



AT CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

The Joy Shechtman Mankoff Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL) at Connecticut College promotes engaged and effective teaching that cultivates significant student learning. The CTL fosters a campus culture that values a diversity of learning, teaching and disciplinary styles, welcomes honest discussion of teaching and learning, and encourages the scholarship of teaching and learning.

To achieve its mission, the CTL organizes programming that facilitates the exchange of ideas about teaching and learning; offers resources and support for new faculty, including programs that promote their smooth transition into the College community and their success in the areas of teaching, scholarship and service; creates both formal and informal sources of support for faculty teaching at all stages of their careers; and engages in efforts to improve teaching and learning at small liberal arts colleges on the regional and national level.



CONNECTICUT
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TEACHING & LEARNING AT CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

The Joy Shechtman Mankoff Center for Teaching & Learning NEWSLETTER

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CTL Advisory Board, from left: Ron Flores, Cherise Harris, Marc Zimmer, Bridget Baird, Julie Rivkin, Michael Reder, John Nugent, MaryAnne Borrelli, Sufia Uddin, Abby Van Slyck, Leah Lowe

From the DIRECTOR

DEAR COLLEAGUES,

I am very pleased to present the second issue of the CTL Newsletter. As I wrote in my introduction to the inaugural issue, this newsletter is part of a larger research initiative that the CTL is undertaking. The goals of this initiative are both to help our faculty become more familiar with the large body of literature on teaching and learning, and to promote a greater understanding of the student learning and faculty teaching that takes place here on our campus.

You will find in the following pages book reviews written by our colleagues that critically consider a variety of

current books about teaching, learning and higher education as a whole. The CTL library has copies of each of these books if you are interested in reading further. Moreover, if a group of faculty are interested in reading one or more of these as a book group, the CTL has funds to support this endeavor. We also have a library full of additional books on teaching and a range of issues related to higher education. Please let us know if you are interested in writing a review of one of them for a future issue of the newsletter.

This year the CTL has continued its classroom-based research on student

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DEAR COLLEAGUES

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learning in partnership with John Nugent in Institutional Research; earlier this semester faculty in the pilot group who administered the voluntary “Intellectual Challenge in the Classroom” survey to their students met to discuss the results. I am happy to say that we will once again be offering this optional course feedback form to faculty who are interested in a more nuanced understanding of how their students experience their classes.

In addition, the CTL has started the CTL Student Research Scholar Program. Two undergraduate students, supervised by Stuart Vyse in the psychology department, are running student focus groups that dig deeper into some of the evidence we have about student experiences here at the College. Those students will eventually write reports and share that information with faculty at CTL events (see page 14 for more information).

Later this May, faculty will be offered the opportunity in the upcoming Camp Teach & Learn workshop “Using Evidence: Changing Your Course to Improve Student Learning” to apply some of this research to their own teaching. Faculty who choose to participate in this interactive workshop will revise a specific course utilizing the evidence gathered from these new CTL initiatives and our new Wabash National Study data that incorporates the experiences of our seniors (see page 15 for some of the highlights of Camp Teach & Learn).

CTL DIRECTOR: **MICHAEL REDER**

FACULTY FELLOWS: **ABBY VAN SLYCK, LEAH LOWE**

TALKING TEACHING COORDINATOR: **MARYANNE BORRELLI**

CTL ADVISORY BOARD: **BRIDGET BAIRD, MARYANNE BORRELLI, RON FLORES, CHERISE HARRIS, LEAH LOWE, JOHN NUGENT, DENISE PELLETIER, MICHAEL REDER, JULIE RIVKIN, SUFIA UDDIN, ABBY VAN SLYCK, MARC ZIMMER**

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT: **JOYCE MCDANIEL**

The end of this academic year marks a major transition for the CTL; Abby Van Slyck and Leah Lowe, the Faculty Fellows, will be moving on to new challenges. As you know, Abby will begin a term as associate dean of the faculty, and Leah will be joining the Department of Theatre at Vanderbilt University. I want to thank them for the tremendous amount of work they have both put into the CTL over the past few years. Abby’s continued work with the Open Classrooms Project and Leah’s dedication to the Mellon Visiting Faculty Seminar have been important in the center’s quest to provide support to as many faculty as possible. The dedication and energy that they have shown has taken the CTL and its programming to new levels. Indeed, the newsletter you are holding in your hand would not be possible without Leah’s hard work and patience. Abby has been a tireless supporter of our early-career colleagues as the fellow working with the Class of ’57 Teaching Seminar. We are fortunate that Abby will bring to her new role the experience she has garnered during her time with the CTL. It has been a pleasure and honor to work with both Abby and Leah.

We were fortunate to have very strong candidates for the position of CTL Faculty Fellow, and earlier this semester the CTL Advisory Board considered their applications. I am very happy to announce that both Anne Bernhard and Sofia Uddin will be joining the CTL as our new Faculty Fellows. They will work with the Class of ’57 Teaching Seminar and take on other duties related to the CTL’s leadership and programming.

I want to also thank MaryAnne Borrelli, who, as you know if you are one of 120 or so different faculty members who have participated in one of the dozen “Talking Teaching” discussions this year, has done a fantastic job of coordinating those events. Once again, MaryAnne’s excellent and detailed notes from this year’s Talking Teaching series are available on the CTL website (<http://CTL.conncoll.edu>). A sample of these



CTL Director Michael Reder with Faculty Fellow Abby Van Slyck.

notes, from last semester’s “Observing and Evaluating Teaching,” is included on page 16 of this newsletter.

Most of the many CTL events would not be possible were it not for the hard work and dedication of Joyce McDaniel, the center’s administrative assistant who sees to the details of our many workshops and discussions. Thank you, Joyce!

Finally, it is important to note that much of our CTL programming is made possible by the ongoing support of Joy Shechtman Mankoff ’56, the Gibney Trust, the Class of ’57 and a grant from the Mellon Foundation. Without these donors’ generosity, as well as the dedicated work of the faculty involved in leading and participating in CTL programming, critical consideration of student learning and faculty teaching would not be such a key component in our lives here at Connecticut College.

Sincerely,
Michael

Newsletter Editor: Leah Lowe

Designer: Susan Lindberg

Contributors: Anne Bernhard, MaryAnne Borrelli, Ann Marie Davis, Ron Flores, Marc Forster, Janet Gezari, Cherise Harris, Michael Reder, Abby Van Slyck, and Stuart Vyse

CTL Reading Group: TEACHING FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS

THIS PAST SUMMER the CTL initiated a new program: a faculty reading group. Established to facilitate faculty engagement with the literature on teaching and learning, it followed a simple format. The book was announced (via faculty listserv) at the end of the spring semester. Early in the summer books were delivered — compliments of the CTL — to those who responded. In the week before school started, the group met for three hours to enjoy lunch, discuss ideas gleaned from the book that seemed most applicable to their own classes, and to review one another's syllabi. In late October two follow-up meetings (offered to accommodate diverse teaching schedules) gave group members the chance to share what they were doing in class, trade "artifacts" (assignments, handouts, syllabi, etc.), and talk about what was working well and what needed refinement.

