

The Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness

Transforming Teaching • Fostering Learning

affiliated with the University Learning Centre

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Bridges

*Reflecting the Scholarship of
Teaching and Learning at the
University of Saskatchewan*

Shhh...I'm Busy Being Quiet

Richard Schwier, Acting Director, University Learning Centre & the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness



I attended a panel session on “Mad Pride” a few weeks ago— one of a series of wonderful multidisciplinary events hosted by our Learning Communities program in the University Learning Centre. It was an

excellent, thought-provoking session that challenged how we look at mental illness in contemporary Canadian society, and it included commentary by professors from Sociology, Anthropology, English and History (Despina Ilipoulou, James Waldrom, Hillary Clark, and Erika Dyck).

These multidisciplinary panels are challenging for the panelists and the audience because they tap into a deeply academic reason for being on a university campus. I am persuaded that these kinds of events get to the very heart of what it means to be an academic, because they invite us to consider big, important questions from different perspectives and traditions.

I was struck by the occasional periods of silence during the question period following the presentations. There was nothing actually silent about these moments; you could almost hear the gears grinding and the chunks of rust popping off of areas of our brains we hadn't exercised in awhile. I was reminded of how important silence is to teaching and learning, a topic treated elegantly in the book *Silences* by STLHE and

the 3M Council. We so seldom give ourselves time, as teachers, or our students' time, as learners, to sit quietly and reflect on a difficult idea or problem.

This wasn't the first time I considered this issue. A very close friend and colleague at Indiana University, Elizabeth Boling, has a habit of just stopping, sometimes abruptly, to ponder something when she's in the middle of talking to a large group. The first few times I saw her do this, I was surprised, and even a little concerned for her. “C'mon Elizabeth. Pick it up!”

But then I figured out what she was doing. She was collecting herself, gathering her thoughts, pulling herself together. Wasn't she? After all, when she emerges from these little lapses, she uses language like some of us use a flashlight to illuminate exactly what we want others to see, and only what we want them to see.

My concern for her turned to envy. This was obviously someone who had figured out how to carve out moments of silence for herself on command. She could retreat to her serene garden of language before returning to the audience. I knew I had to learn how to do this.

I started trying it myself—stopping in the middle of talking about something, that is— and the strangest thing happened. I learned that it wasn't quiet at all inside my head, and there was no little garden

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of language. There was noise: hectoring, LOUD noise and no small measure of chaos. Let me illustrate with a little drama, which is a version of internal conversations I remember from a time I tried to use silence in the classroom. Everything in quotations is my recollection of what I said out loud during the class. Everything in blocked italics is what I remember rattling around in my head in a room that was externally silent—maddeningly, mockingly silent.

“When instructional designers work on projects, they are inevitably looking for moral coherence.”

Eww. That sounded pretentious. Why did I bring that up? I don't have an example. They're staring at me like I'm a two-day-old pimple. Quickly, quickly, think of something—anything. Look at your papers, Rick; don't look up for a second. Pretend it is for effect.

“What do you think I mean by moral coherence, Fred?”

Oh, great, he's shrugging. Good old sub-vocal Fred—he hasn't said anything all term. Why did I think today would be any different?

Moral coherence...dumb term anyway. What does it mean? Fred is right; it deserves a dismissive shrug. But I'm too far-gone to back out now. Come up with something. Hurry!

“All right, then. Here's what I'd like you to do. Take a couple of minutes to think about an instructional design project you've recently completed. Try to think of a decision you made that felt good intuitively. Then think of one that made you feel uncomfortable. What was it that made you feel cozy or dissatisfied with your decisions? Jot down your thoughts so we can discuss them.”

Okay, that bought a little time. Now what? Should I do the old “think-pair-share” approach? That may work. But it will take quite a bit of time. Is this little idea worth that much time? Probably not, but how do I get out of this now? I guess I could just go around the room and pick up on what each person wrote. No, that would take even longer. Okay, maybe they can get into groups of

three—no, four—and they can pick the best example out of their group for the class to hear. Yeh...that might work.

I can't feel my legs.

“Got it? Anyone need more time? Here's what I'd like you to do next. Gather into groups of four—just pick the people seated nearest to you. Now, quickly compare what you came up with and pick the best example from your group. Then we will go around the room and a representative from each group will tell us...”

What? Tell us what? Oh, jeez, ummmm, well, okay, just tell us your story? Maybe emphasize how you felt? Oh, why did I have that third glass of wine last night? I'm as dull as an old pair of hedge clippers. Get a grip, Rick. Say something.

“...about the conflict or the connection you felt. How did it make you feel? Did it change how you saw yourself as an instructional designer?”

Oh, no, they're staring. They can smell the fear; I know they can. Maybe I should back out of this and just tell them it was a dumb idea in the first place. At least that would be honest. No, wait a minute, they're moving, shuffling. Whew! Thank goodness for Andrea—the first to give me the benefit of the doubt and move. She's been saving me all semester.

