

Journal for Academic Excellence

Dr. Susan Albertine to Speak to Faculty on High Impact Practices

Center for Academic Excellence Dalton State College

A Division of the Office of Academic Affairs

The mission of the CAE is to facilitate, support, and enhance the teaching and learning process at Dalton State College. The Center serves to ultimately improve student success and achievement of learning outcomes by promoting the creation of effective learning environments through the provision of resources and faculty development opportunities.

Dalton State College is honored to host Dr. Susan Albertine of the American Association of Colleges and Universities and a national leader in the subject of high impact practices for college learning. Dr. Albertine will speak to the faculty on Friday, October 24, from 9:00 a.m. to noon in Brown Center 105. The title of her presentation is “What Makes High Impact Practices High Impact?”

Dr. Albertine, who Vice President, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Student Success for AAC&U, leads the LEAP Project. LEAP stands for Liberal Education and America’s Promise. According to the AAC&U website,

Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) is a national advocacy, campus action, and research initiative that champions the importance of a twenty-first century liberal education—for individuals and for a nation dependent on economic creativity and democratic vitality.

More information about LEAP can be found [here](#).

Dr. Albertine’s workshop on October 24 will introduce high impact practices (HIPs) and engage participants in defining HIPs, discussing why these practices matter (the evidence of impact), and discerning the benefits in particular to multicultural, first-generation, and low-income students.



Dr. Susan Albertine

The workshop will invite participants to think critically and analytically about HIPs both as discrete programmatic practices and cumulatively as occasions for high-quality learning that students encounter over time in college. It will set the context for effective, intentional, and integrative use of HIPs within and throughout the student experience.

Dr. Marina Smitherman, Director of CAE, states, “This is a rare opportunity to meet with someone in charge of the High Impact Practice movement across the country and this promises to be a fantastic opportunity right here on our own campus.”

Those planning to attend are asked to register at [this link](#) by October 17.



A Word from the Director



Dr. Marina Smitherman

You may have heard that the current focus for the CAE is the development of High Impact Practices (HIPs) on campus but what are they and who do they best serve? High-Impact Practices are specifically designed teaching and learning activities which the evidence base has shown to increase student learning and engagement. In particular they benefit historically underserved student groups and those coming into college with lower standardized test scores.

Not only does that fit the description of much of our student body but with a common desire to leave our students with something valuable from their studies and CCG and funding based on retention and graduation rates heading our way, the development of these activities across campus is something we should all seriously consider. We have made a start but we can always improve.

High-impact learning happens when students are actively engaged and when learning goes beyond the classroom and can be applied directly to life. Students actively pose and solve problems, work collaboratively in a community of peers, experience real-world applications of knowledge, and reflect on the learning processes. Students engaged in high-impact learning often see improvement in grades and achieve their degree completion faster.

HIPs have some common features. They require considerable time and effort on behalf of the student, they encourage learning outside of the classroom, establish meaningful interactions

between faculty and students, encourage collaboration and provide frequent and substantive feedback. Participation in these practices can and should be life-changing (NSSE 2007). NSSE founding director George Kuh recommends that institutions should aspire for all students to participate in at least two HIPs over the course of their undergraduate experience—one during the first year and one at another time during the course of their studies (Kuh, 2008).

On October 24, 2014, Dalton State will host Dr. Susan Albertine, Director of the American Association of College's and Universities LEAP project leading a workshop on "What makes High Impact Practices High Impact." The goal of

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High Impact Practices

- First-year seminars and experiences
- Common intellectual experiences (such as the core curriculum)
- Learning communities
- Writing-intensive courses
- Collaborative assignments and projects
- Undergraduate research
- Diversity and global learning in courses or programs that examine "difficult differences"
- Service- or community-based learning
- Internships
- Capstone courses and projects

this workshop is not only to examine these practices in detail along with the evidence for their effectiveness but to enable us to analyze how we can develop our offerings across our campus. Because of the high profile nature of this speaker, this workshop will be open to other institutions in the local area so please take advantage of this opportunity and register early before October 20th via the CAE webpage. The workshop runs 9:00am-12noon in Brown 105. If you only plan to attend one CAE workshop this year, this one is a not-to-miss event.

References

- Kuh, G. D. (2008). *High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- National Survey of Student Engagement (2007). *Experiences that matter: Enhancing student learning and success—Annual Report 2007*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research.

From the Editor's Desk

The Center for Academic Excellence is moving forward with exciting programming, and the *Journal for Academic Excellence* is traveling with it.

In this issue you will find detailed information about upcoming workshops and speakers and news about faculty achievements in publication and presentation; be introduced to some of the faculty who are helping the CAE with its programming; and read two articles about college teaching.

