



Teaching Notes

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Promoting Student Success: DEEP Lessons from 20 Campuses

Summary & Commentary by Thomas Kolenko,
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This past spring I attended the national AAHE conference and was quickly drawn to a 2-hour session summarizing a landmark research effort, which is now available in print (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt & Associates, 2005). Highlights from this research that are directly applicable to our KSU learning environment are summarized below to serve as thought starters or to draw you to read the book.

A team of 24 researchers studied 20 varied institutions (e.g., doctoral, master's granting, baccalaureate liberal arts) selected based on their high National Survey of Student Engagement scores and higher than predicted graduation rates. The DEEP (Documenting Effective Educational Practice) research focused on identifying (a) what strong performing colleges and universities do to promote student success, and (b) what campus policies, programs, and practices contribute to high levels of student engagement and better than predicted graduation rates.

In my opinion, the most applicable recommendations for KSU were:

1) Create an unshakeable focus on student learning where clarification of student expectations and behavior, institutional expectations, and the academic reward system are high priorities. Making time for students, adopting engaging pedagogies, and accommodating students' preferred learning styles reinforced this student-centered experience. The studied faculties were found to "work with the students they have" rather than only the brightest or the best or the ones they wished they had in their classes.

2) Focus on "Living the Mission" of the university. Missions, values, and aspirations were transparent and understandable to all parties impacting students. It is with a collective understanding and endorsement of the unique educational mission and purposes of the institution that policies and operational decisions were made. Faculty and staff were recruited and rewarded that were committed to the specialness of the mission. Investments were also made in faculty members who were doing the right mission-anchored things, while new teaching and learning center investments further extended their reach. Strong linkages between the campus and community were built around the mission with collaboration and partnerships stressed.

3) Putting funding where it will make a difference in student learning engagement levels. Rethinking resource investments around those programs that are demonstrably effective at fostering student success and pruning the programs that are no longer mission aligned. Student-centered learning initiatives all had "champions" that required financial and emotional support to survive and thrive. Psychological commitments by faculty and support staff were hollow and temporary without tangible backing by university administration. No "unsupported mandates" were permitted in this integrated student-centered model.

While many of these recommendations focused on administrative and institutional concerns, the presentation was rich with specific case applications among the 20 campuses studied. For example, Miami University (Ohio) leveraged student engagement through a Summer Scholars program where undergraduates were paired with faculty researchers. The

University of Kansas held "Tradition Nights" annually in their football stadium for 3000+ freshmen to share stories of commitment to graduation and to the University of Kansas. I urge anyone interested in better understanding student engagement and how various institutions are excelling at high graduation levels to consider purchasing Kuh et al.'s (2005) book.

Reference

Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J. Schuh, J. H., Whitt, E. J., & Associates. (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

What's Cooking in the Lab: Student Feedback on the Psychology Department Lab

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One of the longest standing traditions within the KSU Department of Psychology is the employment of laboratory assistants to aid our students. The major duties of these assistants involves working with students on the appropriate use of the American Psychological Association (APA) standards for technical writing style, basic statistics, and help with homework assignments. The focus of much of our lab assistants' work is related to the two courses that make up our required Research Sequence (i.e., Research Methods and Experimental Psychology); however, they also often work with students on assignments from other courses in the psychology curriculum.

The students who serve as lab assistants are selected based on outstanding performance in the Research Sequence and good interpersonal skills. Depending on their personal class schedules and available funding, we offer between 20 to 40 hours per week of lab time each semester. We try to arrange for coverage in the lab during morning, afternoon, and evening hours. There are many times when the lab is the busiest place in the Social Science building.

The faculty feel this is an invaluable service for our students given what appears to be high usage of the lab and the occasional comment we hear from students. However, we have never formally assessed the use and effectiveness of the lab from the student's perspective. We chose to use what Tam (2001) refers to as the quality control approach wherein the aim is to check whether the services provided meet the desired standards. To this end, it was necessary to view what happened in the lab from the student's perspective (Stryvven, Dochy & Janssens, 2005). The purpose of this study was to ask students how useful and effective their experiences were in the lab.