The class went on from there, but this is enough to make the point of what I learned that day: silence and quiet are two different things. There is nothing quiet about periods of silence in my classroom—at least not for me—and I suspect that the internal chatter is just as deafening for my students as it is for me. Sometimes I wish I could hear what is going on in their heads, but maybe it is a good thing that we can't hear what our students are thinking. If we could, we wouldn't have room for the sometimes frantic and always engaging internal conversations with ourselves as we teach. They may be a little frightening, but those conversations seem to create spaces in my own garden for insecurities, feelings and creativity to blossom. Silence may not be peaceful for me, but it is almost always entertaining.

Teaching and Technology: Mind the Gap

Sandra Bassendowski



Sandra Bassendowski is an associate professor at the College of Nursing, University of Saskatchewan. Her research focuses on integration of technology in teaching and learning spaces, international education, and the history of nursing education.

When I was in London, England this summer, a phrase I heard repeated over and over from an automated voice when exiting the Tube was “Mind the Gap.” In some ways, I find this phrase applicable when thinking about the integration of technology in teaching and learning spaces. Educators frequently find themselves positioned between what has traditionally been done in teaching and learning environments and what is now needed to take advantage of the available technological tools and virtual environments. As Herz (2005) states, educators live and work in the space between.

The EDUCAUSE Teaching and Learning 2009 Project listed “creating learning environments that promote active learning, critical thinking, collaborative exchange, and knowledge creation” as the number one challenge (2009, ¶12) for educational organizations. What complicates this

challenge to an even greater extent is finding ways to use technology to support and facilitate student learning. What is the pedagogical significance of Web 2.0 tools? How can educators blend and mix ideas to develop and deliver creative strategies for teaching? How can educators keep the best about tradition and yet engage students in innovative and creative environments?

When I think about tradition, I think about my collection of photos that portrays the history of nursing education in Saskatchewan and the educational practices from the past. For example, I have a photo of a nursing science class held in the theatre of the Medical Building, University of Saskatchewan in 1954. What stands out for me about this photo is that there are no technological devices: no laptops, no personal digital assistants (PDAs), and no electrical cords running every which way for a connection in the room. The teacher is very evident at the front of the room, and the only tools that are visible are pens and pencils.

In 2009, we have many tools available for our use in teaching and learning spaces, and although emergent digital technologies tend to catch our attention, “educators and researchers must balance the inclination to jump on board with cutting-edge technologies with the discipline of sound pedagogical theory...” (Brill & Park, 2008, p. 74). Brown (2009) conducted a focus group with students from a variety of institutions and asked them to assist with planning learning environments for the next two to four years. The students articulated two main points about teaching and the use of technology: too much or unfocused technology hinders learning, and the use of use of technology should not occur at the expense of personal interaction. A succinct statement from one of the students was as follows: “I believe the most important thing to

keep in mind about learning and technology is that they should be considered in that order” (Brown, ¶13). Technology can provide multiple pathways through course content but the new tools must be carefully and thoughtfully integrated with the overall vision of education (Alexander, 2009; Brill & Park, 2008; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2006). Mind the gap!

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Launching the Newest Centre at the U of S: The Centre for Discovery in Learning (CDL)

The Director of this new Centre is Marcel D'Eon, currently working at the College of Medicine as the Director of Educational Support and Development. Marcel has been involved specifically in medical education for over 12 years and holds a PhD in Educational Administration from the U of S.

The Centre for Discovery in Learning is a research centre created to build capacity and generate outcomes in the scholarship of university teaching and learning. Like the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness (GMCTE), the CDL is affiliated with the University Learning Centre, an academic service and support unit focusing on partnerships to support student learning.

While the GMCTE is a teaching support unit focused on helping faculty members, instructors, sessional lecturers, and graduate students to develop and hone their teaching skills, the CDL is a research support unit concerned with scholarship and research into higher education at the University of Saskatchewan.

Specifically, the mandate of the CDL is to

- enhance the scholarship of research in higher education at the U of S
- promote, support, and acknowledge research and scholarship in university-level education at the U of S
- help develop researcher skills in this area among interested scholars (for instance, through seminars and

workshops, mentoring, and peer support), and

- increase productivity in research and related scholarly work (such as conference publications, published articles, invited presentations, and reports).

Marcel has assembled an impressive Steering Committee to help set the direction for the CDL: Lesley Biggs (Women's and Gender Studies), Linda Ferguson (Nursing), Laurie Hellsten (Educational Psychology), Charles Maule (Engineering), Dan Pennock (College of Agriculture and Bioresources), Rob Pywell (Physics and Engineering Physics), Andrew Robinson (Physics and Engineering Physics), Baljit Singh (Veterinary Medicine), Angela Ward (Curriculum Studies), Kim West and Brad Wuetherick (Gwenna Moss Centre).

Having met a few times already this term, the CDL has decided to begin with a winter series of workshop for entry-level researchers in this higher education and a mini-conference in the spring of 2010. More details will be circulated as they become available.