We are happy say that our first article from outside the region appears in this issue, one written by faculty members from Bluffton University in Ohio. Bluffton University is affiliated with the Mennonite Church, so it is also the first article from a private institution as well. Welcome!

All articles go through a peer-review process, with three reviewers. Articles in the Proceedings Edition (published in June) are peer-reviewed for acceptance at the conference. Faculty from all colleges and universities are encouraged to submit scholarly articles on college teaching and learning, and the submission guidelines are on the last page.

Faculty at DSC may also want to submit a guest column about their area of expertise. We would also like to incorporate a "letters to the editor" feature in the near future.

There are some activities happening on campus that you may have noticed. The "Thank a Teacher" app is available at the [CAE website](#). So far, 142 messages from students have been submitted. Alumni and other faculty can use the app, too, to send a note of appreciation to an instructor here (adjunct faculty are included).

It goes without saying (but I'll say it anyway) that we have more than our share to keep us busy as faculty members at DSC. The CAE and this Journal exist to facilitate your work and welcome any and all feedback that can help us serve you better.



Remind your students to

"Thank a Teacher"

Coming Soon:

Thank a Staff Member



Upcoming Events for the Center for Academic Excellence

Time: Friday, November 14, 10:00-noon, Brown Center 105

Speaker: Kim McCroskey. Kim, our former instructional technologist, is no stranger to DSC. She is now the Technical Director, LMS, for Teaching and Learning at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Topic: Best Practices for Online, Blended, and Hybrid Classes

Time: Friday, January 23, 10:00-noon, Place TBA

Speaker: Barbara G. Tucker, Department of Communication

Topic: EPublishing

Time: Friday, March 20, 2015, all day, Brown Center

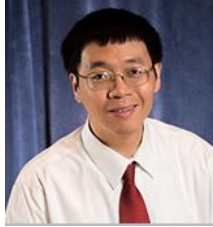
Dalton State College Sixth Conference on College Teaching and Learning

Watch for Call for Proposals

[Go here to get more information about](#)

- The two readings groups (*Courage to Teach* by Parker Palmer during “Coffee and Conversations” and *Learning at Its Best* by Linda Nilson can be found here.
- D2L and Library workshops
- RAP sessions on speakers
- SOTL writing group
- Deadlines for proposals the external conferences

Faculty and Staff Recognition



Dr. Thomas L. Ngo-Ye, Assistant Professor of MIS in the School of Business, recently presented two papers in his field at The 54th Annual IACIS International Conference (IACIS 2014), Las Vegas, Nevada. Both were also published in the peer-reviewed journal, *Issues in Information Systems*.

The citations are as follows:

Ngo-Ye, T. L. (2014). E-commerce Experiences and Impact on the Development of Professionalism. *Issues in Information Systems*, 15(1), 360-369. http://iacis.org/iis/2014/71_iis_2014_360-369.pdf

and

Ngo-Ye, T. L., Choi, J. (2014). Pre and Post Class Case Discussion: Engaging Business Students in Learning Management Information Systems. *Issues in Information Systems*, 15(2), 367-374. http://iacis.org/iis/2014/140_iis_2014_367-374.pdf



Dr. David Vasquez-Gonzalez, Assistant Professor in the School of Education and a new faculty member, presented on "Servant Leadership" at the Second Leadership Conference held at DSC on September 13. This conference is designed for student leaders and led by the Office of Student Life.



Dr. Nancy Mason, Associate Professor of Spanish, was honored with literary awards recently by the William Faulkner Literary Council. The Tallahatchie River Players produced her play, *Meeting at Midnight*, as a full production on September 27 in New Albany, Mississippi. This play is the prequel to *Muscadine Wine*, which was produced in 2012 at Dalton State. *Meeting at Midnight* that won the Faulkner award last year.

Dr. Mason also won second place for her story "Never Sit in Puddles" in the William Faulkner Literary Awards competition in New Albany, MS. The contest is sponsored by the Tallahatchie RiverFest Literary Association, and the prize includes a \$300.00 award.



Dr. Christy Price, Professor of Psychology, recently presented several faculty development workshops on "Engaging Modern Learners." She spoke at Albany State University, August 5; Southern Adventist University, August 13; Bay Path University (Long Meadow, MA), August 19; and the University of Kentucky, August 20. She also presented a workshop on "Encouraging Students to Take Responsibility for Their Own Learning" at the Upstate campus of the University of South Carolina on September 23.

Faculty and Staff Recognition



Dr. Molly Zunfang Zhou, Assistant Professor in the School of Education, has recently published three chapters in the *Encyclopedia of Information Science and Technology*, which is edited by Mehdi Khosrow-Pour and published by IGI Global. They are as follows:

- Zhou, M., Lawless, W. F. (2014). Technology Integration in a Southern Inner City School: A Case Study of In-service and Pre-service Teachers.
- Zhou, M., Lawless, W. F. (2014). Artificial intelligence in education.
- Zhou, M. (2014). Technology in education: Learning management technology and preservice teachers.

