Funds for Scholarship, and CETL Faculty Learning Communities.

Calendar of CETL Events & Workshops

This Web site lists upcoming campus workshops and events sponsored by CETL.

CETL-Sponsored Conferences

CETL annually sponsors or co-sponsors several regional and national conferences on teaching. Details on conferences, including proposal submission information are available at the site.

CETL Publications

This Web site offers links to online, archived copies of all issues of *Reaching Through Teaching* and past issues of *Teaching Notes*.

KSU Faculty Awards

This Web site provides detailed information on the criteria and selection processes for all of the major KSU faculty awards. In addition, there are links to Web sites listing all past award recipients.

Regional and National Conference Calendar

This site provides an extensive list of conferences and workshops on all aspects of teaching and student learning (e.g., technology, advisement, assessment, online teaching, academic integrity), with links to each conference Web site. A new addition is a listing of discipline-specific conferences on teaching.

Journals on Teaching and Higher Education

This site contains an extensive list of interdisciplinary and discipline-specific peer-reviewed journals on teaching, including links to journal Web sites.

Faculty Mentoring Resources

Current sites include resources for KSU Department Chairs and New Faculty. By the end of fall semester we will be adding sites for Senior Faculty and Support Faculty.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

13th Annual Georgia Conference on College & University Teaching March 24-25, 2006

The Georgia Conference on College & University Teaching is sponsored by CETL and the KSU Division of Continuing Education. Attended by over 160 faculty across the southeast, this interdisciplinary conference is designed to provide faculty with an opportunity to discuss and share experiences and innovative teaching techniques. The proposal deadline is November 7, 2005. For additional details on the conference and proposal submissions, visit the CETL conference Web site at <http://www.kennesaw.edu/cetl/CETLconferences.htm>

What Leads to Student Success in Writing?

A CETL Scholarship of Teaching & Learning Team Research Summary

Elizabeth Giddens, Susan M. Hunter, & Margaret Walters,
KSU Department of English

(NOTE: Susan Hunter is now at Clayton State University)

As teachers in KSU's Master's in Professional Writing program (MAPW), the three of us wondered why some talented students in this program do not reach their goals, while others succeed beyond their and our expectations. This observation led us to a research question: What habits of mind and practices lead to success in writing fields?

To pursue this research question, we selected a purposeful sample of master's-level students and graduates from the MAPW program whom we believed to be successful. During the fall of 2004, we interviewed 15 writers. In preparation for the interview, participants were asked to select a text, from any genre, that they considered to be challenging and significant to their development as a writer and to prepare to recall details of the production of the text. These interviews, which were videotaped, offered us compelling success stories and, more important, insights that we hope will help us posit a model of success for secondary, undergraduate and graduate writing students.

Now in its 11th year, the MAPW program attracts a range of students who wish to prepare for careers in professional practice: those who have undergraduate English or communication degrees and seek advanced training that will lead to employment; career changers (often with previous educational and work experience outside the humanities); working professional writers who want advanced training and the M.A. credential for promotion and advancement; and highly successful professionals such as lawyers, accountants, and doctors, who have decided that they want to make writing, publishing, and/or teaching a part of their personal, and in some cases, their professional lives.

In the first phase of the project we identified patterns in how successful writers view their tasks and go about their work. We discovered that they (1) define success as gaining a response from readers; (2) master knowledge domains, including metacognitive knowledge; (3) put their knowledge into action through similar habits of mind; and (4) acquire these abilities from a range of personal, professional, and academic experiences. We presented these preliminary results at the Writing Research in the Making Conference at UC Santa Barbara in February 2005 and at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in March 2005.

Now a year into the project, we have a vast amount of data to analyze systematically, including over 15 hours of video, which has been transcribed into over 400 pages of verbatim transcripts, funded by a CETL Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Research Team (STLRT) grant. In the second phase of the project, we plan protocol, content, conversation, and discourse analyses to code the texts of the interviews. These analyses will enable us to tease out the complexities of our data. The specific research questions for Phase 2 are (1) What is the interplay between habits of mind and knowledge domains related to writing? and (2) How can faculty help writers master these knowledge domains and develop these habits of mind?