Anyone interested in becoming more involved and participating in the activities of the CDL could contact Marcel at marcel.deon@usask.ca or 966-2756.

Keep an eye on our website (http://www.usask.ca/gmcte/drupal/?q=discussion_canada) for upcoming sessions of our Teaching in Canada series, hosted by 3M National Teaching Fellow, Mel Hosain. The next session on January 20 at 3:30 pm will feature a discussion with Anarug Saxena, the newest Master Teacher at the University of Saskatchewan. Join us in Murray, Room 50.

The staff of the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness welcomes everyone at the University of Saskatchewan to visit the Centre and take advantage of our large selection of professional development events, courses, resources, and services.

Please visit our website to find out more about our services and resources for new faculty, experienced faculty, sessional lecturers, those new to teaching in Canada, and graduate students who teach. We offer various workshops throughout the year, host a book club, coordinate faculty peer consultations, maintain a small library of teaching resources, and always have a pot of tea within arm's reach.

Our website is www.usask.ca/gmcte



New and Old Teaching Awards and Grants at the GMCTE

by Corinne Fastuber, Administrative Assistant, Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness

Old Man Winter is upon us, and as we brace ourselves against the cold weather, it may be a good time to reflect on the many outstanding teachers here on campus.

And there will be a number of new ways to express your appreciation to them. Through a three-year grant from PCIP, the Centre will be offering 20 new teaching awards on campus. These will include a Provost's Award for Outstanding Teaching in each College on campus (one for each division of Arts and Science) and five awards that target specific areas of interest, including

- Provost's Award for Excellence in Aboriginal Education
- Provost's Award for Excellence in International Teaching
- Provost's Award for Innovation in Learning
- Outstanding New Teacher Award
- Outstanding Graduate Student Teacher Award

Details on the new awards are available on the GMCTE website at http://www.usask.ca/gmcte/drupal/?q=teaching_awards. These new awards are added to the group of awards and grants already offered on campus. For several years, the Centre has offered the following awards and grants for excellent teaching practices:

- Provost's Prize for Innovation in Teaching and Learning. Deadline June 30th.
- Provost's Project Grant for Innovations in Teaching and Learning. Deadline June 30th.
- Sylvia Wallace Sessional Lecturer Award. Deadline mid-November.

- U of S Master Teacher Award, for on-campus faculty only. Deadline mid-February.
- Call for Proposals 2009: Teaching and Learning Scholars. Deadline June 15th.

Information about these awards can be found on our website: http://www.usask.ca/gmcte/drupal/?q=teaching_awards

Part of the University of Saskatchewan's mission statement reads, "As an academic community, our mission is to achieve excellence in the scholarly activities of teaching, discovering, preserving and applying knowledge."

We encourage you to read this information carefully, and if you know of someone who you feel deserves recognition for their excellent teaching, please take the time to nominate them for one of these awards.

The Gwenna Moss Centre also promotes other teaching awards, both at this university and nationally. They include

- U of S Student's Union Award. Check the USSU website for their deadline: (<http://www.ussu.ca/>)
- The 3M National Teaching Fellowship Award. Information available at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/3Mteachingfellowships/index2.html>. Deadline August 31, 2010
- Alan Blizzard Collaborative Projects Award. Deadline mid-January. Information can be found at <http://www.stlhc.ca/en/stlhc/>

The Centre would like to welcome Alexandra Foster, who was appointed external awards facilitator with Research Administration this past April. She is available to assist you with compiling external nomination packages for

awards such as the 3M and the Fulbright Program.

We would also like to highlight a new award that is being offered through the University Learning Centre: the **First-Year Learning Communities Teaching Award**. Instructors assigned to teach a class involved in First-Year Learning Communities are eligible to be nominated by LC students. The deadline for nominations is yet to be determined. The recipient of the First-Year Learning Communities Teaching Excellence Award will be announced in March, and recognized at the annual Celebration of Teaching and Learning, hosted by the University Learning Centre and the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness.

Criteria for choosing the recipient of this award are

- The LC instructor made a concerted effort to identify and integrate broad concepts that span the LC courses involved in the Learning Community or Learning Communities associated with his or her class.
- The LC instructor participated in, and contributed to, the LC initiative in a significant way, as determined by students.
- The LC instructor encouraged students to actively engage in learning opportunities outside of the lecture hall, classroom, and tutorial or lab session.

For more information on this particular award, go to <http://www.usask.ca/ulc/lcaward>



Making the Connections that Engage Us in Teaching and Learning

Denise Larsen, Ph.D., R. Psych

Denise Larsen, Ph.D., R. Psych., is an Associate Professor of Counselling Psychology at the University of Alberta and Director of Research at the Hope Foundation of Alberta. On February 11, 2010, she will be at the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness. Dr. Larsen will be presenting more about her teaching and research work on hope.

The future never becomes completely present without first rehearsing, and this rehearsal is HOPE.