Dr. Zhou has also worked with Dr. Marilyn Helms on a study on *Principals' Perceptions of Using E-portfolio Information for Hiring Decisions*. The study was presented at International Annual Conference on Education and Social Sciences, Beijing, China, 2014.

In August, she completed an undergraduate research project supported by the Academic Enhancement grant from Academic Affairs office of Dalton State. The results of the project were co-presented with undergraduate student Clyfton Tom at the National Conference for Teacher Education ATE (Association of Teacher Education) 2014 Conference in Niagara Falls, New York.

Her article "Teachers' and parents' perceptions of parental involvement on inner city children's academic success" was published in *Georgia Educational Researcher*, 11(1), 71-85. She is also completing her third book *Supporting Multiculturalism and Diversity in University Settings*, which will be released in Spring 2015.



Dr. Robert Clay, Associate Professor of Mathematics, published a paper, "Derivative of Area Equals Perimeter Extended," in the November 2013, Volume 17 issue of *Mathematics Teacher*.



Four faculty members in the English and Communication Departments, accompanied by students, presented papers at the Popular Culture Association of the South's Annual Conference on October 1-4 in New Orleans. (Listed clockwise)

Dr. Kris Barton presented "The Heroic Divide: Nature Versus Nurture in the Marvel Cinematic Universe."

Mr. Nick Carty led attendees on a Creole Cuisine Walking Tour.

Dr. Jonathan Lampley presented "Batman at 75: Reflections on the Dark Knight's Diamond Anniversary."

Ms. Leslie Collins presented "From Monica to Paula: The Slut Shaming of Women Who Have Affairs with Politicians."

The faculty were joined by four student presenters: Greg Ellis, Tanner Blackton, Kayla Henderson, and Kellie McClure. From what we hear, a good time was had by all.

Meet the Center for Academic Excellence Leadership Team



John Asplund

Assistant Professor, Mathematics
Event Promotion and Tech Support



Karren Bennett

Assistant Professor, Nursing
Book Group Facilitator
Teaching at Its Best



Jenny Crisp

Assistant Professor, English
QEP Director /CAE Joint events/
initiatives



Jerry Drye

Associate Professor,
Communication

Spotlight on



John Asplund: “The knowledge that I have a responsibility to cultivate the growth of young minds lends passion to my practice, and I endeavor to share that passion with my students. Certain perspectives may view mathematics as a dry, rigorous subject that only avails itself to lecture style teaching. However, I believe that mathematics can be intriguing and that there are a variety of interesting ways to present it that engage students on a higher level, and allow a certain amount of creativity. That is why I strive to improve my teaching every day and reflect on the success of each lesson. In this way, teaching is a learning process which I intend to nurture. My role on the CAE is promotion and tech support.”

Roben Taylor: “I am serving on the CAE committee this year and am looking forward to leading a book talk "Teaching unprepared Students" this spring. My personal interest in teaching is ensuring that all students, regardless of differences, feel valued and challenged in today's diverse classrooms.”

Meet the Center for Academic Excellence Leadership Team



Orenda Gregory
Associate Professor, Education



Matthew Higgs
Assistant Professor, Political Science
FYES/CAE joint events/initiatives



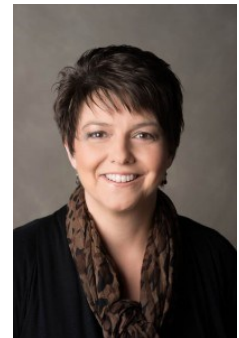
Elizabeth Lucht
Assistant Professor, Biology
Co-facilitator, Book Group
Teaching at Its Best



Jacquelyn Mesco
Assistant Professor, Education
Facilitator, Book Group
Teaching Unprepared Students



Sarah Min
Lecturer, Communication



Christy Price
Professor, Psychology
Co-facilitator, Book Group
Teaching at Its Best



Raina Rutti
Associate Professor, Management
Co-facilitator, Book Group
Teaching at Its Best
Conference Chair



Roben Taylor
Associate Professor, Education
Facilitator, Book Group
Teaching Unprepared Students



Barbara Tucker
Associate Professor, Communication
CAE Journal/Thank a Teacher/
Facilitator, Coffee and Conversations/
Journal Club

Motivating Students to Read: Innovations from a Retooling Year

Abstract: Drawing on a year-long institutional Retooling effort, we present four case studies of innovations to increase students' preparation for class by motivating them to complete course readings. First, students completed self-reflections on Moodle to address their preparation and learning for each class session. Second, students were grouped into teams and given oral quizzes, using mild competition to spur reading. Third, a communication professor used readers' notes, video responses, and student self-evaluation to promote thoughtful interactions with texts. Finally, in a nutrition class, students were inspired to delve deeply into their readings to plan and prepare a Thanksgiving meal for clients of a food pantry. These case studies reveal that students' engagement with texts can be increased through innovative course structures and professor interaction.

