

CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

<http://ctl.calpoly.edu>

Spring 2006

Message from Joe Grimes



In our last newsletter, I highlighted the significance of dealing with what we might call “the small stuff.” I mentioned, for example, how the first impression that you give on the first day and how you pay careful attention to detail, especially in communication, makes all the difference in whether students just crawl to the end of the course or race across the finish line in triumph. This article continues the thread of that message by addressing the importance of treating students as individuals.

To demonstrate your understanding of your students’ uniqueness and its importance to you, try the following in-class activity. Bring a bowl of fruit (or some object specific to your discipline, if you prefer) to class. Bring enough pieces (8 – 12 pieces should be sufficient) of one kind of fruit and ask your students to give a general description of it. Then distribute the fruit to students and ask them to examine an individual piece carefully for a

couple minutes. Afterward, collect the fruit items in a container and place them on the instructor’s desk in such a way that they are not identifiable by location. Ask the students to come up and pick out their own piece. Usually, they will be able to select the one that they examined because of its unique characteristics. The point here is that as students, they will have some common characteristics and requirements in learning, but that each person also will have unique requirements. You can then assure them that at first glance they may have a list of common descriptors but that you will do your best to discover their unique characteristics, and that they should consider these qualities as they work together to achieve the learning outcomes of the course.

At the end of the quarter, you might use another activity to get the adrenalin going and cause the students to leave your class energized about further extending their learning. Bring a star fruit to the last class, hold it up, and ask the students about what is inside. They will most likely mention things such as juice, vitamins, fruit pulp, and seeds. Then slice it, pass it around, and use a screen image to show the star in the cross-section. Then you can

(...continued on page 7)

- Do you need someone with whom you can discuss important classroom and career decisions?
- Would you like to have someone observe your class and offer useful feedback?
- Do you want to confer about a plan that you have for a course?
- Do you need assistance finding a campus resource?
- Would you like to try out a new teaching method using our smart classroom?

The Center for Teaching and Learning is here for you, and our work with you is completely confidential



The Center for Teaching and Learning
Kennedy Library, room 510

We are open from 9 to 5, Monday through Friday.
Phone us at 756-7002 or 756-2088

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CTL Announcements

Energize Your Students: Allow Them to Construct Some of Their Own Learning

In the future, our students will be expected to move beyond being mere holders of information (material) and instead become true thinkers. This shift will be more likely to happen if we turn over some of the teaching responsibility in our courses to the students. First, be sure to communicate up front to your students (and perhaps to your peers) the purpose of any changes that you plan to implement in your class. Students will cooperate with and be appreciative of your approach if they see its value and understand what you are trying to accomplish. Additionally, you should give your students proactive guidance for the way they participate in the activities you provide.

If a faculty member uses appropriate techniques and develops activities that cause the students to take on some of the teaching responsibility, those strategies will offer many benefits:

- Provide the student with an opportunity to better understand the learning methodology and possible learning techniques
- Result in deeper understanding and enhanced success in achieving the course objectives
- Understand how they solve problems or achieve goals and help to revise those methods that are less successful
- Help to eliminate future mistakes and become aware of approaches that other students use
- Develop an appreciation of the levels of understanding along the lines of Bloom's Taxonomy
- Understand the role and skill of being a teacher as opposed to merely knowing something
- Enhance the skills that they will need to become life-long learners

Some possible techniques that a faculty member may use to create student excitement and involvement include the following:

- The teacher gives the student a project (including an evaluation) and asks the student to teach the faculty member something.
- The teacher pairs up senior level students with lower level students for tutoring or mentoring. This may be done one-on-one or in teams, and results in a learning experience for both.
- The teacher assigns the student the responsibility to present course material to a person who is not knowledgeable about the subject matter.
- The teacher has students in the class discuss material with one another. This strategy is most successful if the students themselves decide how the groups are to be formed.

Beyond the enhanced learning experience, students will develop a deeper appreciation of the faculty when they experience the difficulty of being a teacher. The overall experience will include greater understanding of what they are supposed to know, enhanced understanding of difficult material, better understanding of how to prepare, an ability to think in real time, and other valuable opportunities that result from being in the role of a teacher.

CTL Resources are for the Entire Campus

If you're a member of the Cal Poly community, the Center for Teaching and Learning is for you. Whether you're on the staff, lecturing part- or full-time, brand-new, on the tenure track, or tenured, call us or stop by to see the many opportunities we offer to enhance your teaching and learning experience as well as the learning experiences of our students.