- Jorge Luis Borges (Argentine Poet)

In some large measure, education is about contributing to the creation of good futures, good futures for students, and, most expansively, better futures for the world. We might consider education as part rehearsal for better futures, a process during which new possibilities for good futures are creatively imagined, vigorously explored, and bravely enacted. With education, a student's mind and heart can open to possibilities previously unimagined. In the process of learning, both students and teachers can make space to envision new futures with which to engage.

Hope, and questions about its role in human experience, once attracted only the attention of theologians and philosophers. However, the last thirty years have seen an explosion of research interest in hope within the social and health sciences. Thousands of studies on hope now populate the research literature. I believe that an early review of

the construct bears relevance to teaching and learning today.

Hope is "a process of anticipation that involves the interaction of thinking, acting, feeling, and relating, and is directed toward a future fulfillment that is personally meaningful" (Stephenson, 1991, p.1459). It is this movement toward a personally meaningful future that seems crucial when reflecting on the role of hope in education. As Parker Palmer asserts (1988), our chosen disciplines and our career aspirations are often born of a deeply and personally meaningful connection: "[w]e were drawn to a body of knowledge because it shed light on our identity as well on the world. We did not merely find a subject to teach – the subject also found us" (p. 25). From this perspective, hope provides both inspiration and drive. It is about the meaningful personal and professional connections that engage one in learning and teaching, providing the purpose and energy needed during times when the work of learning and teaching becomes difficult.

Today, the virtual avalanche of research on hope spans both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. In a recent review of much of the quantitative research on hope, Cheavens, Michael, and Snyder (2005) conclude that "hope is beneficial in virtually every circumstance which has been measured" (p. 127). Indeed, with respect to student outcomes, research consistently reveals hope playing a potent role including higher grade point averages. Further, in educational work at the Hope Foundation of Alberta, our ongoing conversations with teachers and students demonstrate that although hope does not eliminate

struggles, it motivates teachers and students to persevere, to imagine new possibilities, and to take necessary small steps (LeMay, Edey, & Larsen, 2008).

Regrettably, an awareness of the importance of hope does not necessarily equate to an ease in holding and sustaining it. Many scholars and educators believe that the hope of the teacher or helping professional is essential (Koenig & Spano, 2007) to supporting student hope. Li and Larsen (under review) remind us that teachers, seen in a position of authority and apparent objectivity, are often perceived by students as offering both direct and tacit messages about what may be educationally and occupationally possible in students' lives.

Yet, however important teachers' roles are in supporting students' engagement through hope, the challenges to teacher hope are significant (Snyder, Shorey, & Rand, 2006). Large institutional contexts are often difficult settings within which to live out meaningful career hopes. In the case of university teaching, concern for a vital and effective university professoriate has been an ongoing focus of study for decades. Research on university worklife consistently identifies the challenges academics face in highly demanding and competitive environments (Larsen, 2009). Rarely are the deeply personal connections held by faculty members spoken aloud – those hopes that draw the university teacher to an academic career, the hopes of who one might *become* as an academic, and the hopes of what one's life contribution might be.

Yet leading researchers suggest that it is just these hope-filled connections that

are necessary to sustaining a teacher's hope with her or his students. For Snyder et al., "teachers must stay connected to their hope-filled roots in order to remain models of hope for their students" (p. 172). Teachers require a connection with the joy and inspiration of hope-filled activities both at work and in their lives beyond work.

Interested in the role of hope in teaching and overall academic worklife, I turned to university professors for stories of work (Larsen, 2009). I wondered about stories of work, stories of teaching, and whether requesting stories about hope would be a meaningful focus of conversation. Employing narrative inquiry, I began research conversations with two faculty members in my own discipline of counselling psychology, both of whom I had not known prior to this study.

Working at different universities, one participant (Meagan) was an untenured faculty member, while the other (James) was a faculty member five years from retirement. In creating the research texts, I sought to lay their stories of worklife along side each other, while specifically attending to themes related to hope. During our research conversations, Meagan and James reflected on the stories that drew them to academic work, stories about what offered hope at work, and experiences that drained hope.

I need not have wondered whether conversations about hope would be meaningful. Though both participants first thought that they might have little to say, our initial conversations lasted 2-3 hours. What each hoped for in becoming an academic had taken shape over many years. Stories of hope at work were intimately linked to what each participant had come to love or believe was important in life. Deeply held hope provided important motivation and conviction for dedicating one's working life to teaching and the academy.

James described the importance of hope and meaningful life purpose this way: "People are asking ... Where is the hope? ... If we don't go there then people do say, 'What's the point?' People

give up ... so hope may appear ... a bit abstract or elusive, yet it's so central and integral." Indeed, both James and Meagan identified the desire to meaningfully contribute to the lives of others as central to their own sense of hope at work. As Meagan put it,

[At the end of my career, I would like to be able to say] I opened the door of possibilities for others, for students, and for colleagues too ... And that I was able to set the stage for people, to provide that platform ... or the props that they needed to go on their journey. You know ... a sense that they can be all that they can be" (p. 154-155).