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 Dr. Jason Swartzlander, Associate Professor of Accounting, Bluffton University, Bluffton, OH
 Dr. Zachary Walton, Assistant Professor of Communication, Bluffton University, Bluffton, OH

During the 2013-14 academic year, Bluffton University faculty joined together in Retooling for Student Learning and Engagement. Inspired by national studies, such as *Academically Adrift* (Arum and Roksa 2011), as well as our own assessment data that show too few students are adequately engaging in coursework and their learning, we launched our Retooling year. The faculty voted to place on sabbatical most of the usual faculty governance work to open time and energy for the Retooling work. Though larger curricular and institutional level questions were considered, a major focus of Retooling was to encourage and provide resources for faculty members to try out new approaches in their classes.

In his role as director of the Teaching and Learning Center, the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs met individually with each faculty member in the fall and spring. These conversations focused on identifying the particular concerns that each faculty member was working to address throughout the year and to consider corresponding teaching innovations. During these conversations, a frequent topic was a desire to have students come to class better prepared, particularly through having thoughtfully completed the assigned

readings. Professors were motivated toward this goal because of their belief in the individual learning that would occur if students read before class, their desire for students to be informed participants in class discussions and collaborative learning, and their intention to implement innovative classroom activities that required the basic understanding of material provided by course readings.

This article presents four of these innovations. Though the professors take different approaches, in each case a central goal was to increase students' preparation for class by motivating them to complete course readings. The first innovation, implemented in several classes, involved students' self-reflection on Moodle (a course management system) to address their preparation and learning for each class session. Second, in an accounting class, students were grouped into teams and given oral quizzes, using mild competition to spur reading. Third, a communication professor used readers' notes, video responses, and student self-evaluation to promote thoughtful interactions with texts. Finally, in a nutrition class, students were inspired to delve deeply into their readings because they needed that knowledge to plan and

prepare a Thanksgiving meal for clients of a food pantry. Though further refinements may be needed, each approach provides a strategy for other teachers to use and adapt in the ongoing effort to have students read course assignments.

Background

A variety of studies have shown that student reading for class is helpful for learning and course success, yet many students continue to come to class without having completed readings. Burchfield and Sappington (2000) showed that only about one-third of students typically come to class having completed the reading assignment. Nevertheless, the learning possible through course readings is reflected in superior test results. Sappington, Kinsey, and Munsayac (2002) revealed that students who do course readings gain a significant advantage on course test results. On the other hand, “deficiency in reading compliance diminishes the potential for class discussion, appreciation of lectures, and mastery of the subject’s contents and concepts” (Sappington, Kinsey, Munsayac, 2000, p. 274). Ideally students should recognize that they are losing important learning opportunities if they do not complete course readings.

However, researchers have pointed out that professors are also responsible for creating structures so that students want and need to complete course reading. In their summary article, Czekan-ski and Wolf (2013) reviewed a variety of class participation strategies. They found that students too often found it possible to avoid entering into classroom discussions, thus allowing them to mask a lack of preparation for class, if discussion is the only direct marker for preparation. Yet this lack of reading has implications for what is possible within a classroom. As Burchfield and Sappington (2000) have pointed out:

Student compliance with reading assignments plays an important role in classroom social dynamics as well as individual achievement. Participation is enhanced when students prepare for classes and seek involvement in dialogue. Eventually, behaviors of the majority tend to become norms. Failure to monitor reading compliance sends a message to

students that this aspect of learning is optional and of little concern to the instructor. (p. 59)

In fact, writing about literature courses, Broz (2011) has argued that reading is *the* essential element for learning within a class and, therefore, courses should be structured so that students who do not read will fail the course. At a minimum, we can see that encouraging strong preparation for classes is a part of a professor’s responsibility in designing a course.

Knowing how best to encourage students to read requires an understanding of why students are not reading. Lei, Bartlett, Gorney, and Herschbach (2010) identified four primary motivations for students’ not reading: insufficient reading skills, inadequate self-confidence, lack of interest about course material, and devaluation of the reading’s importance. Similarly, Starcher and Proffitt (2011) have found that students do not read for a variety of reasons, though they have expanded their list to include the role of the professor: students may not be proficient readers; students may not be motivated to engage challenging texts; when students do read, they are inclined to read social media rather than textbooks; students’ lack of reading may be related to a lack of internal motivation; students find that professors fill in material during class lectures, so students feel they do not need to read; professors do not use readings during the class; and students have other demands competing for their time rather than completing their readings.