This year's book, *Teaching First-Year College Students* by Bette LaSere Erickson, Calvin B. Peters and Diane Weltner Strommer (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), was suggested by CTL Faculty Fellow Abby Van Slyck, who had reviewed the book for the last CTL newsletter. "I liked the book," she noted, "because one didn't have to read it cover to cover to get great concrete ideas about how to meet first-year students where they are, while challenging them to become the kind of advanced students we want to teach." The topic resonated with Connecticut College faculty, 23 of whom — from all academic divisions of the College — joined the group. The reading group format was a hit; faculty appreciated the chance to read and reflect over the summer and liked the way the book established a common ground among colleagues from different departments, allowing them to discuss in depth what they were doing in their classrooms that semester. The book, too, was



Ruth Grabn in class.

praised for providing a great number of specific, practical suggestions.

Here are some of the ideas from *Teaching First-Year College Students* that our colleagues adapted to their own classes.

PURBA MUKERJI, Economics 111: Introductory Macroeconomics

I used a "structured controversy" to study government policy in the wake of the current U.S. financial crisis. The topic is very timely and students are keen to understand what is going on in the economy. It is also a rather involved

topic and requires us to cover almost all material of the course before it can be discussed formally. The structured controversy provided the opportunity to discuss the topic in an intuitive way.

The procedure is to divide students into groups where each group is then subdivided into opposite sides of a controversy. In this case the controversy was whether the government's stimulus package was an appropriate policy to address the unemployment and slow down of growth in the U.S. economy. The discussion was based on two newspaper articles, one from the Wall Street Journal and the other from the New York Times. The two newspapers tend to belong to the two ends of the political spectrum and offer opposing views of government policy. This provided a basis for some real-world economic analysis in the face of the usual propaganda dished out in popular media.

I tweaked the book's exercise in two ways, one successful and the other not. I told the groups that they would have to try to come to a consensus view at the end to share with the class. This was successful since it seemed to make them more analytical and less partial to



Purba Mukerji

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First Year

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preconceived notions and prejudices. The second was to let them read the articles in class instead of assigning the readings to be done before class. I think this was a mistake, as it wasted precious class time. Nonetheless, the result was a very interesting class discussion and hands-on application of economic concepts.

RUTH GRAHN, Psychology 101: Psychology as a Natural Science

I teach PSY 101 on a regular basis and had two new, closely related goals for this offering of the course. First, I wanted students in the class to feel that their presence in each class was noticed. Second, I wanted to know everyone's name. In the CTL reading group on engaging first-year students, we discussed a number of strategies for giving students in a large class a personal experience. A few that I tried are described below.

First-day exercise: "Working with a group of students sitting nearby, make a list of issues that you believe a psychologist would find interesting. How might this person contribute to a better understanding of this issue?" Once the small groups had a list and some ideas, I asked a few groups to offer some examples of the issues they discussed. These were compiled on the board. We then examined a table from the textbook that described various types of psychologists. Most novice psychology students have "therapist" in mind when asked what a psychologist does, so this was an opportunity to expand the concept of psychologist. It also gave me a sense for what issues the students found interesting.

In order to make students feel less anonymous, I incorporated a series of in-class exercises that happened without prior notice. The exercises were not graded individually, although they provided the basis for awarding the class participation grade, which was 10 percent of the course grade. The exercises were risk-free expressions of what a student understood, serving as a signal both to me and to the student

about how well the material was being processed. Here are a few examples:

In-class exercise 1: "Draw the neurons in the withdrawal circuit, indicating for each one if it is a) afferent or efferent and b) sensory or motor." This exercise was done individually, and then each student worked with a neighbor, comparing drawings and using their notes to complete or correct elements of the question that they missed. We had a discussion about what parts were most challenging and clarified those. Then they were instructed to circle the portion of the drawing that they did correctly on their own and turn it in. This gave me a sense for how well they were able to express their understanding of the circuit, and it was another opportunity to have a discussion.

In-class exercise 2: Students were instructed that as they were learning material for Exam 3 they should make up a few multiple-choice questions that would demonstrate their understanding of the material on an exam. They were instructed to bring these to class. On the day they brought their questions to class, I instructed them to pass their questions to another student, who then answered the questions and turned them in. After looking them over, I chose five questions that I thought were worthy of an exam question, and we looked at those together during the next class.

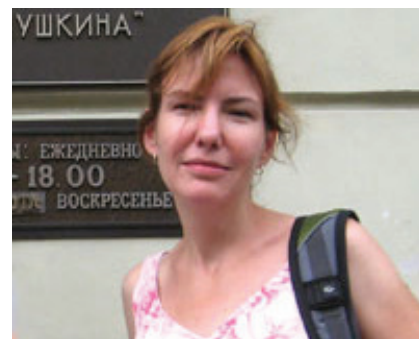
The goal of each activity was to deconstruct the anonymity of the large class. I feel that this objective was partly met. Even though I did not get to know all 92 of my students by name, I am confident that I'll get closer to fully achieving that goal by incorporating a few more of these activities next time I teach the class.

ANDREA LANOUX, FYS 140I: Russia After Communism

What's in a Grade? In *Teaching First-Year College Students*, Erickson, Peters and Strommer emphasize the importance of clearly expressing expectations to students and of illustrating points through specific examples (93, 168). Inspired by these suggestions, I decided to try fully

transparent grading in my first-year seminar in fall 2010. In connection with the students' first writing assignment, I handed out a list of criteria that I use in grading student essays — i.e., what a grade of A, B, C, etc. means in my system of evaluation, and what an essay that earns a given letter grade accomplishes (or not) in its form and content. I then asked students whether they would be willing to have me post electronic versions of their graded essays (without attribution) to the course Moodle site so that all students could see them. They all agreed.

This exercise ended up being a productive and interesting experiment not only for students, but also for me as the person whose grades were to be "made public." I discovered that it is one thing to grade and comment on student essays individually, and quite another to articulate in writing to an



Andrea Lanoux

entire class why and how, for example, a B essay meets the stated evaluation criteria (given the countless flavors of "B essay"). In other words, this experiment made my grading more conscious and explicit — and I hope useful to students. Most students ended up reading at least some of their peers' essays online, and they reported that the experience was very instructive. I was somewhat surprised that no students questioned my grading system, either on those or subsequent essays. Clearly, this is just one possible way to "take the mystery out of grading," but one that I found worthwhile and worth repeating in future courses.

The CTL plans to sponsor another reading group this summer. Watch your e-mail for the invitation to participate.

From the CTL BOOKSHELVES

Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses

Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa.
Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
2011. 272 pps.

More students are engaged in higher education than ever before and learning less. Three semesters of college education have a barely noticeable impact on their academic growth. This is the conclusion Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa come to after collecting data from 2,322 students attending 24 four-year colleges and universities of varying size and selectivity throughout the U.S., including historically black and Hispanic-serving institutions. For those entering college “with unequal demonstrated abilities,” the inequalities won’t just persist but increase. Arum and Roksa aren’t the first to point out that today’s students and parents subscribe to a consumer or client model: their goal is “to acquire the greatest exchange value for the smallest investment of time and energy.” They have stopped believing that economic success requires academic skills as well as academic credentials. Although current students may be more involved in extracurricular activities than in previous generations, the skills they learn from them aren’t the academic skills most widely recognized by faculty and prospective employers as those higher education develops: the ability to think critically, reason, use evidence and write.