However, the work of sustaining hope as academics was no easy task for either Meagan or James. Both struggled with institutional values and criteria for success, often seeing these as misguided requirements for ensuring job security and advancement. Competition and the lack of meaningful community drained energy and hope. Over many years, James had witnessed significant changes in university culture:

It's a challenging time for a lot of people because it can be very lonely and isolating ... And when you are in situations of loneliness and isolation you don't sense much hope, you don't feel much hopefulness about the future ... (p. 158).

Clearly aware of threats to hope, Meagan and James also believed that it was important to identify personally meaningful ways to sustain hope at work. While they identified several important sources of hope, I will confine this discussion to three sources that the participants identified.

First, collegial mentorship was one crucial source of hope for both participants. Meagan found hope in a close mentorship with a senior faculty member. In this relationship, Meagan found support for her convictions, her actions, and her struggles in her early work as an academic. James also found hope as he mentored new faculty members.

A second vital source of hope for both James and Meagan was found in their relationships with students. James experienced hope in witnessing the development of his students, "when I see a graduate student come to terms with something or I see a student develop a newfound skill that gives me hope" (p. 160).

Finally, Meagan discussed the importance of remaining connected to deeply held hopes at work, suggesting that these provide grounding when faced with dominating institutional expectations:

Be clear as to your purpose, what brings you there ... and use it as a guide ... as a model or a mission statement or something that you can hold onto because in all the demands and the business and the expectations ... I found it easy to lose track of that ... It is almost like a guiding light that you need when the way gets dark ... (p. 162).

My conversations with Meagan and James revealed one other interesting effect. It seems that turning our attention toward a thing can make its presence more apparent. Hope is a folk-term, meaning that it is a word and multidimensional construct that we often use in everyday life. During follow-up interviews, James commented on his heightened awareness of hope. It seems that by reflecting on hope during our first interview, his had become more explicitly attuned to it. As he said, "It's like owning a red car. Once you have one, you notice them everywhere!" (p. 163). I believe that James' reflection highlights one more possibility for supporting hope: the possibility that by intentionally attending to the threads of hope in our stories, we become more aware of its presence.

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GMCTE Winter Workshops for 2010

Here is the tentative roster for single sessions offered next term as we went to press with *Bridges*. The schedule will grow, and there is always a possibility that some dates and times will change as we confirm sessions with presenters. Refer regularly to the GMCTE website (<http://www.usask.ca/gmcte>) for the most current information, or contact Jaymie

Koroluk, Program Coordinator (jaymie.koroluk@usask.ca), if you have any questions.

January 11, 2010, 2:30 pm
Presentation: Title: The (Digital) Writing on the Walls (and why the walls don't matter anymore)
Presenter: Mike Wesch, Cultural Anthropology and Media Ecology, Kansas State University.
Location: Neatby-Timlin Theatre
Description: This presentation, sponsored by the Vice President, Information Technology, examines the impact and possibilities of digital media for learning and living.

January 21, 2010, 2:30-3:30 pm
Workshop: Writing Objectives
Instructor: Dierdre Bonnycastle
Description: At this workshop you will learn the importance of instructional objectives and at the end be able to write clear, effective objectives with limited referral to reference materials. Bring examples of objectives from your courses and/or be prepared to write example objectives.

February 3, 2010
Workshop: Evaluation Strategies
Instructor: Pat Wall
Description and time TBA

February 11, 2010, 1:30-2:30 pm
Workshop: Listening for Hope: Reflecting on Teacher and Learner Engagement
Instructor: Denise Larsen - University of Alberta; Hope Foundation of Alberta
Description: As universities face organizational change and restructuring, faculty may experience uncertainty and fatigue. In this presentation, Larsen shares her research exploring the narratives of two counselor educators (one early- and one late-career) in Canada as she asked them, "What drew you to becoming a professor? What challenges your career hopes and what helps to keep them alive?" In parallel with her research exploring hope in professorial worklife, Larsen has also been exploring the role of hope in student life narratives. During this presentation, Larsen will also lay students' stories alongside those of her professor-participants, examining potential intersections between

teacher and learner hope and considering the impact on educational engagement.

March 3, 2010
Workshop: Creating Meaningful Multiple Choice Questions
Instructor: Greg Malin
Description: MCQ tests are the most commonly used method of assessment in the College of Medicine and in most health sciences colleges. As easy as these are to mark, writing a high quality and reliable MCQ is not as easy as you might think. If you use MCQs for your assessments and want to learn some simple strategies for writing high quality MCQs, plan to attend this workshop.

March 24, 2010
Workshop: Using a Habermasian perspective to optimize the classroom learning environment
Instructor: Phillip Lee
Description: One of the most pressing challenges for the university as a teaching/learning institution, and for us as teachers and co-learners, is to create an optimal learning environment within our respective classrooms. Pragmatically, responding to this challenge requires the identification, assessment and integration of our pedagogical beliefs and practice(s). This session explores the relevance of a Habermasian perspective for bridging the ideal (our beliefs) and the real (our practices), for enhancing learning potentials in the university classroom. Participants in this session will: identify the central features of an ideal learning environment; locate the ideal within the real, within their classroom experience; and collaboratively consider possible limitations and opportunities.