Various studies have attempted to evaluate the techniques that faculty members can use to motivate students to read. Starcher and Proffitt (2011) surveyed a variety of compliance measures, such as quizzes, student-generated reading questions, student responses to prompts, SQ3R, group-created summary of readings, substituting short readings for longer readings, and reading logs. Likewise, Hatteberg and Steffy (2013) evaluated a range of these approaches and found that students reported that “announced and mandatory methods are overall more effective than methods that are either unannounced or optional” (p. 349). While these methods can help attain the important goal of gaining reading

compliance, ultimately any of these extrinsic approaches is a stepping stone toward encouraging students to move toward intrinsic motivations to be a lifelong learner (Starcher and Proffitt, 2011).

As will be seen, the innovations to gain reading compliance presented here draw on elements of these studies. Recognizing the importance of reading prior to class, professors engaged in a range of activities and assignments to promote reading, refusing to accept low reading rates as an unchangeable reality. The activities incorporated both extrinsic and intrinsic student motivation. Increasing this motivation was a significant emphasis in the innovations, though addressing concerns about reading comprehension was also at work in several of these approaches. Finally, faculty members adapted compliance measures, such as quizzes, reading responses, and reading logs, in an effort to increase student reading for classes.

Self-evaluation of Reading, Participation, and Learning

As we have seen, students who are prepared for class, by completing the assigned course readings, show learning gains and can better contribute to class discussions. Yet many students continue to come to class without having read the assigned texts. For many professors, class participation makes up a portion of the course grade, but this segment of the grade may be assigned impressionistically by the professor (Czekanski and Wolf, 2013). Czekanski and Wolf (2013) have shown that providing students with clear rubrics about how participation will be evaluated is more effective.

Researchers have been examining the role of metacognition—reflecting on and monitoring one’s thought processes—in students’ learning. Various studies, such as Kruger and Dunning (1999), have shown that students tend to evaluate their work more highly than it merits, with less competent students in particular over-estimating the quality of their work. People who do not recognize that their work or preparation is inadequate will not be motivated to make changes or improvements.

Our first innovation addresses both

concerns about quantifying class participation and a desire to have students reflect on their preparation and learning. This approach is not without its shortcomings, as Ryan, Marshall, Parter, and Jia (2007) and Sappington, Kinsey, and Munsayac (2002) have shown that students tend to inflate their self-reporting. One way to help to correct such bias and improve metacognitive skills is through enhanced training of students at the beginning of the course, since such training has been shown to increase the accuracy of self-reflection (Kruger and Dunning, 1999).

Case Study #1: Student Self-evaluation of Participation

Dr. Ross Kauffman, Assistant Professor of Public Health

This experiment in participation logging grew out of a series of discussions among faculty members in the social sciences division. In the years prior to the current effort, social science faculty members had used various paper-based forms of self-reporting to increase student accountability. Statistical analyses revealed a strong correlation between self-reports of effort and academic performance both on exams and in the class over all, but collecting and recording such data proved time consuming, limiting their utility. As a result, three faculty members decided to conduct a trial of an online participation log.

We created the log using the online quiz module of Moodle. A separate quiz was created for each class session. Following the completion of each class session, students were asked to report: 1) time spent preparing out of class, 2) amount of reading completed and understood, 3) their contribution during the class session, 4) evidence to support their self-rated contribution, 5) a description of their learning during the period, 6) a checklist of colleagues in the class to identify who contributed to their learning, and 7) a description of how those colleagues contributed to their learning. (The whole instrument is available in Appendix A.)

I implemented the strategy in two small classes, a seven-member Epidemiology class and a six-member Social Sciences Capstone class. Special care was taken at the start of the semester

to introduce students to the idea of the participation logs, the reasons behind the practice, and their responsibilities. This introduction included a detailed discussion of how the points were assigned for each question. Several questions followed a traditional 0-100% scale (time spent preparing, amount of reading), while others had responses that could actually detract from one's grade (reporting a contribution in which "It was possible that someone was hurt by my presence in class today. I was distracting/texting/sleeping OR rude,") or did not influence the score (evidence, description of learning, and others' contributions). These responses were intended to underscore the fact that participation is about much more than attendance, and that there are ways of contributing negatively to the learning environment in the classroom. I also emphasized that this effort reporting was an assignment covered by the institution's honor code, and that misreporting data would be a case of academic dishonesty.

As mentioned above, students were expected to complete a log after each class. To do so, they would log into the course management system, click the link for the appropriate class log, then enter their responses to the seven questions. The graded portion of the log was instantly scored, providing students with immediate feedback. Students generally rated their preparation highly (mean = 83%, median = 87%, range: 53%-100%), though the ratings aligned well with in-class preparation and exam performance.