Method

Participants

Participants were psychology majors who had received assistance in our lab ($N = 161$; 79.8% women, 20.2% men). Once they had worked with the assistant they were asked to complete a questionnaire. All participants were treated within the guidelines established by APA for the ethical treatment of human participants.

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Instruments

We developed a survey to address a variety of issues. Of primary interest were the student's level of satisfaction with the resources available, the ability to concentrate while in the lab, the assistance they received, the hours of operation, and the overall experience in the lab. These items were rated on a scale from 1 (*Not at all satisfied*) to 5 (*extremely satisfied*). In addition, we collected information concerning the use of scheduled appointments, frequency of lab usage, and the likelihood of recommending the lab to fellow students. Recommendations were rated from 1 (*Not at all likely*) to 5 (*extremely likely*).

Procedure

Students who came to the lab for any assistance were asked to complete our survey after they had received the help they requested. Data was not collected from all students since participation was completely voluntary. Once the survey was completed, the participant placed it into an envelope located outside the lab. Surveys were collected, coded, and input monthly. Data was collected for three semesters to date, from 1/14/04 to 4/29/05. These dates represent the Spring 2004, Fall 2005, and Spring 2005 semesters.

Preliminary Results

The class standing for participants indicated 41.3% were Sophomores, 34.8% were Juniors, 17.4% were Seniors, and 6.5% were Freshmen. Over 50% of these students had transferred to KSU. As expected, the lab was most frequently used for Research Methods (27.4%) and Experimental Psychology (25%). A fairly large percentage of students also came to the lab for assistance in Life-Span Developmental Psychology (16.7%) and Abnormal Psychology (15.5%).

Lab usage data revealed that most students used the lab only once (26.9%). Surprisingly, some students took advantage of the services in the lab more often, with 11.5% stating they came for help almost daily, 23.7% a couple of times a week, 10.3% once a week, and 19.3% once every couple of weeks.

Satisfaction items provided very positive ratings, in general. For satisfaction with the availability of resources 55.1% were extremely satisfied, 25% were very satisfied, 14.7% were satisfied, and 5.1% were somewhat satisfied. Ability to concentrate in the lab ratings indicated that 46.8% were extremely satisfied, 26.6% were very satisfied, 19.6% were satisfied, and 7% were somewhat satisfied. Most students rated satisfaction with the assistance received as very good (87.6% extremely satisfied, 11.2% very satisfied, 1.2% satisfied). Overall ratings of the lab experience were also very positive (70% extremely satisfied, 24.4% very satisfied, 5.6% satisfied).

A 4-way ANOVA was computed using time of day, sex of participant, class standing, and transfer status, as independent variables with overall satisfaction as the dependent variable. There were no significant differences for any of the independent variables ($p > .05$). Employing the same independent variables separate ANOVAs were computed using satisfaction with assistance received, lab hours, availability of lab resources, lab assistant's knowledge, ability to concentrate, and treatment by lab assistant separately as dependent measures. For each analysis the results were non-significant ($p > .05$).

Discussion

The findings are all very encouraging. Simple frequency distributions provide justification for the time and expense involved in maintaining our lab. The results indicate students of all class levels use the lab and for a variety of courses. Of particular interest is the fact that over 50% of those using the lab are transfer students. This suggests that these students use the services provided in the lab to assist in the transition to the rigorous standards maintained in our department.

Results of inferential analysis of satisfaction outcome variables produced no significant differences. In this case, such consistent support for the null hypothesis again provides evidence of the effectiveness and quality of the assistance received by students in the lab. Ratings of satisfaction were consistently high

regardless of the time of day, class standing, sex of the individual, or transfer status.

We believe that more studies like this would be helpful in any academic discipline. Given ever-present budgetary concerns, collection of data on the quality and effectiveness of this type of service can provide justification for preserving programs or services. In terms of quality control, data of this nature can also offer information regarding specific areas that require improvement.