April 7, 2010
Workshop: Assessment for Learning
Instructor: Laurie Hellsten
Description and time TBA

Date, time, and details TBA
Workshop: Rubrics for TAs (This session will be offered online via Elluminate)
Instructor: Jon Mueller, North Central College, Illinois

*Tears and fears and feeling proud
To say "I love you" right out loud
Dreams and schemes and circus crowds
I've looked at life that way*

*But now old friends are acting strange
They shake their heads, they say I've
changed
Well something's lost, but something's
gained
In living ev'ry day*

*I've looked at life from both sides now
From win and lose and still somehow
It's life's illusions I recall
I really don't know life at all*

*I've looked at life from both sides now
From up and down, and still somehow
It's life's illusions I recall
I really don't know life at all*

- Joni Mitchell's *Both Sides, Now*

Joni Mitchell's lyrics speak to the dissolution of a sense of simplicity that occurs after one has glimpsed something from another perspective. In this article, I use Mitchell's lyrics as a means to explore the culture of trust within the university. Like 'life' in Mitchell's lyrics, once you look at the university from both sides, you find an illusion and realize you really don't know the university at all.

All university teachers, in one way or another, look at the university from both sides; that is, they look at it from the perspective of a university student and as a university teacher.

From the student perspective, the university is where students learn to perform for their teachers and to secure their teachers' approval. University students learn to create a static self-image so that others, such as their teachers and potential employers, know what to expect from them. Students sit in one classroom after another, attend to a set number of educational units, and ensure they achieve the standards set forth by the university.

The university checks to ensure students have the right number of credit units and that they have complied with the required contractual obligations before



Exploring the Culture of Trust within University

by Candace D. Bloomquist, Graduate Student Assistant, GMCTE

awarding degrees. From the student perspective, the university looks like a business, complete with academic products, standards for success, external quality control, and performance-based approval. And students are the consumers of what the university is selling.

From the university teacher's perspective, discourse between teacher and student is often limited which results in students doubting their ability to understand, to think, and to act on their own. Teachers see students seeking to achieve a certain standard rather than to learn, potentially limiting themselves as life-long learners. Joni Mitchell's lyrics might address this as the 'university's illusion.' Standards are static; learning and teaching are dynamic. Standards seek homogeneity; learning needs individual experience. Standards are grounded in the past, whereas university education ideally would be grounded in the future.

Under a business-like model, the university feels pressure to compete for students. For example, witness the front-page prominence of an October 30, 2009 On Campus News article on university enrolment. See also the 2009 Enrolment Action Plan in which the assumption was made that "the competitiveness of the post-secondary education landscape is widely understood." This competition for students shifts the focus of the university from ensuring the well-being of its students is central to its mission to measuring the financial aspects of successfully enrolling large numbers of students. It is then not surprising when students end

up merely purchasing their degrees and consequently disengage from the learning process.

But where does this leave us as members of the university community? It is my hope that awareness of the university illusion will change the game a little bit. But why does it change the game, and, more importantly, why does this matter so deeply? Is it necessary to explore the illusion that is created when the university is structured on a business-like model?

Why the university illusion might matter deeply

The assertion at the core of the latter question is if the university adopts a business-like model, the culture of trust within the university may be compromised. Part of understanding this matter is clarifying the function of an ideal university. Gibbs' (2004) book on trust in the university suggests that an ideal university functions to engage and collaborate with others rather than for others. Gibbs (2004) states, "[t]his is manifested in education not through structured instruction controlled by the academic but in a joint exploration of truth through engaging in the search for knowledge and understanding" (p. 154).

The university is the place to explore knowledge that is 'standing-reserve.' This means that as we push the boundaries of what is knowable through learning exploration, we evaluate the potentiality of an entity. The students' potentiality, for example, is realized when her/his

knowledge is applied to discover her/his authenticity. There are no assumptions made about the essential purpose of the student ahead of time, just the trust in her/his potentiality.

This ideal vision of the university is critical. How the university could be and how it will be if we continue on the current path are two very different things. One is a process of creative exploration trusting in the standing-reserve of student's potentiality, while the other is a competitive process perpetuating distrust. So how does the university currently assist, or fail to assist, the student's exploration of his or her potentiality?

The challenge to trust

The university fails to assist students by failing to facilitate a culture of trust. In a culture of trust, members of a community creatively engage with each other within a sustainable environment in which the freedom to explore and flourish is promoted. The university currently relies on social conventions that increase predictability, effectiveness and efficiency, but do not promote a culture of trust. For example, inflexible standards, student handbooks, faculty policy guides, and university statements regarding academic honesty replace a genuine culture of trust. However, these standards support the university strategies for recruiting and retaining large numbers of students that want to purchase a degree.