The implementation of an electronic system increased efficient use of time. Once acclimated to the system, students generally completed the logs in less than five minutes. Student grades were instantly accessible in the course gradebook. Unfortunately accessing the responses to the text of short-answer questions requires multiple clicks, and the course management software does not allow for comparisons between quizzes, leaving significant room for improvement.

Based on our experience with this pilot project, faculty in the social sciences plan to continue utilizing and refining this method. Several key lessons have emerged from this work. First, students are capable of accurate self-assessment

of their preparation, and requiring such assessment can improve the quantity and quality of preparation. Though this is the case, some students will tend to over-estimate their preparation, and feedback from the instructor is an important part of such a system. Second, identifying the correct frequency for logs may be critical to their successful implementation. For classes that met three times per week, some students found burdensome the number of logs to be completed. While daily logging has its advantages, it may be desirable to reduce the frequency of logging if this results in better compliance and more complete data. Finally, electronic systems can offer significant time advantages over paper forms, though the addition of tools that allowed for easy examination of trends over time would increase the utility of online participation logs. In summary, while refinements are required, online participation logging offers an effective way to communicate instructor expectations and maintain accountability in the classroom while minimizing the burden on students and instructors.

Oral quizzes and competition

While efforts to humiliate students or create intense competition are to be avoided in classrooms, creating an atmosphere in which students embrace the expectation that they come prepared for class is important. When one of the authors announced that reading journals were not going to be collected that class day, a student proclaimed, apparently in all seriousness, "I'm glad I didn't write mine last night." Such an attitude can have a deleterious effect on the learning atmosphere (Burchfield and Sappington, 2000). More broadly, in McCrudden's study (2011) of students' motivation for completing course readings, "there were no comments indicative of students trying to demonstrate their competence, or conversely, to avoid looking incompetent to their peers or the instructor" (p. 217). One approach to create a classroom environment in which students embrace their role in reading before class is to use games and competition. McKeachie (1999) argued that classroom games that make use of competition can be an effective motivational device, if the

atmosphere remains light rather than intensely competitive. More specifically, Fleck and Hussey (2009) analyzed a classroom activity based on a reality show format, with the student groups competing with and evaluating their classmates. Their study showed that this mild competition “was successful in meeting many of its goals, including increasing student participation, interest, comprehension, and motivation, as well as connecting to students’ culture” (pp. 66-67). Similarly, we believe that competition among groups, based on reading before class, can tap into the competition that many students experience as part of athletic teams and create a class atmosphere in which preparation for class becomes expected.

Case Study #2: Team Competition with Oral Quizzes

Dr. Jason Swartzlander, Associate Professor of Accounting

The approach I took to help improve student engagement and learning was to develop a team-style, competition-based quiz structure. I implemented this concept in my fall 2013 Intermediate Accounting I class. The students were divided into four teams of approximately four to five students. I placed the students into their teams, making a deliberate effort to create equally competitive teams. The first scheduled class session of each new chapter was dedicated to the quiz.

For each chapter I developed a catalog of questions, each having a unique point value. The structure of the quizzes evolved slightly over the course of the semester. Initially, I simply asked a question and the first student to “buzz in” would be given an opportunity to answer. The team was given a point(s) for a correct answer. For incorrect answers, the team that “buzzed in” second would be given an opportunity to answer, and so on. It was quickly evident that having no restrictions on answering questions undermined the stated goals of this concept. The strongest students on each team dominated, which eroded any incentive for the other students to invest the effort to prepare for the quiz.

To correct this problem, I kept the students on the same teams but assigned each team member

a number (which was random and changed with each quiz). I then asked questions to students with a particular number. The students were given a certain amount of time to respond, based on the difficulty of the question, and would answer the question (by writing it on a piece of paper) without assistance from any other team members. All of the teams with the correct response would receive a point. If no team provided a correct response the teams were allowed to huddle and provide an answer, with each team answering correctly receiving a point.

Overall, I felt the concept was very effective. Assigning a number to each team member was a valuable adjustment. Rather than simply counting on the strongest team member to answer, the students reported that this revision helped them better to prioritize class preparation because they did not want to disappoint their team. One student, who regularly received high grades in classes, reported that she had spent much more time reading for this course than for others.

Finally, the next time I use this strategy I will build into the syllabus lecture time following the quizzes, rather than immediately moving into homework problems. This modification will give students additional exposure to the concepts and will supplement the understanding gained through their quiz preparation.