CTL Announcements

Spring 2006 Newer Faculty Update

The Center for Teaching and Learning provides a wide variety of opportunities to support and meet the needs of the newer faculty, including the Newer Faculty Learning Community (NFLC) that began at Cal Poly three years ago. The main objectives of the Newer Faculty Learning Community are to provide a support network (both social and professional) for newer faculty and to foster a sense of community and collegiality on campus. The NFLC has identified and shared experiences in several areas of interest, including describing Cal Poly's unique culture; implementing active learning strategies that foster student participation; evaluating effective teaching; mentoring students and faculty; professional development; navigating the retention, promotion, and tenure process; conducting research; embracing change; and encouraging high standards.

During Winter 2006, the NFLC met three times to discuss **“Successful Strategies for Grant and Sponsored Projects.”** We began by providing an overview of different types of grants, from federally funded grants (such as NSF), to grants and sponsored projects with industry, to state, local, and university-supported grants. Each type's characteristics and requirements may vary widely, and we discussed those qualities in detail.

We also talked about general items related to grants and sponsored projects, including integrating teaching, professional development, and sponsored project work with thematic unity in the sponsored projects and grants. We discussed vital resource-seeking strategies: identifying goals clearly, concentrating funding efforts in areas that make clear contributions to the department and college, and seeking opportunities that improve knowledge and abilities through collaboration with colleagues and industry.

For the upcoming **Spring 2006** session, our theme will be **“Faculty-Student Interaction.”** We want to discuss strategies for fostering respect between the students and faculty. Topics will include dealing with teaching challenges, such as with students who don't read or don't pay attention in class, and students who talk during class, show up late repeatedly, or create other issues. Other topics will include what to do when students cheat (from proving it, to your rights and your students' rights) and strategies for dealing with students trying to “bully” the professor – how to keep control of your class. Another issue is that of email from students, such as the expectation of many students who think that we are “on call” 24/7, that email replaces office hours, or that it is acceptable to send messages that are too informal or inappropriate. Related to all of these topics is the importance of creating a comprehensive syllabus that delineates our policies and expectations.

We enjoyed meeting our returning newer faculty this quarter, and we look forward to continuing our work together. If you were not able to attend any last quarter's meetings, you are still welcome to join the group this quarter! If you need to leave at noon due to other commitments, we welcome you to attend the first hour.

The three spring quarter Newer Faculty Learning Community meetings have been scheduled on Thursdays from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm in the Kennedy Library 510 on the following dates:

- **Thursday April 6, 2006**
- **Thursday May 4, 2006**
- **Thursday May 18, 2006**

If you have any input or suggestions for initiatives aimed at helping you or other newer faculty members succeed in their roles at Cal Poly, please contact one of the following Newer Faculty Coordinators working with the CTL:

Al Liddicoat	aliddico@calpoly.edu	756-5217
Patricia McQuaid	pmcquaid@calpoly.edu	756-5381
Gwen Fisher	glfisher@calpoly.edu	756-2287

Also, newer faculty may find useful information posted on the Cal Poly New Faculty web resource (<http://www.calpoly.edu/faculty/newfaculty.html>) or the New(ish) Faculty email listserv. **To sign up for the listserv, go to <http://cla.calpoly.edu/~dschwart/newfaculty/newfacultylist.html>.**



Spring Workshops

TLS/CTL Effective Teaching with Technology Learning Community (ETWTLC) – Spring 2006

ITS Technology and Learning Services (TLS) and the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) would like to invite you to join the Spring Quarter 2006 Effective Teaching with Technology Learning Community. This learning community involves a commitment to attend nine workshop sessions on Thursday mornings from 10 am to noon.

Instructors:

Walt Bremer – CTL Assistant Director / Professor of Landscape Architecture

Luanne Fose, Ph.D. - Instructional Designer, TLS

Joe Grimes, Ph.D. – CTL Director / Professor of Computer Science

Tonia Malone – Blackboard Administrator & Instructional Technology Consultant, TLS



Modeled after the Effective Teaching with Technology four-day workshops offered in previous summers, these learning community sessions will provide methods for examining various pedagogical techniques, general approaches for enabling those strategies with technology, and hands-on training in Blackboard and other software applications. Within the nine-week series, workshop participants will focus on using sound pedagogical perspectives to develop one Blackboard course. The ETWTLC nurtures the exchange of ideas among peer faculty, provides the chance to try out new technologies, offers the advantage of a longer period to absorb new concepts, and affords the opportunity for support assistance from TLS staff during the time between sessions.