Without a genuine culture of trust within the university, imagination is hindered, the potential of people to enrich each other's lives is stifled, and the creative contribution of authentic individuals to the solution of collective problems is inhibited. A culture of trust, on the other hand, facilitates authenticity, is grounded in respect, and provides a safe place for exploration and unlimited possibilities. The university could assist students' and teachers' exploration of their potentiality by promoting a culture of trust.

The challenge then is to explore the culture of trust within the university by offering an opportunity to illustrate that a culture of trust, rather than a business-

like model, can be successful at shaping the university. To meet this challenge, the university, rather than passively accepting a purchased or standardized education, could actively engage the student in the learning and teaching processes.

Evolving the culture of trust

One possibility the university could take in the preparation of university teachers is to reconsider reliance on techniques to maximize efficiency and manage students or classrooms, with one focused on the inspiration to 'let learn.' Another possibility is to create a place where students and faculty together engage in learning, rather than simply prepare for the job market. If, as it is sometimes said, "teaching is even more difficult than learning," this is only because the teacher needs to be an exemplary learner and a role model for his/her students. In an environment where the teacher is also a learner, the teacher has a degree of vulnerability, remaining able to learn-in-public and to be seen actively responding to emerging challenges in each educational situation. If we, as university teachers, are to 'let learn' with our students, we have to understand the 'university illusion' and unlearn the potential culture of distrust that exists in the university-as-business model.

Conclusion

The university is responsible for creating a culture of trust and not perpetuating the university illusion that rests on the mechanics of teaching and learning. Two final questions which members of the university community might ask themselves as they consider the future of the university: first, what could a university be? Second, how can we—the students, faculty, staff and administrators—use this idea of a university to encourage engagement within our own university?

Candace D. Bloomquist is a PhD candidate at the University of Saskatchewan. She currently holds a Graduate Service Fellowship at the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness. Please email candace.bloomquist@usask.ca with your comments.

Recommended Reading

Brookfield, S.D. (1995). Building trust with students. In *Becoming a critically reflective teacher* (pp. 163-176). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Curzon-Hobson, A. (2002). A pedagogy of trust in higher learning. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 7(3): 265-276.

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Trow, M. (1996). Trust, markets and accountability in higher education: A comparative perspective. *Higher Education Policy*, 9(4): 309-324

Teaching Effectiveness Afternoons (TEA) Sessions

Throughout the year, we host informal, open, drop-in afternoon discussions on teaching effectiveness. These sessions take the form of an open meeting hosted by the ULC Director, along with a special guest every week or two. These sessions are casual, round-table open discussions on topics of interest to our special guest and to campus instructors.

We encourage you to drop in for a cup of tea and a cookie and take part in an engaging conversation in an intimate setting. If you have an idea for a TEA-time topic or guest, please email or drop by The GMCTE. Our philosophy is that we can always use one more cup of tea with our friends of the Centre. For more information, contact Richard Schwier (richard.schwier@usask.ca, 966-5867) or Corinne Fastuber (corinne.fastuber@usask.ca, 966-2231).

All TEA sessions are held in Murray Building 50. In term two, our guest list so far includes:

Monday, January 11, 2010 - 10:30 am
With Mike Wesch, cultural anthropologist and media ecologist, visiting campus from Kansas State University (this TEA will be held in the Learning Commons, main floor, Murray Bldg.)

Tuesday, January 26, 2010 - 3:30 pm
With Patti McDougall & associates from St. Thomas More

Tuesday, February 9, 2010- 3:30 pm
With Lyn Currie & associates, Education & Music Branch Libraries

Tuesday, February 23, 2010 - 3:30 pm
With USSU President Warren Kirkland & Executive Members Ben Fawcett, Daniel McCullough, Chris Stoicheff

Tuesday, March 9, 2010- 3:30 pm
With GSA President, Nicholas Fraser & members of the GSA Executive

Tuesday, March 23, 2010- 3:30 pm
With Anurag Saxena, 2009 fall Master Teacher recipient

Tuesday, April 6, 2010 - 3:30 pm
With Robert Buckingham, School of Public Health

Tuesday, April 20, 2010- 3:30 pm
With Rick Long, Teaching and Learning Committee of Council

Tuesday, May 4, 2010- 3:30 pm
With Lea Pennock, University Secretary

Tuesday, May 18, 2010- 3:30 p m
With Karen Chad, Vice-President Research

Wednesday, May 26, 2010- 3:30 p With Mary Buhr, College of Agriculture and Biological Sciences

Book Club: Conversations on Teaching
Our book club schedules occasional conversations about teaching and learning books with friendly fellow faculty. Runs from October to April.

Book Club Continues in 2010

As faculty, a lot of our time and attention goes into teaching and meeting with students. With research, committee work, and other professional responsibilities, little time remains for talking with fellow faculty about teaching. Even less time is available for reading a book about teaching.