Reading Responses, Professor Feedback, and Student Self-evaluation

When considering options to spur reading compliance for class, researchers typically include students’ written responses to the reading (see, for example, Hatteberg and Steffy, 2013). Ryan (2006) studied the effectiveness of using reading quizzes, focus worksheets on the reading, and focus worksheets with instructor feedback. Of these tools, the students who completed the focus worksheets and received the professor’s feedback showed the most learning on their midterm and final exams. Interestingly these students also had higher retention rates in the course than students in the other two groups. Combining reader reflections with professor feedback forms the basis of our third case study.

Case Study #3: Reader Notes, Video Response, and Student Self-evaluation

Dr. Zachary Walton, Assistant Professor of Communication

Grading a stack of papers has always depressed me, yet I have always felt energized by individual meetings with students to discuss their writing. However, it is not feasible for me to meet individually with every student to discuss each assignment, especially when I require students to write a response to nearly every reading assignment. I developed a process that included pre-class writing, YouTube video reviews of students' work, and student self-evaluations based on these video reviews. I used this technique in my upper-level course Gender, Race, and Communication. In previous years, I have taught this course as an advanced seminar in critical/cultural theory that included graduate-level readings and demanded a great deal of writing by students. While the majority of students were from the Communication discipline, the course attracted students from other disciplines that included Criminal Justice, Women's Studies, English, Psychology, and Sport Management. Given the advanced nature of the readings, I have found that students were increasingly tempted to skim or simply not engage with the readings.

This time, for each reading assignment, I required students to compose what I call "Reader's Notes." Each RN requires students to address three elements of the assigned text(s). First, they briefly articulated the thesis of the reading and how the author attempted to prove his or her argument. Second, students were challenged to make connections between the ideas and themes addressed in the text(s) and their particular interest(s) within Communication studies or their major, including how they might connect what they read to other classes and/or how they might use the text to help to inform their everyday performance of race and gender. The final section required the students to develop two or three discussion questions designed to prompt class dialogue. For each question, students were required to include a context summary of the

specific portion of the text they were referencing, cite specific page numbers from the text(s), avoid overly vague questions or questions of mere definition, and keep the questions narrow and specific in scope. Students digitally submitted these Reader's Notes the evening before the relevant class session via Moodle. This gave me an opportunity to read the documents before class and identify issues and questions for me to address, which proved a valuable resource for my course preparations. Students were also required to print hard copies of these documents for each class and be prepared to share their writing if called upon.

After several rounds of RN submissions, I began evaluation. I first marked up the digital copies with highlights and annotations using the commenting tools in Microsoft Word. I then used free open-source video capture tools (Open Broadcaster Software, available at <https://obsproject.com/>) to record video reviews. The software recorded my computer desktop as it was displayed as well as recording any sound fed through the soundcard. I used a high-quality microphone to record my voice. With the highly annotated documents queued, I displayed the students' Reader's Notes on my screen and proceeded to talk through my comments, observations, and evaluations of their work. These video reviews ranged from 15 to 45 minutes. I then uploaded these videos to YouTube, sent each student a private link to their review, and integrated the videos into the Moodle gradebook.

As a final step in the process, students were required to watch the video reviews and to complete a qualitatively-oriented self-evaluation form. They were instructed to use the notes they took during class, the video reviews of their work, and examples of "superior/excellent" RNs produced by students from previous courses that I provided to rate their work. They were required to rate each of the three sections for each RN that was covered in the most recent video review as "Superior," "Excellent," "Good," "Average," "Below Average," "Poor," or "Missing." They then submitted these forms, and I converted their qualitative marks into numerical percentages. I

then added my own evaluation to their work, averaged the results, and formulated a final percentage result as their grade for the RN evaluation round.

Student response to these steps was generally positive. While many resisted the amount of writing I required, most commented that the regular writing “kept them honest” and accountable to the reading assignments and that the RNs prepared them for class. They also expressed appreciation that I uniquely crafted each class session to respond to their comments, questions, and summaries expressed through the RNs.

The video review element of the process was an unqualified success. Students commented that they paid much more attention to the reviews than to written comments from other instructors. Students reported feeling that some other instructors rarely provided much evidence of spending much time in reading and evaluating their written work. In contrast, the video reviews demonstrated the amount of time I invested in reviewing their work and my attempt to engage with their thoughts. I noted that this sense of dialogue also manifested itself in class conversations improving as the semester progressed. It was also significant that the video reviews lacked any kind of numerical evaluation, thus shifting their focus to actual comprehension of the course material. The only “complaints” regarding the reviews came from a few students who reported that they had to watch their reviews several times and take notes on my comments in order to complete their self-evaluations.