Arum and Roksa administered the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) to students in their first semester and at the end of their sophomore year. *Academically Adrift* focuses on the performance task, which is one of the CLA’s components, a real-world task that requires analysis and evaluation of a wide range of documentary and statistical evidence. For example, an employer is about to authorize the purchase of a SwiftAir 235 for the company’s sales force when an accident

makes her reconsider. After reviewing various documents (newspaper reports, a federal accident report on single-engine planes, e-mails, charts of SwiftAir’s performance characteristics and so on), the student has to write a memo making a recommendation and addressing “several questions, including what data support or refute the claim that the type of wing on the SwiftAir 235 leads to more in-flight breakups” and “what other factors might have contributed to the accident

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“Faculty effort with respect to teaching correlates with student effort with respect to learning.”
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and should be taken into account.” The memo is scored on the soundness of its argument, its clarity and persuasiveness, and the effectiveness and correctness of its expression.

Arum and Roksa’s title, *Academically Adrift*, refers to both students and the institutions that have colluded with them in creating a collegiate culture that doesn’t promote academic learning. What distinguishes these students from those belonging to earlier generations is their belief that success depends less on hard work than on management skills: “shaping schedules, taming professors and limiting workload.” The most compelling evidence is that they devote only about 12 hours a week to studying. Math and science students study (slightly) more than students in the humanities and social sciences, but only one in five students reported studying

more than 20 hours a week. In the early 1960s, combined class and study time for a full-time college student was roughly 40 hours per week. Between 2005 and 2007, when Arum and Roksa collected their data, combined class and study time for a full-time college student was 27 hours per week — fewer hours than a high school student spends in school. This reduction in study time applies to students from all demographic subgroups and with all kinds of family backgrounds, within all majors, and whether they worked or didn’t, and regardless of the type, size and selectivity of the college or university they attended.

Faculty effort with respect to teaching correlates with student effort with respect to learning. Half of Arum and Roksa’s sophomores had not taken a course during the prior semester that required more than 20 pages of writing, and one-third of them had not taken a course that required 40 pages of reading in a week. African-American students were “particularly likely to enroll in courses that did not require at least twenty pages of writing for the semester or forty pages of reading per week.” According to Arum and Roksa, faculty spend about 11 hours per week on advising and instructional preparation. Faculty believe that teaching is less important than scholarship in tenure and promotion decisions and that the primary measure of successful teaching is student evaluations. These, Arum and Roksa suggest, measure student satisfaction rather than student learning. Moreover, what evidence we have suggests that “entertaining classroom activities” and a “generous distribution of high course marks” boost both student satisfaction and enrollment numbers. Arum and Roksa doubt that research and teaching are complementary, but given how little time faculty devote to research during teaching semesters (about two to five hours per week), this may hardly

matter. The faculty they surveyed spent most of their time performing other professional and “quasi-administrative functions” such as attending committee meetings, preparing manuscript reviews and doing external consulting.

According to Arum and Roksa, faculty and students have agreed to a “disengagement compact.” Faculty who require less work of students and attend to it less carefully save time for other pursuits. Good grades mean not risking a student’s defensive anger, possible complaints to department chairs or deans, and even intervention by parents. Good grades also mean not challenging a student’s self-esteem. Suggesting that you expect more than the student has delivered or that a student can do better may be taken as undervaluing that student’s effort or setting an inappropriate standard. Many recent studies suggest that self-esteem may be the real Sputnik in the room. It’s certainly the only category in which U.S. students across the board outperform students from other nations. If our students are drifting, they’re also riding high on the winds of self-approval (except, of course, when they’re not).

There is good news for the liberal arts. Higher CLA scores can be predicted for liberal art students than for pre-professional students majoring in business, education or social work. Which institution a student attends, however, hardly makes a difference. According to a national survey of about 300,000 freshmen and seniors in four-year colleges that Arum and Roksa cite, 33 percent of college seniors in the top 10 percent of these schools reported that they had not written a 20-page paper during their last year in college. The best predictor of learning turns out to be a background of learning, as registered by four or more AP courses on the student’s high school transcript and high GPAs and SAT/ACT scores. In other words, students who perform better in college do so either because they begin by knowing more, or because they have better habits of learning as a result of having studied harder in high school. Faculty engagement with students outside the

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“A student’s learning opportunity is exponentially increased if she receives not just a grade but a detailed response to her writing that she can follow up in a meeting with her instructor.”
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classroom makes a difference to the student’s academic performance, but only if the engagement is academic. Arum and Roksa don’t doubt that the student-centered and collaborative learning so popular in recent years develops student engagement by making academic work look more like social life, but they find no persuasive evidence that it improves a student’s ability to think critically, reason complexly or write lucidly.

Will *Academically Adrift* change anything? It may lessen the respect paid to faculty, as perhaps it should. It will probably not lessen the respect paid to academic institutions that provide a range of services that parents and students can evaluate more easily as well as more highly than learning: gracious accommodation, state-of-the-art fitness centers, excellent student resources, and services of various kinds, the latter increasingly supplied by “non-faculty support professionals,” the “fastest growing category of professional employment in higher education.” But the links Arum and Roksa forge between student effort and student learning and between student effort and both faculty effort and faculty standards suggest some changes we could make. Student evaluations have been widely institutionalized, but students are not well suited to measuring either their learning or its challenges. Could we evaluate faculty

effort, in particular faculty engagement in student learning? I think we could. We would do it by paying attention to how much work faculty assign their students and to how thoroughly they respond to student work, and especially written work. Writing a 20-page paper is a marker for Arum and Roksa, but even more relevant to student learning is what happens to that paper after it is turned in. A student’s learning opportunity is exponentially increased if she receives not just a grade but a detailed response to her writing that she can follow up in a meeting with her instructor. The model here is academic essay writing, but it need not be. Problem sets, lab reports and art projects also count as work that develops habits of critical thinking and complex reasoning, along with skills of expression. I wouldn’t myself want to accede to the idea that research and teaching are no longer complementary. Unless faculty members know their subjects, keep up with work in their fields and submit their own work for evaluation by other scholars who are more qualified to assess it than the students these faculty teach, they are likely to be unable to set the high standards that Arum and Roksa argue are necessary for students to learn more than they are learning now.
— Janet Gezari, *English Department*

The Last Professors: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities

Frank Donoghue. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008. 172 pps.

While *The Last Professors* presents a depressing analysis of recent developments in American higher education, Frank Donoghue’s discussion does not really break new ground, at least for those of us who have been following trends in higher education. He laments the “corporatization” of universities, the increasingly competitive nature of higher education, and the shift away from traditional liberal arts disciplines toward more “practical” education. Donoghue, himself a professor of

English at The Ohio State University, assumes, like many writers of this kind of book, that most humanities professors live in an isolated ivory tower and have somehow missed these developments. The book is designed to open our eyes.

Despite this basic condescension toward his colleagues, Donoghue makes a number of interesting points. First, he puts the problem of corporate or business influence on colleges and universities into a historical perspective. American businessmen have always been skeptical of the traditions of liberal education that came out of Ivy League universities and even as far back as the 19th century they often advocated practical learning over what they considered the useless humanities. This kind of criticism has never really gone away and has been a constant influence in state university systems, even in the “flagship” schools like Ohio State, where Donoghue teaches. If elite universities and colleges have been able to resist them for the most part, these pressures have come to dominate community colleges and lower-level state universities and colleges.