We anticipate multiple outcomes from our research. First, we hope to contribute to composition theory by establishing the interrelated roles of knowledge domains, particularly metacognitive knowledge, and habits of mind for the full development of individual writing ability. We also hope to help educators design more effective writing programs and offer future researchers theoretical concepts to test and refine. Because qualitative data related to process and metacognition are difficult to capture fully in print, our multimedia method of reporting

findings by combining prose, graphics, and video may make the research more accessible to administrators, teachers and students and become an attractive dissemination method for other researchers as well. Finally, we believe that excerpts from the interviews can provide writers at secondary, undergraduate, and graduate levels with realistic, successful role models.

In the coming year, we plan to present our work at conferences for scholars and teachers of English Studies (College English Association), writing-across-the-curriculum specialists (at Clemson University), and college writing specialists (CCCC). We will also produce a student- and administrator-friendly webcast of the project, which will be accessible on the KSU Careers in Writing Web site (www.kennesaw.edu/careersinwriting/). A longer, scholarly presentation of our preliminary findings is already available for sharing via DVD copies of an integrated video and PowerPoint presentation. In the longer term, we intend to publish this research in both a peer-reviewed online journal, so that we may include video clips from the interviews, and in a print-based scholarly monograph.

How You Say It Can Make a Difference

Kevin M. Johnston

Director, Michigan State University TA Programs

"The most disturbing effect of weak language lies in the fact that it can profoundly undermine otherwise strong teaching."

- Joan Middendorf & Stephen Yandell (2002)

Read and compare the following two statements: (1) "I hope you appreciate not having to read the entire book." And, (2) "You should pay attention to the pages I've assigned." Do the same for these next two scenarios: (1) "If you didn't do well on this quiz, don't worry. There was a lot of material to study and it only counts for a small portion of your grade." And, (2) "If you didn't do well on this quiz, you will want to review the material more closely. Please come see me if you have questions about the material..."

If you were a student and your instructor used the first sentence in each of these pairs, how would you react? How might you respond to the second sentences in each pair? Is there a difference? Indiana University's Joan Middendorf and Stephen Yandell maintain that there is. In "Replacing Weak Language with Strong: Transforming Your Teaching Persona," a recent article in the *National Teaching & Learning Forum*, they qualified the first statements in the pairs above as examples of weak language, the second statements in each pair as strong.

The authors maintain that students do react differently according to the language that teachers use with them. Middendorf and Yandell believe that "strong" language communicates credibility. Weak language on the other hand, used even in the best organized, best facilitated, and most pedagogically sound classrooms communicates a lack of teacher confidence and low student expectations. Weak language is ambiguous and self-doubting. It even *sounds* ambiguous and self-doubting. Moreover, because weak language can be imbedded in our speech patterns, it is very hard to self-diagnose. Their research also reveals that the source of many student complaints and low teaching evaluations can be traced to language factors about which teachers are not even aware. Apologies and overly polite speech can undermine confidence in a teacher's ability and alarmingly, first impressions are often hard to shake, even through the entire semester.

The authors offer the following advice to help teachers avoid weak language or behavior:

1. Avoid the using rising intonation at the end of sentences.

(Continued on next page)

Johnston, continued from Page 3

2. Don't sound doubtful.
3. Avoid apologizing for things students have responsibility.
4. Don't put yourself down.
5. Don't over-praise students.
6. Don't provide an open forum for students to criticize your teaching.

Teachers *should* be aware of not only what they say, but also how they say it. Changing the way you lecture to your students, question them, and direct them to task can have a strong effect on how they respond to you. However, Middendorf and Yandell warn that strong language used inappropriately can appear cold and insensitive, and it can lead to the same sorts of communicative dissonance that weak language creates between teacher and student. They also point out that because of what most students deem as their inherent authority, older Caucasian males can generally get away with language that, when used by others, communicates significant doubt (Middendorf & Yandell, 2002). On the other hand, white males can suffer from students' expectations if they try to take themselves out of the authority position, as by seeking to avoid dominating a discussion when students expect them to lead it.