If a book club sounds like an opportunity and/or an excuse you are looking for—scheduled occasional conversa-

tions about teaching with friendly fellow faculty—you are invited to join us. The plan is pretty simple. We will meet every three weeks or so for an hour to talk our way through a good book about teaching and learning. To give some continuity to our conversations, we will have a regular meeting time and place, with e-mail reminders.

Thursday reading group 1: (The Courage to Teach, by Parker Palmer). This book is available for purchase from the GMCTE for \$25. Please bring cash or cheque only. The first Thursday of each month: Jan 7, Feb 4, Mar 4 and Apr 1.

Meeting Place: Murray Building, room 50
Time: 12:30-1:30

Facilitator: Trish Dowling

Friday reading group 2: (What The Best College Teachers Do, by Ken Bain). This book is available for purchase from the GMCTE for \$20. Please bring cash or cheque only. The first Friday of each month: Jan 8, Feb 5, Mar 5 and Apr 2.

Meeting Place: Murray Building, room 50
Time: 12:30-1:30

Facilitator: Gail Stevens

You can register for Book Club on the GMCTE Website or contact Corinne Fastuber for mor information (corinne.fastuber@usask.ca, 966-2231).

STLHE Volunteers?

The University Learning Centre is hosting the annual conference of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in June of 2011. Some of the preliminary planning and work is already underway, but we invite you to become a part of our dynamic conference planning team. Drop a line to the conference chair, Linda Ferguson (linda.ferguson@usask.ca) or Richard Schwier (richard.schwier@usask.ca) to volunteer.

Advanced Topics "Mini Courses"

In the second term of this academic year, the GMCTE is experimenting with more diverse formats of faculty development opportunities.

One new offering will be "mini-courses" or "advanced topics." The rationale is that

- learning can be deeper when working in a cohort
- topics can be studied in more depth than in a single workshop
- a sustained relationship with the instructor and with peers will allow for the practice and application of the skills and knowledge learned, as well as feedback from the instructor. These opportunities will facilitate the participants' practical application of what is learned in their respective teaching practices
- supportive inter-disciplinary communities of practice will naturally develop

Topics for the second term are

- Technology and Open Teaching
- Teaching as Performance
- Active Learning
- Teaching Portfolios

The first mini-course in the series, Technology and Open Teaching, will hold its overview session on January 13, 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm, with weekly sessions on the next three Wednesdays (January 20, 27, February 3). Dates, times and registration information for the other topics will be available on the GMCTE Website.

Each mini-course will start with a workshop open to all instructors on campus. Participants who are interested in studying the topic in more depth will then register for the mini-course, which will be from 2-5 sessions long.

Participants who are unable to attend the first session, unfortunately, will not be able to register in the mini-course.

Likewise, those who do register are asked to commit to attending every session of the mini-course. Successful completion of the course will result in a letter written for the participant that may be used as evidence of teaching development in a teaching portfolio or case file.

For more details, contact Tereigh Ewert-Bauer at 966.6321 or tereigh.ewert-bauer@usask.ca, or watch our website for more information at www.usask.ca/gmcte.

Faculty Peer Consultation

The Peer Consultation Program is a voluntary, collaborative approach to enhancing teaching and learning at the University of Saskatchewan. Peer Consultation is designed to support teaching and teachers. It is voluntarily initiated by a teacher who is committed to on-going improvement, and we keep it confidential.

Why do it?

Peer consultation is not a remedial process; it is a cooperative, collaborative approach to enhancing teaching and learning. Teachers may request a consultation for many reasons, including to

- obtain feedback on changes they have made in a course
- discover what's going well
- improve their overall teaching skills or address a particular concern
- discuss ideas and innovations with a peer.

Who are peer consultants?

Peer Consultants are not evaluators. They are teachers who have attended workshops to receive training and want to cooperate with their colleagues to enhance teaching and learning. They will give you feedback about your teaching, not the content.

Who chooses the consultant?

The GMCTE Faculty Peer Consultation Coordinator will match you with a peer consultant from those available. However, the teacher has control over all other aspects:

- Deciding on the timing of the observation
- Selecting the aspects of teaching to be observed
- Choosing the type of observer in terms of gender and discipline (the consultant will not be a department colleague, but it is sometimes helpful to choose a consultant from a cognate discipline).

What is involved?

After you have been matched, the consultant will:

- meet with you to discuss your needs
- attend one or more of your classes, and be introduced to the students with a short explanation
- observe your teaching and gather information
- give students a brief questionnaire at the end of class (other techniques, such as videotaping, may also be used at the teacher's request)
- possibly arrange to meet a group of students after class to obtain more detailed feedback on the course
- meet with you again to discuss the information that has been gathered
- send you a confidential report on the consultation (the consultant's report is your property, and it remains confidential unless you decide otherwise).

Finally, the Faculty Peer Consultation Coordinator from the GMCTE will ask you to comment on the consultation process to assess its usefulness to you.

How do I find out more? If you would like more information or want to request a consultation, please contact The GMCTE (corinne.fastuber@usask.ca, 966-2231)