Donoghue traces the growth of community colleges and development of for-profit universities, which focus on job training and practical education. Almost all for-profit universities have been founded in the last 10-15 years and feature more and more online teaching. All of these universities, some with very questionable teaching and admissions practices, employ faculty without tenure. As most faculty members are aware, even elite colleges and universities have hired more contingent and part-time faculty in the last 20 years. Donoghue argues that tenure itself is disappearing — it is “becoming a mirage” — and that over the next 50 years tenured faculty will be increasingly confined to a small number (maybe 50-100) of elite institutions.

If for-profit universities and community colleges focus on providing their students with skills to get jobs, elite institutions provide prestige above all. Consumers and the wider public use rankings (especially those

from U.S. News & World Report) to measure this prestige, but they also consider admissions selectivity, the success of athletic programs, and high-profile research achievements, particularly those in medicine and the sciences. Competition for prestige is particularly difficult for state universities, which are under financial pressure from state legislatures, to manage as they cannot be too restrictive in admissions and must compete for faculty talent with rich private universities while maintaining extensive athletic programs. These institutions suffer what Donoghue calls “mission creep.” For prestige reasons they maintain humanities programs, even hiring “star faculty,” but students demand classes in practical programs, like technology, engineering, business, teaching and nursing.

Much of Donoghue’s discussion laments these developments and conveys a depressing sense that there is little place left in American higher education for either tenured professors or the humanities. As he says, if a discipline does not *bring* money into a university, is not *about* money or is not considered “practical,” it is often the first to be cut. Donoghue’s discussion of prestige and “prestige envy” hits particularly close to home. We face many of these issues at Connecticut College, which qualifies as an elite institution in Donoghue’s analysis. For the past 20 years Connecticut College has fought to improve its rankings and its reputation. We talk about “aspirations” and compare ourselves (often unfavorably) to colleges like Williams and Amherst. We suffer “prestige envy” as we look those institutions, just as Ohio State does when it contemplates Harvard or Princeton. The College, and its faculty, have often claimed that we are “better” than our rankings and we feel that improvement in our reputation will come if we had a more accomplished research faculty or more acclaimed academic programs. Yet we also have learned that “marketing” and “branding” and successful athletic teams may be just as important in this competition for prestige. Is this the

world we are doomed to inhabit, the reality of higher education now and in the future?

Unfortunately Donoghue offers few suggestions for how to combat these trends, or even if there is any hope of combating them, other than imploring faculty members to understand how their institutions *really* function. Understanding the problems, as outlined by Donoghue, is perhaps a first step, but in the long run faculties at institutions like ours need to find convincing ways to defend the liberal arts education that is the reason we exist. We cannot possibly be all things to everyone, a mini-Princeton or a mini-Ohio State, competing with our peer schools for scholarly prestige, athletic victories and admissions selectivity, all while providing our students with job training for well-paying jobs, a broad education, and a chance for graduate school or professional school. We face a challenging future. — *Marc R. Forster, History Department*

The Black Academic’s Guide to Winning Tenure — Without Losing Your Soul

Kerry Ann Rocquemore and Tracey Laszloffy. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Press, 2008. 261 pps.

While it may appear from the title that it has only one target audience, *The Black Academic’s Guide to Winning Tenure — Without Losing Your Soul* offers great insight for every administrator who has ever wondered why they can’t retain faculty of color, for untenured faculty of all racial backgrounds who are looking for ways to navigate treacherous tenure-track waters, and for faculty of color who think they’re alone in their experience. Essentially, this book details all of the ways in which being an untenured faculty member of *any* race is challenging, but particularly for Black faculty. Even more importantly, it offers concrete ways to surmount these challenges.

The authors’ major premise is that “there is a fundamental difference between the experiences of black and

white faculty, and that difference is caused by the fact that we live in a social world organized by race.” They further explain that for untenured White faculty, being in a “one-down” position is a temporary status confined to the institution, while for Black faculty it is a permanent condition that extends *beyond* the institution. Moreover, research on Black faculty indicates that they face disproportionately higher service requests, are overwhelmed by Black students looking for mentorship, receive lower than average evaluations, face feelings of loneliness and a lack of acceptance, and are often expected to prove their worth in ways their White colleagues are not. Thus, they must face the same demands as their White counterparts while *also* negotiating subtle and blatant racial insensitivities.

After establishing these facts early on, Rockquomore and Laszloffy spend the remainder of the book detailing specific strategies on how to flourish (not merely survive) on the tenure track. While they pay special attention to the concerns of Black faculty, they clearly specify that “most of the nuts-and-bolts suggestions we provide for how to win tenure are not exclusive to black faculty and can be used by faculty of any race.” Chapter 7, “The Art of Efficient Teaching and Service,” specifically offers several helpful teaching strategies. For example, one common mistake new faculty make is overpreparing for class (30 hours per week on average). However, for Black faculty, “[T]he experience is qualitatively different when you know up front that students do not necessarily assume you are competent, credentialed, or intellectually worthy of being in front of the classroom. The apprehension increases with the awareness that every mistake may be magnified, counted against you, and generalized to all black faculty.” To this end, they may engage in “defensive teaching” in hopes of proving academic prowess, combating bad evaluations and fighting off perceptions of being an unqualified affirmative action hire. This coupled with the demands of service (e.g., being asked to “diversify” every committee, mentor

an abundance of Black students, etc.) leaves little time for research, which is often one’s currency in academia. According to the authors, it may also lead to bad teaching where students are overloaded with information and spend class time frantically trying to keep pace with the professor and unable to get in a word edgewise.

To this end, the authors recommend several excellent strategies designed to decrease one’s teaching workload while also making classes more engaging. For instance, they recommend keeping preparation to a maximum of two hours per hour of lecture. They suggest specific ways to do so, including: aligning personal standards for course content and rigor with departmental standards (new faculty’s standards are often far higher), using standardized assessments (e.g., multiple-choice tests or essay exams graded by rubric) and “hiring” an undergraduate teaching assistant to whom one can delegate time-expending tasks (e.g., making copies, updating a class spreadsheet, etc.). They also recommend that faculty integrate their courses with their research interests, thereby increasing both faculty and student enthusiasm for the subject matter. These strategies ultimately allow for less course preparation and thus more time for *daily* writing (which is empirically proven as a strategy for “high performers” and for which the authors make a very convincing case).

Rockquomore and Laszloffy’s no-nonsense, real-world approach to this book offers faculty a new outlook on the tenure track as well as ways to overcome many of its attendant difficulties. Various other concrete and practical suggestions for navigating academic life are also offered, including how to overcome psychological obstacles to writing, dealing effectively with conflict, building a supportive network of mentors and sponsors, and establishing a national reputation in the field. In other words, for those still on the tenure track and particularly those of color, this book is a one-stop-shopping guide to tenure and long-term success in academe. — *Cherise A. Harris, Sociology Department*

The Teaching Portfolio: A Practical Guide to Improved Performance and Promotion/ Tenure Decisions

Fourth Edition. Peter Seldin, J. Elizabeth Miller, and Clement A. Seldin, eds. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010. 416 pp.