There are also some limits to the present study. Since completing the survey was completely voluntary, it is possible that only those who had a positive experience filled out the report. It is also possible that the high rating may have been due to the pleasant personalities of the lab staff over the three semesters sampled. To investigate these possibilities we will continue to collect data for at least another year.

References

- Stryyven, K, Dochy, F., & Janssens, S. (2005). Student's perceptions about evaluation and assessment in higher education: A review. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 40, 325-348.
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What is Diversity?

Dede Yow, CETL Faculty Fellow in
Diversity Across the Curriculum

I applied for the position of CETL Faculty Fellow in Diversity Across the Curriculum with full awareness of the challenge—and the rewards—that come with teaching and learning what Janet Bennett calls “cultural humility.” Born and raised in the Jim Crow South where denial is a staple of existence, I have seen first hand what fear can do to human beings. I have spent the greater part of my own life coming to understand emotionally and intellectually the factors that have produced and energized stereotypes and myths that create a regional and national mindset about people who are not the “norm”—white heterosexual Christian Americans.

My role as Faculty Fellow is to work collaboratively with all constituencies of the university to appreciate diversity. I believe that a peaceful and productive life on this planet is possible only if we seek the knowledge and develop the skills that bring us to open our hearts and minds to the “other.” Here's the rub. Who is the “other”? And what, exactly is diversity?

Let's start from the top. The report from the Office of the Interim Vice President for Diversity and Human Resources addresses the challenge of “Developing a Curriculum That Fosters Intercultural and International Competencies.” The report states the following:

The educational dimension focuses on educating all students to live and function in a pluralistic society and an increasingly linked global community. Scholarship and the curriculum, teaching and learning strategies, recruitment of diverse faculty, and faculty development efforts are the action vehicles in this dimension.

One could counter that students—in fact, most of us—live and function well within our self-prescribed realities. So to educate, then, is to open the mind to accommodate other belief systems as viable.

Before we work on strategies and development, though, we need to define “different.” The College of Humanities & Social Sciences set this working definition of diversity:

The HSS community welcomes persons of differing backgrounds and experiences including but not limited to age, disability and health status, ethnicity and race, family structure, geographic region, language,

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religious/spiritual and secular beliefs, resident status, sex and gender, sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, and socioeconomic status.

Certainly, a good start, but can we list *all* differences? And do we make priorities when we do attempt to define groups?

Now to the masses for a definition of diversity. Using the Google "I'm Feeling Lucky" option, entering "Diversity" takes one to "Diversity Web: An Interactive Resource Hub for Higher Education" (see <http://www.diversityweb.org>), which is sponsored by AACU (American Association of Colleges and Universities). It comes right back to our house, the academy.

Here's where I think we can do our work. Curricular changes happen when faculty engage intellectually and emotionally with ideas. Experiencing transformation on one's own is often a precursor to creating a climate, a curriculum, and even a syllabus that allows each student to experience transformation from a monocultural to a multicultural view. Considering the language we use when we talk about the "other" is a thoughtful place to begin.

Dialogue is crucial to understanding. Once we talk—among ourselves and with our students—we can negotiate. In that process can come understanding, if not agreement. In CETL, we offer programs on intercultural communication, book talks on writers such as James Baldwin, and dinner and discussion of movies (*Crash* on Nov. 11th). The short films *Living with Pride* (on October 4th) and *Family Fundamentals* (on Oct. 27th) open a window to growing up gay in America. Check the calendar on the CETL website for dates and details of these and other diversity-related events and programs (see <http://www.kennesaw.edu/cetl/CETLcalendar2005.htm>).

Because we are in an educational institution, class often falls below the radar. I invite suggestions on how to approach this aspect of diversity as well as other areas that you realize need attention. It's time to move from thought and idea to action. Let's get it started here.

Taking Risks in the Classroom

Kevin M. Johnston

Director, Michigan State University TA Programs

"Teaching is mostly listening. Learning is mostly talking."