Enrollment is limited to 10 participants to ensure the quality of each person's training experience. Intended for beginner/intermediate Blackboard users, there are no course prerequisites for enrollment beyond basic web navigation and file management skills. Participants should expect to spend one hour per week working toward successfully developing a Blackboard course and other technology enablers. The weekly workshops will begin on Thursday, March 30, and end on Thursday, May 25, 2006.

The series instructors will conduct a pre-workshop survey to determine the final scope of the workshop content based upon registered participants' needs. Possible topics include:

- ✓ How to Plan and Implement Course Changes
- ✓ Improving Course Organization, Management, and Navigation
- ✓ Peer Feedback on Your Course Design
- ✓ Your Personal Learning Style and How It Affects Your Teaching Style
- ✓ Helping Your Students See the "Big Picture" of Your Course
- ✓ Blackboard Basics and Beyond
- ✓ Best Practices for Uploading Files into Blackboard
- ✓ Communication Methods in Blackboard (Announcements, Email, Discussion Board, Online Chat)
- ✓ Tips for Engaging Students in Discussions
- ✓ Experiencing Blackboard From the Students' Perspective
- ✓ Blackboard Course Customization for a More Personal Design
- ✓ Demonstration of Exemplary Blackboard Courses at Cal Poly
- ✓ Creating Effective PowerPoint Presentations
- ✓ Using PowerPoint Animations to Easily Demonstrate Complex Tasks
- ✓ Improving Student Comprehension and Note Taking
- ✓ New Technologies That Enhance Learning
- ✓ Better Student Team Project Collaboration with Blackboard's Group Tool
- ✓ Assessments, Surveys, and Evaluations in Blackboard
- ✓ Implementing the Blackboard Gradebook Tool
- ✓ Obtaining Student Feedback Throughout the Quarter
- ✓ Ways to Help Students Succeed on Exams
- ✓ Mastery of Blackboard's Assignment Tool
- ✓ Time-Saving Electronic Paper Grading Techniques

... and More! (continued on pg. 7)

"Teaching Well" Workshops

Spring 2006 Workshops

The Center for Teaching and Learning will again host the Teaching Well Workshops series for Spring 2006. These interactive workshops will cover a variety of relevant topics to help faculty now and as they prepare for the remainder of the academic year. Workshop topics, listed with their facilitators on the schedule below, include teaching practices, technology integration, and course development.



- March 31:** *No Workshop - Cesar Chavez's Birthday*
- April 7:** *Meeting Unique Student Requirements*
Leader: Joe Grimes, panel
- April 14:** *Active Learning*
Leader: Sue Elrod, panel
- April 21:** *No Workshop - Open House*
- April 28:** *Innovatively Enhancing How Faculty Determine Student Learning*
Leader: Marilee Bresciani
- May 5:** *Using Student Teams to Enhance Student Learning and Better Prepare Students for Their Future*
Leader: Joe Grimes, panel
- May 12:** *Course Design*
Leaders: Walt Bremer, Sue Elrod
- May 19:** *Best Practices When Thinking About Using Technology in Courses*
Leaders: Walt Bremer, Luanne Fose, Joe Grimes
- May 26:** *Cutting-Edge Technology*
Leader: Luanne Fose, Walt Bremer
- June 2:** *No Workshop - Last Day of Classes*

To register, contact the CTL (ctl@calpoly.edu; 756-7002)



CTL Provides lunch; workshop groups meet at 12 noon in the CTL at Kennedy Library, room 510B. Advanced registration is encouraged.

Marilee Bresciani Will Speak

Innovatively Enhancing How Faculty Determine Student Learning

We are fortunate that Marilee Bresciani, Assistant Vice President for Institutional Assessment and Visiting Associate Professor in the Office of Institutional Assessment and Diversity, Texas A&M University will visit Cal Poly on April 29th. She will facilitate the Teaching Well Workshop on that date from 12 noon until 2 PM. Among her responsibilities is her work with faculty members to improve the methodologies used to determine the success of students in achieving course objectives. She teaches a course with the following description and objectives:

Course Description:

This course will provide an opportunity for persons responsible for the planning and/or administration of academic or co-curricular programs to design appropriate and feasible means of evaluating those programs. Attention will be given to the application of basic principles of evaluative research, assessment of student learning and development, and current literature in the field.