What is a teaching portfolio? And more importantly to most of us, what makes a *good* one? For many new faculty, the question looms dimly on the horizon in anticipation of tenure review. But the question is not for untenured professors alone. As *The Teaching Portfolio* emphasizes, just about anyone in higher education has a stake in understanding the uses and values of this important tool — especially on today’s campuses, where the gap between research and teaching is steadily closing. As the authors contend, teaching portfolios are increasingly relevant, as institutions “are moving from lip-service endorsements of the importance of teaching to concerted and sustained efforts to evaluate and reward it.” Consequently, individual professors — as well as entire institutions — are increasingly pressed to better evaluate and gauge faculty teaching effectiveness.

Now in its fourth edition, *The Teaching Portfolio* is acclaimed as the most widely used in the portfolio industry. Divided into three main sections, the book earns its reputation as a comprehensive, straightforward and practical guide. The first section covers the “how-tos” and “reasons-for” developing teaching portfolios; the second compiles essays on their various uses at a broad range of institutions; and the third offers no fewer than 21 sample portfolios representing the work of professors from just as many academic fields. For readers who find this three-tiered approach appealing, a similarly formatted companion volume can be found by the two authors, Peter Seldin and J. Elizabeth Miller: *The Academic Portfolio: A Practical Guide to Documenting Teaching, Research, and Service* (2009).

The first section of *The Teaching Portfolio* is useful for anyone looking for

straightforward, bare-bones advice on drafting and evaluating portfolios. For the completely uninitiated (and perhaps overwhelmed), I would recommend starting first with Chapter Eight, a new addition to the fourth edition. Offered in a familiar Q&A format, this section not only proffers the highlights of all of Section One, but also answers some of the most pressing questions with succinct, informed responses. The “typical portfolio,” the chapter summarizes, can be compiled in roughly “twelve to fifteen hours spread over several days” and contains “a narrative of seven to ten pages, followed by a series of appendices that document the claims” in the narrative. While no single portfolio is like another, the authors offer a checklist of five core items (including a personal statement, sample syllabi and student evaluations) that are most often selected for inclusion.

In addition to tips on compiling the document, Section One also answers basic questions on the institutional uses and practices for implementing portfolios in the first place. By illuminating some of the core objectives behind a “program for portfolios,” the first section is directed equally at institutional administrators and faculty. Among the prominent themes the authors highlight, for instance, is the portfolio’s promise as a tool to ensure teaching improvement, promotion and tenure. Despite the portfolio’s advantages, however, the authors caution institutional leaders against implementing the program from the top down. The most successful portfolio programs, they confirm, have “unflinching support” from administrators, but are fundamentally faculty driven.

Following on the *whats* and *whys* of the teaching portfolio, the second section elaborates more fully on the many *ways in which* the portfolio is utilized at different colleges and universities. In contrast to the handbook format of the first section, this ensuing set of chapters resembles an edited volume comprised of wide-ranging essays from various institutional perspectives. Taken

as a whole, the section underscores that regardless of size or funding, all varieties of institutions are becoming significantly transformed by teaching portfolios. From fostering self reflection to enhancing graduate education, portfolio programs are yielding variable — yet highly satisfying — results at private, public, for-profit and junior colleges alike. At Loyola University of Maryland, for example, the processes of mentoring and self-evaluation have informed both the faculty and the institution. While professors have

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“The most successful portfolio programs, they confirm, have ‘unflinching support’ from administrators, but are fundamentally faculty driven.”
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naturally gained insights on their teaching, the university has also acquired unexpected information about trends among its faculty. Such knowledge about aggregate strengths and weaknesses has led the university to identify new possibilities for faculty development experiences.

Finally, the third section of this book is comprised of a large compendium of sample portfolios. Again, the message of this section is found in its sum rather than individual contributions; as a unit, the samples drive home the point that portfolios service a broad spectrum of teaching experiences and programs. Although the book does fail to include a sample portfolio for historians (sadly, this reviewer might have to look elsewhere for specifics), it seems that practically every other academic field is covered. From theater to justice

studies; music; pathology; legal studies; and fish, wildlife and conservation ecology, this final section crosses the gamut of scholarly disciplines. Beyond history, the only other obvious subjects I found missing were computer science and foreign languages. Despite these omissions, however, any instructor (including a historian, to be sure) will benefit from this robust and extensive collection.

For me, the most useful aspects of *The Teaching Portfolio* were the variety and scope of perspectives offered, something that I found more informative than a book written entirely for an audience of untenured professors like myself. When the time comes to perfect my own teaching portfolio, I will confidently return to this book for its time-tested, all-encompassing and no-nonsense approach. Moreover, beyond finding advice on how to get the most out of the process, I will gain more insights on the ways in which my portfolio can be assessed and utilized. I will know more about the questions and demands that face my evaluators, which ultimately helps me to understand the bigger picture. Precisely because *The Teaching Portfolio* is for the full range of participants in a teaching review, it answers the question of what a *good* portfolio is in the most inclusive and transparent way possible. — *Ann Marie Davis, History Department*

Plagiarism, The Internet and Student Learning: Improving Academic Integrity

Wendy Sutherland-Smith. New York: Routledge, 2008. 240 pps.

If plagiarism seems easy to define, and if students’ failure to respect its essential elements is frustrating, then this is the book for you. Drawing upon the disciplines of law, history, literary theory and cultural studies, and incorporating the research of teaching-and-learning scholars, Wendy Sutherland-Smith delineates the diverse views of plagiarism that are advanced by students, faculty and administrators. Moreover, she makes

the associated debates accessible and interesting, without over-simplifying their complexities. The connections among student learning, intellectual development, pressures to succeed, authorship, judicial penalties, teaching methods, course content and moral obligation, among other concerns, are thoughtfully considered. Well-chosen excerpts from interviews with students and faculty are cited in support of the author's contentions. These voices echo conversations heard on our campus, making her analysis even more engaging.

Sutherland-Smith advances three contentions, which she clearly hopes will facilitate a searching discussion about plagiarism. She begins with the claim that conceptions of authorship are now changing dramatically. Highly respected communications theorists and practitioners are rejecting the "possessive individualism" that gave rise to copyright, dispensing with the romantic ideal of the singular creative writer. They argue that language cannot be bought and sold, because it is part of a communal social context; that the written word has no boundaries; and that writing involves an extended apprenticeship that may incorporate copying, as well as composition and creativity. Drawing the voices of these scholars into "her" text and applying their insights to plagiarism, Sutherland-Smith implements the theories that she examines. Numerous scholars — through her interviews and their publications — test and ultimately recommend the rationales and conclusions that the "author" presents.

Second, Sutherland-Smith delineates the contrasting understandings of and judgments about plagiarism that are advanced by faculty and by students, while always stressing that neither group is monolithic in its beliefs. She finds that plagiarism is assessed along an extended spectrum, with some equating all plagiarism with cheating, others asking whether there is an intent to deceive, and still others questioning whether plagiarism is actually illicit. Some students, for example, say that they copy from published works — or cut and paste text from the Internet —

because they don't have the concepts and information to offer original responses. They are simply too "new" to the discipline. Other students share answers and essays because they have studied together, with faculty encouragement; for these students, the line between collaboration and collusion is unclear, even unidentifiable. Still other students fail to provide adequate citations because they do not know how to operationalize the college or university policies. Considering these cases, faculty and students come to widely divergent conclusions about the culpability of the student writers, which reflects strong (but seldom acknowledged) disagreements about learning at the collegiate level.