Dr. Alice Dreger, Lyman Briggs College – Michigan State University

Parker Palmer (1998) addresses identity and integrity in teaching. Much of Palmer's work focuses on finding ways for you to find your "heart" as a teacher. Part of that self-reflective process involves asking yourself, "Who am I as a teacher?" and "How does my teaching *honestly* reflect my passion for my subject, my students, and for learning? For many of us, this kind of introspective journey is risky business. If not for the emotional discomfort these types of searches occasionally promote then because finding even *more* time to consider such large issues seems nearly impossible with day-to-day classroom responsibilities, research demands, and perhaps, home and family concerns.

What constitutes risk-taking in the classroom? As far as teaching is concerned, risk-taking for most teachers implies they are doing at least one of two things: (a) employing teaching strategies with which they are not familiar and/or (b) employing behaviors that in some way break down traditional class structures, hierarchies, etc. in order to promote better student learning.

Committing oneself to doing either of these can lead to more than a little discomfort. Employing both at one time could be disastrous. But learning is not always a comfortable process. Some scholars even believe that "true" learning only occurs when there's a little pain involved.

During a Michigan State University (MSU) Seminar on College Teaching, Dr. Alice Dreger, Lyman Briggs School, artfully addressed taking risks in the classroom. Pulling from her own experiences as a student, Dr. Dreger remarked that she realized

she didn't necessarily need teachers to teach her, particularly if they went about their business using traditional approaches. That realization led Dreger to this conclusion: In order to be effective in the classroom, a teacher must take risks to breed the kind of student-teacher trust that promotes effective learning. Some of her recommendations for new teachers (and maybe even more experienced ones) included:

- Try new teaching approaches and assess "on time" their effect. Trust your students' opinions. Share the evaluation process with them. Put their opinions in effect when possible.
- Be willing to stop an activity (or a class) if it's clear your students are not prepared.
- You're prepared. Engender in students a feeling that they have a responsibility to you and to each other to be prepared as well.
- Use creative visual props to engage students in conversation.
- Be willing to give students space to learn.
- Realize that you're not going to be "great" most of the time. It's okay to have a bad day.

At the "heart" of Dreger's risk-taking philosophy is the belief that shared success and failures create trust between teachers and students. For some of us, taking a risk means not wearing a tie to work, or learning students names AND calling on them personally to help you make a point to the rest of the class. For others, taking a risk means reconstructing your course to emphasize collaborative learning, trading textbooks for provocative readings, or allowing students to submit exam questions for the final. The point is that if you are taking risks in the classroom you're doing something different from what is *comfortable* for you.

Perhaps you'll choose to try something that turns out to be ineffective, or worse yet, embarrassing (There's nothing like a little shared embarrassment to create a teachable moment.). Or, more than likely, you'll try something different that has your students coming to the next class saying, "Wow! Can we try that again?" The following are some tips on how you might take risks in the classroom:

Taking Risks With Lecture

Do Not Lecture. Transform a passive-learning experience into one that involves your class by breaking your lecture down into 3-5 seminal points. Organize your class period accordingly into 15-20 minute segments. Following a five-minute introduction to the day's activities, treat each point/segment this way:

- Identify a problem/situation related to the main point of the segment.
- Give students 5 minutes to write a quick list of qualities that relate the problem to the main point of the segment.
- Take 5 minutes to solicit responses from your students. Write them on the board.
- 5 minutes more of your comments on their remarks and on their relationship to the segment's main point.
- 3 minute summary and analysis. Setup of next Segment.
- End class with an effective with a 7-10 minute summation of the day's main points, your student's most meaningful comments, and how they all relate to the day's lesson.

Taking Risks With Discussion

Assign groups as soon as possible early in the semester. Use these groups as a means for addressing key points of the day's topic(s). Assign to group participants a role within the group (i.e. scribe, reporter, discussion leader, skeptic, and reflective thinker). Have students stick to their roles when addressing a topic or problem. ROTATE roles regularly. Assign group reporters responsible for sharing information with the rest of the class. Function as a "traveling facilitator," moving from group to group to assist in the activity.