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PREFACE: The Cal Poly Shared Reading Program



The Cal Poly Shared Reading Program is in its fifth year. New students who plan to enter in fall of 2006 will be asked to read the best-selling novel *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold over the summer. When the new students arrive on campus for WOW, they will engage in a 1.5 hour small group discussion about the book. PREFACE is seeking volunteer faculty and staff to lead these 1.5 hour small group discussions.

We ask that volunteers attend one PREFACE information session. If you volunteer, you will receive a free copy of the book and have the opportunity to attend an exclusive reception with the author, Alice Sebold.

CTL will sponsor the one-hour PREFACE information session for any interested volunteer faculty or staff person, and the CTL will offer eight such sessions during May. Choose the one that works best for your schedule. You may sign up to volunteer and select your information session at the PREFACE website, www.preface.calpoly.edu, in mid-April.

For more information about volunteering with PREFACE, please contact Patricia Ponce at x61380 or at preface@calpoly.edu.



CMS - PeopleSoft Student Administration (SA) System

The installation and initial use of the SA system is well underway. Application processing for new Fall 2006 students began last October in the new SA system, with admission decisions continuing. All registration and other management of academic activities for fall quarter will be handled through the new system starting with the building of the Fall 2006 class schedule.

Remember, admission and registration activity for summer will continue in the old system.

Consultation about the new SA system continued for faculty members during the winter quarter with a meeting for department chairs/heads and deans on February 3, with approximately 40 people attending, and an open forum on February 10, with approximately 70 people attending.

It is too early at this time to provide information to faculty regarding how they should access student information, obtain class lists, get epermits, perform on-line grading, and complete other tasks that require access to the new SA system for fall quarter. Also, some changes to the way that students currently register for classes through Poly Web Registration (POWER) will be necessary. When information regarding these processes is available, it will be distributed to faculty and students.

For additional information regarding the Student Administration Project, please refer to the Student Administration website at <http://cms.calpoly.edu/admin/index.html>. For further information or to provide ideas, please contact Joe Grimes (jgrimes@calpoly.edu; 756-2088) or Kimi Ikeda (kikeda@calpoly.edu; 756-2186)

Share Your Ideas or Research on Teaching and Learning

The CSU Institute for Teaching and Learning invites you to submit research articles, reports, or reviews dealing with scholarly investigations of teaching and learning to *Exchanges: The Online Journal of Teaching and Learning in the CSU*. Go to <http://www.exchangesjournal.org> for more information.

Thanks to the Library!

A key partner in the success of The Center for Teaching and Learning is the Kennedy Library. Thanks to Dr. Hiram Davis, Dean of Library Services, and the library staff for supporting the growing CTL. The library continues to be an exemplary partner in the mission of the CTL.



Marilee Bresciani (cont.)

Course Objectives:

The overall purpose of this course is to explore issues, models and procedures for evaluating academic and co-curricular programs in higher and adult education, particularly those programs that contain student learning and development outcomes. The course will consider systematic and continuous design issues that influence the validity and utility of evaluations. The practical nature of evaluation will be stressed along with the rigors of applied research. It is anticipated that students who complete the course will be able to:

- define outcomes-based assessment;
- articulate the purpose for outcomes-based assessment, in particular the assessment of student learning and development;
- apply at least one research methodology in an assessment project;
- critique the benefits of various research methodologies used in outcomes-based assessment;
- identify realistic solutions to the challenges encountered when implementing outcomes-based assessment;
- demonstrate the ability to plan outcomes-based assessment for higher and/or adult education programs;
- critique evaluation designs in order to determine possible reservations regarding use of reported findings;
- articulate how findings can or can not be used to inform decisions for continuous improvement;
- identify meaningful ways to report findings and decisions made; and
- effectively present outcome-based assessment plans and findings to a diverse audience.

Please call or email Joe Grimes (jgrimes@calpoly.edu 6-2088) if you have any questions. Attendance is limited to 25 people. To register, please contact the Center for Teaching and Learning (756-7002 or ctl@calpoly.edu).

Effective Teaching with Technology Workshops (cont.)

Click on the link below to register for the ETWTLC. When you complete the registration, you will receive an email confirmation. Soon afterward, you will receive the pre-workshop survey to better inform us about what you hope to learn in the workshops. <http://www.tls.calpoly.edu/training/learningcommunity.html>

Faculty Internet Resources

Center for Teaching and Learning: <http://ctl.calpoly.edu>

Faculty Website: <http://www.calpoly.edu/faculty>

Newer Faculty Website: <http://www.calpoly.edu/faculty/newfac/newfac.html>

Message from Joe Grimes (cont.)

observe that students are each individual stars just waiting to shine in their own individual way.