Finally, Sutherland-Smith suggests that there are connections between methods of teaching-and-learning and plagiarism. She asks teachers to consider the values and priorities they teach in the classroom, observing that students often seek to apply those values and priorities to all of their learning. A professor who provides a lecture with PowerPoint, for example, will routinely expect students to take detailed notes and even copy slide content. The associated examinations may require significant memorization. When copying and rote learning are stigmatized as inappropriate, even illicit, in writing papers, many students are confused — and may even feel betrayed. Meanwhile, a teacher who relies on class discussion to analyze diverse viewpoints may recommend less note-taking and more individualized reflection. Examinations, similarly, may seek to elicit the students' own analysis. But this pedagogy will not necessarily result in more detailed or extensive citations. In these circumstances, students believe that they are following the professor's lead in focusing more on their own intellectual growth than on their intellectual debts. Sutherland-Smith notes that there is considerable evidence that if students understand what constitutes plagiarism, and if they understand why these actions are unacceptable, then they are much less likely to plagiarize. However, the

requisite perceptions and conceptions were not easily mastered — and there were reasons for students' failure to do so.

As this overview suggests, Sutherland-Smith is intensely pragmatic in her analysis. The legal histories, literary theories and cultural profiles that she supplies are immediately applicable to shared governance meetings, the classroom and office hours. This volume provides concrete advice without polemics or sermonizing. The extended quotes allow anyone to anticipate (and thus rehearse) conversations about this difficult topic. At just 200 pages, the book is a quick read, but it is also clearly structured, allowing someone to easily find the answers to more specific questions. As Sutherland-Smith observes, plagiarism too often incites helplessness or moral panic. This book is a good start on providing a thoughtful remedy to those feelings. —*MaryAnne Borrelli, Government Department*

Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?

Janet Eyler, Dwight Giles, Jr., and Alexander W. Astin. San Francisco: Jossey Boss, 1999. 352 pps.

Introduction to Service Learning Toolkit: Readings and Resources for Faculty

Campus Compact, eds. Providence: Campus Compact, 2003. 304 pps.

"Service Learning Course Design Workbook." Jeffrey Howard. Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning

Ann Arbor: OCLS Press/University of Michigan, Summer 2001. 63 pps.

Some years ago, the Association for American Colleges and Universities and the Charles Englehard Foundation teamed up to establish the "Bringing Theory to Practice" initiative, designed to address a perceived increasing disengagement between college students and their academics. Donald Harward, former president of Bates College and a founder of the initiative, outlined a variety of ways that such disengagement

manifests across college campuses, including drug and alcohol abuse, cheating and depression. For many of us, a back row of students working their Facebook accounts or students obsessed with their grades rather than what they've actually learned are other manifestations of their disengagement, or dare I say it, their boredom.

The need, according to Harvard and others, was to introduce more engaged learning pedagogies that consider the whole student experience, which includes not only processing content, but also personal development and civic engagement. Such active pedagogies offer students responsibility for their learning as they apply ideas and concepts to real-world situations and do so collaboratively with faculty and fellow students. He praised service learning and community-based research in particular as “exemplars of such teaching styles.” But, why service learning? As a pedagogy does it engage students in their learning and bring together the multiple components of liberal learning? Although there is extensive literature on service learning outcomes, one of the best studies focusing on these questions is found in *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* by Janet Eyler, Dwight Giles and Alexander Astin.

To get a handle on student outcomes, the authors used a variety of data sources and methodologies incorporating a wide range of colleges and universities involved in a multiplicity of experiential learning programs. A few key observations are worthy of note. First, while there is no clear difference in the grades of students who take similar courses with and without service learning options, service learning students were more motivated to understand complex concepts and better able to apply course material to real-world situations. They were also more likely to remember and use the course material in real-world community experiences. Second, service learning students were more likely to be more confident and reflective, open to new ideas, and more tolerant, and to question stereotypes. Third, service learning students developed stronger

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“... service learning students developed stronger interpersonal skills, worked better with others from diverse backgrounds and found ‘greater rewards in helping others.’”
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interpersonal skills, worked better with others of diverse backgrounds and found “greater rewards in helping others.” And fourth, in addition to demonstrating a better understanding of social issues (civic knowledge), they also reported that they were *committed* to making a difference in their community (civic values) and *could make* a difference (civic efficacy) because they *knew how* to make a difference (civic skills). The findings are laid out in a very clear and organized fashion (although, at times, it can be a tad dry) and the authors conclude with detailed appendices of their instruments that instructors can use when assessing their own course outcomes.

One of the most important messages shared by Eyler, Giles and Astin is that for service learning to have positive outcomes, a lot of planning and effort are required. One of the best texts to help guide the professor who dares to tip her toe into the waters of service learning is *Introduction to Service Learning Toolkit*, an anthology of classic readings. Without exaggeration, this is the bible of service learning guides currently on the market. Read this one first! Each chapter consists of three or four articles and a section of service learning resources on the Web and ends with a list of recommended readings. The first set of chapters focus on definitions and principles (Andrew Furco’s piece, for example, defines and differentiates the varieties of experiential learning from internships to volunteerism); the underlying learning theory behind service learning

(Kerri Ann Rockquomore and Regan Schaffer use cognitive mapping to explain the positive impacts of service learning); basic principles of good service learning pedagogy (Jeff Howard details how incorporating service learning pedagogy is difficult because it tends to be “counternormative” since it decenters the classroom and democratizes the learning process); and reflection assignments and projects that promote the integration the classroom and community experiences.

The remaining chapters address a broad range of issues from implementing model programs across campuses to redefining academic culture to reassessing the promotion and tenure process. All of the selections in these chapters offer much in the way of understanding service learning, but three other areas of the text are critical reads for those considering service learning: the community partnership, community-based research and the assessment process. The key theme drawn from the selections on community partnerships is that they should be just that: partnerships. Too often the interests of the college and the community are not the same, but if service learning is to be successful, as Barbara Holland and Sherri Gelman note, there must be common ground and recognition that the campus and the community are a part of, not apart from, each other. The selection on community-based learning is especially important because it questions our traditional views of research, where we are the experts and the community is the subject of our empirical gaze. In the selection by Kerry Strand and her associates, the authors lay out a set of principles by which we can create campus-community research partnerships that are “genuinely collaborative and driven by community rather than campus interests.” Lastly, given the time and effort needed to implement a successful service learning course, it is essential that we can gauge its success. In another selection Amy Driscoll and her associates measure success by not only student outcomes, but campus and community outcomes as well.

Ultimately, the faculty member has to decide whether a service learning component is appropriate for a particular course, and that can be a scary decision because typically it takes a few tries before pedagogy is successful. Sadly, too many professors give up on service learning after one failed effort, not recognizing that even in failure much is learned and increases the chances of success on the next go round. Fortunately, the editorial staff of *The Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* prepared an excellent resource, “The Service Learning Course Design Workbook,” that offers a step-by-step guide that considers learning goals, course objectives, teaching strategies and assessment methods in order to help the faculty member make an intelligent decision not only about what type of service learning program to use but whether service learning is, indeed, an appropriate pedagogy for that particular course. Even for those faculty members who are not considering service learning, the workbook is an excellent resource to have nearby when designing a new course and syllabus. — Ronald J.O. Flores, Sociology Department

Classroom Research: Implementing the Scholarship of Teaching

K. Patricia Cross and Mimi Harris Steadman. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996. 288 pp.

The focus of this book is to engage teachers in the practice of conducting their own classroom research, to study why certain learning problems occur and then find ways of effectively dealing with them. The book is presented as a series of case studies in which the authors describe classroom situations that illustrate various learning issues. Cross and Steadman then analyze each situation, formulate hypotheses about the learning issues and provide suggestions for classroom research to explore the different hypotheses. The case studies also cover a variety of disciplines and class types (large lectures, small groups,

labs), so there should be something useful for almost every reader. The book could also be used for faculty discussion groups or more discipline-specific workshops. The book is well written and easy to follow, with clear subheadings so that you can focus on the areas that are of most interest.