"Give up the Chalk" regularly. Allow students to facilitate parts of the discussion.

Taking Risks with Assessment/Evaluation

Employ mid-term evaluations. 3-5 questions from which you can get something meaningful. Share results with your students. Make small changes if necessary.

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Ask your student in the evaluations what THEY could be doing to make the class more effective.

Ask your students for assistance in making up exam questions. USE the results if they're appropriate.

Resources

The resources listed in the reference list in their own way address risk-taking in higher education. The Simon (1992) text addresses teaching as a form of political action. O'Reilley (1998) in *Radical Presence* takes a "Palmeresque" look at teaching as a means for spiritual growth. Nilson's (1998) work is "risky" for some because "teaching at its best" often involves employing non-traditional methods of lecturing, discussion, class evaluation and assessment. Finally, the Duncan-Hewitt and Apple (1995) handbook came from a 2-day teaching seminar I attended on cooperative learning, surely a risk-taking venture for most of us (cooperative learning, that is.).

References & Resources

- Duncan-Hewitt, W., & Apple, D. (1995). *A handbook on cooperative learning* (2nd ed.). Corvallis, OR: Pacific Crest Software.
- Nilson, L. B. (1998). *Teaching at its best: A research-based resource for college instructors*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.
- O'Reilley, M. R. (1998). *Radical presence: Teaching as contemplative practice*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.
- Palmer, P. J. (1998). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscapes of a teacher's life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Simon, R. I. Teaching against the grain: Texts for a pedagogy of possibility. In *Critical Studies in Education and Culture Series*, H. A. Giroux & F. Freire (Eds.). New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1992.

(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 Site of the Month

Distance Teaching & Learning Shared Space Library

[http://www.uwex.edu/disted/conference/
Resource_library/shared_space.cfm](http://www.uwex.edu/disted/conference/Resource_library/shared_space.cfm)

Are you interested in distance and e-learning, whether it is a total or blended online course? For 21 years the University of Wisconsin has sponsored an annual conference on Distance Teaching and Learning. As they state on their Web site, "the conference addresses the needs of educators, trainers, managers, and designers who are involved in the application of technology to the teaching and learning process." At their Web site they offer free streaming video of all keynote addresses, streaming video of forum discussions, and proceedings from concurrent sessions (PowerPoints and handouts) for conferences between 2001 and 2005. Topics from the 2005 conference include:

- Does "Better" Learning Come from "Better" Technology?
- The Learning Sciences, Education and Technology
- E-Learning: Higher Education Evolution or Extinction?
- Beyond the Podium: How E-Learning Changes Our Professional Lives
- Understanding the Dynamics and Meeting the Needs: New models of Faculty Support for Online Learning
- Next Generation Technologies Meet Next Generation Learners
- Course Development Strategies
- Course Evaluation
- New Models of Learning: Blending Asynchronous and Synchronous Formats
- Innovative Applications

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>

Congratulations to the 2005-2005 Recipients of the CETL Scholarship of Teaching & Learning Resource Team Funding Awards

The Capstone Class: Designing a Research Project with Undergraduates

Miriam Boeri & Tracy Turner, Department of Sociology,
Geography, Anthropology & Criminal Justice

A Study of Knowledge Domains and Habits of Mind That Lead to Student Success in Writing

Elizabeth Giddens & Margaret Walters, KSU Department of
English & Susan Hunter, Clayton State University Department of
English

Increasing Student Familiarity with the Psychology Faculty

Jeff Helms, Department of Psychology

Using Evolutionary Psychology as a Framework to Enhance Learning and Critical Thinking in General Psychology

Christopher Randall, Department of Psychology

Best Practices of Educational Leadership Practicum Experiences in Georgia

Eric L. Tubbs & T. C. Chan, Department of Educational Leadership

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