Perhaps the key to effectively employing strong communication is practicing a receptive and empathetic confidence, but with an awareness of your own teaching language and style. As teachers, some of us are humorous, others demonstrative, others more subdued. All these approaches can be effective. But what works best for you? In his chapter on lecturing, written for *University Teaching*, Jerry Evensky admits that he's "...not even sure how to describe my own style. It's certainly pretty low-key. I just know it's mine, it's me, and most students seem to respond to it. Ultimately, that's all that matters (Lambert, Tice, & Featherstone, p. 28)."

As you begin to work on your approach to teaching, I encourage you to consider the following: Although changing your tone and style can make you a more effective communicator, always teach in manner that suits you best. Seek to find your authentic teaching "voice" and trust it. Students can and will respond positively to all kinds of teaching styles and voices, but they can also spot a fraud right away. Think about your style, about what you are saying and how you say it. Ask yourself then, "How is this who I am as a teacher?" The more confident you are in your approach to teaching and in your ability to prompt student interest in the material, the happier you and your students will be.

And really, that's all that matters.

References

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- Middendorf, J., & Yandell, S. (2002). Replacing weak language with strong: Transforming your teaching persona. *The National Teaching and Learning Forum*, 11, 7-9.

Additional Resources

- Boice, R. (1996). *First-order principles for college teachers: Ten basic ways to improve the teaching process*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.
- Chickering, A. W., & Zelda F. G. (Eds.). (1991). Applying the seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *New Direction for Teaching and Learning*, No. 47. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
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(NOTE: This essay was originally printed online as one of the Michigan State University Teaching Assistant Program "Thoughts on Teaching." It is reprinted with permission of the author.)

Web Sites of the Month

Case-Based Teaching & Learning

Originating in business and professional schools, case-based teaching (or also sometimes referred to as problem-based learning) has become increasingly popular across all disciplines. In case-based teaching students are asked to apply their course knowledge to analyze and develop courses of action for realistic and intrinsically interesting situations or scenarios. The intent is to engage students in a learning activity designed to enhance critical thinking and applications of course material. The development of effective cases can be time-consuming and challenging. There are, however, numerous Web sites devoted to case-based teaching that include a vast array of pre-tested cases for your classes. Below we have listed two excellent Web sites that describe the case-based teaching approach and include case collections to get you started.

National Center for Case Study Teaching In Science

<http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/projects/cases/case.html>

This Web site is an excellent starting point for developing a case-based teaching approach in your class. In addition to general information about case-based teaching, it has a very large and free collection of cases, each of which includes "teaching notes" for using the cases. Disciplines for which cases are available include, Anatomy & Physiology, Anthropology, Astronomy, Chemistry/Biochemistry, Computer Science, Ecology, Evolutionary Biology, Geography/GIS, Mathematics/Statistics, Medicine/Health, Microbiology, Molecular Biology/Genetics, Physics/Engineering, Plant Science, and Psychology. The Web site also provides links to a number of other Web resources for cases in disciplines such as sociology, business, and international affairs.

Problem-Based Learning Clearinghouse, Institute for Transforming Undergraduate Education at the University of Delaware

<https://chico.nss.udel.edu/Pbl/>

Another large online collection of peer-reviewed cases for a wide variety of disciplines. Each case includes teaching notes and related materials. This Web site requires one to join to access the cases, but it is free.

Cases for Undergraduate Educational Psychology Classes

<http://www.indiana.edu/~caseweb/>

This site features a set of free cases written by undergraduate students based upon their actual field observations.

Cases for Teaching Business Courses

Because the case-teaching approach originated in business, it should be no surprise that there are several extensive online resources for cases. I have listed several of the larger sites below. However, be forewarned that these sites charge for their cases.

Harvard Business School Cases & Teaching Materials

http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu/b01/en/cases/cases_home.jhtml

Stanford Graduate School of Business Case List

<http://gobi.stanford.edu/cases/>