The first chapter describes the differences between traditional educational research and classroom research. Traditional research relies on quantitative data (usually requiring a large number of students) with the goal of publishing the study and leading to policy changes. Classroom research

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“Understanding why students display particular behaviors may then allow the instructor to adjust her teaching practices to address the problem more effectively.”
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is more often qualitative and doesn't necessarily have the goal of being published, but rather is used to help the teacher understand how and why students learn so that teaching strategies can be adapted accordingly. The next three chapters present three different case studies and an in-depth analysis of each, including a brief review of recent literature on the relevant topics. The learning issues covered by the case studies are pretty universal, and include problems with student motivation, the effectiveness of small group work, and students who are focused solely on their grades rather than mastering the subject. The final chapter provides a case to be analyzed by the reader and provides step-by-step guidelines for developing your own classroom research project based on the presented case.

The authors encourage us to ask questions about whether the teaching

methods we use are working: are they effective for teaching students what we want them to learn and how do we know they are effective? I was intrigued with the idea of digging deeper to find out why certain problems arise in the classroom rather than just taking a stab in the dark about how to fix it and hoping it works. For example, a common problem many of us encounter is that students often come to class unprepared. A variety of possible solutions to the problem, such as requiring a written assignment based on the reading to be turned in before class, are then tried. Although the solution may work, it does not address the cause of the problem. The focus of classroom research is to understand *why* students are not coming to class prepared. Is it because they are not interested in the subject? Is the material too difficult? Are they just stretched too thin? Understanding *why* students display particular behaviors may then allow the instructor to adjust her teaching practices to address the problem more effectively.

The authors also offer concrete examples of ways to assess what's really happening in the classroom. I found myself wanting to try some of the suggested methods and think they could potentially yield interesting and informative results about how and why students learn (e.g., a group evaluation form to find out if small group work is really effective for teaching students certain concepts or skills). Many of the suggested assessment methods were laid out in a way that one could use them immediately in her own classes with little or no revision, which I find very helpful. Other assessments seemed like too much effort to be worth the potential rewards.

This book is a good starting place for anyone interested in pursuing the scholarship of teaching and learning, without requiring the rigors of traditional educational research. Many of the ideas presented in *Classroom Research* gave me new ideas about how to evaluate the effectiveness of my teaching and a stepping stone into the scholarship of teaching and learning. — Anne Bernhard, Biology Department

CLASS OF '57 TEACHING SEMINAR

THE JOY SHECHTMAN MANKOFF CENTER for Teaching & Learning welcomed seven incoming tenure-track faculty into the Class of '57 Teaching Seminar last fall. The seminar meets about once a month throughout the academic year to discuss issues related to teaching and faculty life at Connecticut College.

New faculty members participating are Monique Bedasse (history), Shani Collins (dance), Anthony Graesch (anthropology), Jennifer Rudolph (Hispanic studies), Tanya Schneider (chemistry), Rachel Spicer (botany) and Jeff Strabone (English). The goals of the seminar are to help the participants become more intentional, reflective teachers and to support one another in our development as teachers and scholars at the College. The seminar also provides a safe space for new faculty to discuss concerns or raise questions and provide support to their peers. This year the incoming tenure-track faculty were joined by the members of the organizing committee: Ann Marie Davis, Purba Mukerji, Shubhra Sharma, Anne Bernhard, CTL Faculty Fellow Abby Van Slyck and CTL Director Michael Reder.

The fall semester began with an introduction to teaching cultures at Connecticut College and a syllabus workshop followed by lunch at a local restaurant. Other seminar topics in the fall included designing better writing assignments (a workshop led by Steve Shoemaker), grades and grading, dealing with student push-back, encouraging students to speak in class, and getting mid-semester student feedback. The spring semester began with a seminar about strategies for teaching different types of classes effectively, including large lecture classes, first-year and advanced seminar classes, and teaching one-on-one. Dean Roger Brooks joined the group in March for a discussion about how to motivate students to take responsibility for their own learning.

Other seminar topics planned for the spring semester include a discussion on balancing teaching, research and service and a discussion about student cultures featuring current Connecticut College students.



Class of '57 Seminar workshop on creating effective writing assignments.

OPEN CLASSROOM PROGRAM

IN 2010-2011, for the third consecutive year, the Joy Shechtman Mankoff Center for Teaching & Learning sponsored an Open Classroom Program to encourage Connecticut College faculty to visit one another's classrooms. The goal of the program is to put into action our belief that teaching should be treated like scholarship and artistic production — a professional activity that we make public in order to benefit from the considered responses of our peers.

The CTL circulated a list of participating faculty (a whopping 58 this year) and the 181 classes that they, collectively, made available to the program. As in years past, the CTL also circulated suggestions (developed by Rick Holmgren of Allegheny College) for observing classes and giving constructive feedback. In order to encourage faculty members to take the plunge and make a visit, the CTL also offered to pay for lunch or coffee (up to \$25) after a class visit to allow those involved to discuss their teaching.

Those who have taken advantage of the program are enthusiastic about the experience — although sometimes in unexpected ways. Marc Zimmer and

Tanya Schneider (Chemistry) visited Derek Turner's course on Bioethics. According to Tanya, "As a new member of the faculty, it was valuable to visit Derek's class because it gave me a chance to meet a colleague as well as discuss the methods he uses in class. Additionally, several of my students were also taking Derek's class, and it was interesting to see that their relative levels of engagement were mirrored in his class as well."

Following a visit to Abby Van Slyck's Gender in Architecture course, Julia Kushigian (Hispanic studies) reported, "At lunch afterwards we touched on so many of the moments of class that I had found rewarding that I found myself eager to return to my syllabus for a new course I was developing for the spring to incorporate some of Abby's techniques. The Open Classroom experience is rewarding at any level of one's academic career because it opens the mind to a rich, interdisciplinary dialogue right here in our liberal arts experience."

For more information about the Open Classrooms Program, contact Abby Van Slyck, Faculty Fellow, Center for Teaching & Learning, at 860-439-2731 or at avaan@conncoll.edu.

STUDENTS RESEARCH ACADEMIC CHALLENGE, TEACHING AND LEARNING

THIS SPRING, two sophomores are conducting focus-group discussions with fellow students in an effort to find out more about student perceptions of academic life at Connecticut College. The project is a follow-up to the Wabash surveys of students and other survey data that has been collected in recent years. Institutional Researcher John Nugent has conducted a number of focus groups in the past, but based on the assumption that focus groups led by fellow students would produce more useful results, a number of Wabash schools are using student facilitators to conduct focus groups.