We should try our best to get the unique star in each of our students to develop more fully.

To assist you in your pursuit of excellence for yourself and your students, I would like to remind you that the CTL staff and I are here for you. In addition, the CTL's newly upgraded facilities are available to faculty during the times that we are not using them for scheduled events. You are welcome to use our personnel, facilities, and tools to support your work with teaching and learning.

As always, I invite you to seek the completely confidential assistance that the CTL provides, and I have listed some possible areas in the box on page one.

My goal is to be a role model and excellent facilitator of learning for my students, and as the Director of the Center of Teaching and Learning I will do my best to assist the faculty and staff of the campus realize their goals as well. Please contact me (jgrimes@calpoly.edu; 756-2088) or any of the other CTL faculty members listed on page 8 if you would like assistance from your Center for Teaching and Learning.

Why Don't the Assignments We Receive Match the Instructions We Give?

Professors at a recent workshop commented with frustration about the enormous discrepancies between the quality of the work they had envisioned receiving from their students on certain assignments and the quality of the work that the students actually turned in. One faculty member remarked that her students had apparently obtained all of a paper's sources from Google, while another commented that some of his students' projects ignored important components of the task, and still another said that many of his students had clearly not even bothered to proofread their work. And yet all of these professors had followed the rules that we all learned about assigning work: *Provide assignment instructions in writing*. Moreover, students who received low grades on assigned work often complained about their C's, D's, and F's: "It's not fair. We didn't know what you wanted!"



We've all had those "we didn't know" moments, with our students looking at us accusingly, as if our standards were too vague, too esoteric, too mysterious for them to understand. They'd have done what we wanted, they seem to say, if Professor X hadn't taught them to do it the other way, or if we'd covered that issue more during class, or if (this is the one that really gets me) they'd been able to read our minds.

Why do we find ourselves in this situation? More importantly, how can we avoid it? A variety of issues, many of which are beyond our control, contribute to the problem. Some students insist on completing work at the last minute. Others resist visiting the Kennedy Library. Still others, alas, don't read our instructions carefully. In spite of our best efforts to provide students with the tools they need to succeed at assigned work, not everyone will take advantage of those tools. And sometimes (I dare to say) we really aren't perfectly clear. Therefore, I'd like to recommend one strategy that you can employ to increase the chances that your students' work will meet your basic expectations: *When you provide the assignment instructions, provide the grading rubric as well.*

When you give the rubric with the assignment, you'll prevent the "we didn't know" issue before it ever arises. Your students will know—because you've told them. Your students will have to at least look at the rubric—because it's right in front of them. Most importantly, your students will be significantly more likely to meet your expectations for the work—because you've made those expectations explicit.

You can provide rubrics for lab reports, quarter-long projects, written assignments, and even for essay exams (give the rubric with the study guide, if you offer one, or on the syllabus, if you don't). Furthermore, if you require students to attach a copy of the rubric to the work itself, you'll have guaranteed that they look at it long enough to staple it to the paper, glue it to the project, or attach it to the computer program. And not coincidentally, your own grading practices will become smoother, fairer, and more efficient.

Would you like help designing assignments that lead to good student work? Or help creating rubrics that reflect your most important expectations and facilitate the grading process? WINGED can assist you as you help your students become better thinkers, readers, writers, and overall learners so that they can best master the content in your courses. For some fresh ideas and tips, come to one, some, or all of this quarter's workshops. I'm inviting *you* to the table for cookies, coffee, and conversation with faculty from across the campus. Space for the workshops is limited, and we ask that you register ahead of time. I hope to see you at the CTL.

April 4 and 11 (two Tuesdays): Fostering Critical Thinking in Your Classes
April 6 and 13 (two Thursdays): Designing and Evaluating Assignments and Exams
April 18 (Tuesday): Basic Writing Review for Faculty
April 20 (Thursday): Writing Workshop for Faculty

Each session meets from 3:10-5:00 pm, Library Room 510. For more information or to sign up, contact Deborah Wilhelm (dwilhelm@calpoly.edu, 756-7038) or the CTL (ctl@calpoly.edu, 756-7002).

CTL Staff and Faculty Associates

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