Last semester, Sarah Lamer '13 and Daniel Brown '13, both psychology majors, were chosen as the inaugural CTL Student Research Fellows who will conduct the focus groups. In November, Lamer and Brown traveled to the Center for Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Ind., accompanied by CTL Director Michael Reder and Professor of Psychology Stuart Vyse. While at Wabash, the Connecticut College contingent was trained in focus group methodology and met students, staff and faculty from other Wabash schools engaged in similar data collection efforts. Discussions with representatives from other schools and with Wabash staff during not one, but two poster sessions helped sharpen the objectives of the Connecticut College

focus group work to come.

This semester, Lamer and Brown are registered for individual studies under the supervision of Vyse, and as part the requirements for their individual studies, they will conduct a series of focus groups with fellow students. The primary issues for discussion will be the level of academic challenge experienced by students during all four years at the College and the kinds of teaching styles and assignments that foster student engagement. (See sidebar for a sample of focus group questions.) Data collection will continue throughout the spring semester, and in the fall Lamer and Brown will return to finish their terms as Research Fellows.

In fall 2011, the CTL Student Research Fellows will have two primary tasks. First, they will summarize the data from the previous semester's research and report their results at various forums on campus. In addition, two new Student Research Fellows will be selected, and Lamer and Brown will be on hand to assist in the training of their successors. The hope is that the CTL Student Research Fellows Program will become a continuing program of evaluation and feedback conducted by a new group of students each year and that out of this sustained effort will come many useful innovations that will improve the academic and intellectual lives of the students.



CTL Student Research Fellows Daniel Brown '13 and Sarah Lamer '13 in front of the poster they created at the Center for Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College.

Spring 2011 Focus Group Questions

What kinds of classes or instructors make you want to participate in class?

What kinds of classroom experiences change the way you think about a topic or your beliefs?

What has been your best experience with being supported by a faculty member outside of class?

Which faculty members do you know best and how did you get to know them?

When you arrived at Connecticut College, did you spend as much time preparing for your classes as you expected?

How do you manage your time? Do you have a regular study schedule or plan?

What things would promote your getting more work done for your classes?

What types of assignments push you to accomplish more than you thought you could?

What kinds of professors or classes challenged your ideas and beliefs?

What kinds of messages do the school administration and leadership send about what is important for students and what Connecticut College can do for students?

Are you held accountable for preparation for class? Have you had weekly quizzes or postings on reading or assignments? If so, has this helped you prepare?

When did you find yourself regularly preparing readings or assignments for class without being quizzed or prompted to do so?

Do you feel as though the students on campus have a visible intellectual leader?

JOIN US FOR CAMP TEACH & LEARN 2011

TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY, MAY 24, 25 & 26

ONCE AGAIN, the CTL will be sponsoring a variety of opportunities for faculty to critically consider their teaching with the goal of improving student learning as part of the seventh annual Camp Teach & Learn. Highlights include a workshop on using evidence to change your course to improve student learning; “Film Studies Boot Camp,” led by Nina Martin; and three CTL reading and discussion groups, which include discussions of: *How Learning Works: 7 Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching* (2010), led by Anne Bernhard and Sufia Uddin; *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (2011), led by Leah Lowe and Bridget Baird; and a selection of readings related to key issues in higher education, led by Roger Brooks, Julie Rivkin and Abby Van Slyck. A variety of other workshops related to effective teaching with technology, writing and student learning will also be offered. A full list of workshops, including dates and times, will be announced in May. In the meantime, if you are interested in participating in one or more of these discussion groups, please e-mail Michael Reder at reder@conncoll.edu to request your copy of these books or readings.



William Germano leads a workshop on book publishing, Camp Teach & Learn 2010.



Book discussion group, Camp Teach & Learn 2010.



Some of the participants in the day-long workshop “Peace & Productivity”: Succeeding in Your Pre-Tenure Years” with Dr. Kerry Ann Rockquomore, co-author of “The Black Academics’ Guide to Winning Tenure Without Losing Your Soul,” which was co-sponsored by the CTL, CCSRE and the Office of the Dean of the Faculty. See the review of Rockquomore’s book on page 7.

Talking Teaching Notes: OBSERVING AND EVALUATING TEACHING

THE JOY SHECHTMAN MANKOFF CENTER for Teaching & Learning is placing notes from its popular Talking Teaching series online. Below are notes from “Best Practices for Observing and Evaluating Teaching,” held on Oct. 20, 2010, with featured discussants Bridget Baird, Simon Feldman, Jenny Fredricks, Chad Jones, Julia Kushigian, Michael Reder and Abby Van Slyck. To see notes from other Talking Teaching events, go to www.conncoll.edu/centers/ctl/10193.htm.

How do you prepare a useful peer evaluation of a colleague’s teaching?

Peer teaching evaluations have multiple purposes and audiences: They are dialogues about teaching-and-learning among faculty colleagues; evaluative commentaries consulted throughout tenure and promotion reviews; and complements to student evaluations. In other words, peer evaluations serve purposes that are both informative and evaluative — a difficult combination to master. How can you, as an evaluator, respond to these varying needs for information and judgment? As a teacher, how can you help the observer to prepare for the visit so that it is as productive as possible? This conversation will provide concrete suggestions for faculty who are observing and being observed.

A summary of points raised and debated throughout the conversation follows ...

- What are some of the policy questions and concerns that are raised by peer teaching evaluations?
- IFF stipulates that there should be one peer teaching evaluation each semester, for each faculty member eligible for review or promotion (i.e., for assistant and associate professors). This creates real challenges for small departments, as the evaluations are so frequent that they quickly come to be resented.



Abby Van Slyck, Mab Segrest, Doug Thompson, Bob Askins, and Chris Steiner at a Talking Teaching discussion.

- Peer teaching evaluations serve purposes that are formative and evaluative. How can these opposing functions be served well? Is it possible to maintain any confidentiality in the process? Mentoring requires trust and honesty, which may be difficult to sustain when evaluations are public and constant.
- How and when can peer teaching evaluations be done and done well?
- Team teaching provides a rich environment for peer teaching evaluation, especially since the team members spend so much time observing and consulting with one another.
- Guest lectures are another opportunity for conducting peer-teaching evaluations. Note that a guest lecturer may bring a new dynamic to the evaluator’s classroom, which can suggest innovations in the evaluator’s own approach.
- To lessen the asymmetries of an evaluation, the evaluatee could visit the evaluator’s class first. This would lower tensions and facilitate conversation. Or, both evaluatee and evaluator could visit another class, so that they could discuss teaching without focusing upon their own pedagogies.
- How can the peer teaching evaluation process be improved at Connecticut College?
- Peer teaching evaluations need to be recognized as teaching acts. Doing so highlights the need for evaluators to explain their standards, their thinking and so forth. Administratively, identifying the evaluations as teaching would also garner greater awareness and respect for the evaluations as time-consuming obligations. Peer teaching evaluations should, for example, be specifically identified in the teaching section of the faculty annual report template, which is provided by the Office of the Dean of the Faculty.
- In making the peer teaching evaluation process more systematic, there also needs to be an explicit recognition that this is typically a senior-to-junior evaluative process. It is seldom associated with mentoring, although it arguably should be set in that context.
- Faculty members need more practice in conducting and recording peer-teaching evaluations. Like teaching, there is an art to peer evaluation and it can only be refined through repetition.