Reading for Project-based Learning

As noted earlier, one reason why students do not read for class is that they believe the readings are unimportant (Lei, Bartlett, Gorney, and Herschbach, 2010). McCrudden (2011) has shown that one method to motivate students to read is to provide cues so that students can see a text’s relevance. These “relevance cues” should be aligned with the “intended learning outcomes” (p. 218). One way that students can see the relevance of their reading is if they are simultaneously immersed in a high-stakes project

that makes use of the material that they are reading. Such an approach also has the potential to inspire intrinsic motivation, as students desire to learn course material so that they can complete their projects.

Case Study #4: Preparing a Thanksgiving Meal for Food Pantry Clients

Professor Jeanna Haggard, Assistant Professor of Food and Nutrition

The Food Service Systems Management course fulfills the management requirements for the dietetics curriculum. Course topics include management of personnel, budget, sanitation, menus, nutritional content of food, and quality control including customer satisfaction. This is a difficult course and is often resisted by students due to their lack of experience with management and the challenging nature of the course’s topics. Management and quality control are better learned hands-on than just through PowerPoint lectures. My goal with developing a project was to create an opportunity for the students to experience this curriculum rather than simply listening to lecture. With management, until one’s name is on the project or department as the manager, it is difficult to understand the responsibility, pressure, and reward that comes with the title and job duties.

I discovered a need from our local food pantry for a prepared Thanksgiving meal in our community. Many of the food pantry’s clients were living without cooking facilities. The normal Thanksgiving donation to the clients was a turkey, but obviously without cooking facilities this was not appropriate aid. Therefore, I designed a course assignment that would also meet this need: the students were required to prepare and serve Thanksgiving dinner for fifty families in our community. The list of requirements for this project included: menu development, budget review, donation acquisition, sanitation and HACCP development, management of food handling and logistics of delivery, public relations, procurement of food, and full production. Students were required to submit a detailed production schedule assigning each student in their group a job, a timeline of duties, and a deadline of when each duty needed to be accomplished. This planning



required that students critically think about what actually needed to be accomplished, the order that tasks should be started, and the number of hours required for each task. Students were also responsible for researching the ingredients including what equipment worked best with each item and ingredients, what would the quality of the product be with equipment available, what product would have the best yield for this large production, how to plan the nutritional content, and how to ensure sanitation of the product.

The course schedule of chapters was created based on the students' needs in their project timeline. For example, the initial step in the project was menu creation, so this was the first chapter that students read and focused on in class. Students not only learned about the basics of menu development but then learned firsthand that this is the first step in management of large events and management of large food service establishments. I was able to refer back to this concept throughout the project, illustrating how imperative it is to develop the menu first. Students used the course textbooks in a similar way an employee would utilize an operational manual. Students realized early in the planning of the project that a resource would be needed to complete this project. Detailing the tasks that needed to be accomplished allowed the students to see the purpose of the course in the dietetics curriculum. Required readings became a resource and necessity for each student, not a requirement that was assigned by the instructor. A student not reading the required material did not only directly affect his or her grade but rather the confidence of the other students. To some extent, peer pressure helped ensure that the readings and each student's part of the project were completed so the project as a whole could be successful.

As the instructor, I utilized questions throughout the project as feedback to help the students think through the process instead of telling them what should be done. For example when students presented their plan I gave them feedback such as: "Will this product cook well in a conventional oven, or will you have excessive moisture loss and dry product?" "Will two staff

members be adequate for delivery of the food?" Students did not have the feeling of turning in a research paper and then sitting back and waiting to see if they met the bar or failed. Feedback was continuous and simulated a working relationship to accomplish a common goal. I feel this environment gave the students confidence and the desire to tackle a large project. At no time during this large and demanding project did students complain about the workload, and at no time did I have to push the students to step up and put more effort into the project. The benefit of this type of course project was the students' internal motivation, growing from their knowledge that lack of time and effort meant participants of the food pantry would be without a Thanksgiving dinner. An added benefit was that the project's focus coincided well with the university's core value of service.

Students were motivated to do the course readings and assignments because they saw the relevance of the project. With these higher stakes, the pressure came from the students' own desire to serve participants, not from the extrinsic fear of failing in the eyes of the instructor.

Conclusion

As these case studies have shown, instructors can incorporate a range of innovations into their courses to motivate reading compliance. A course management system, such as Moodle, can serve as a tool to have students reflect on and evaluate their own preparation for and learning in a class session. Team-based competition, with each member individually responsible for a question, can provide a fun incentive for reading and learning. Intensive interaction with texts, including video feedback from the professor, offers an opportunity for students to read, respond, and then reflect on their responses. Finally, developing a project external to class can provide more intrinsic motivation for students to recognize the significance of what they are reading and learning. Each of these approaches can be modified to meet the particular situation and demands of other courses.

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Appendix A

Instrument to evaluate student participation

- How much time did you spend reading, completing assignments, or otherwise studying for this course since our last meeting?
- I did not spend any time.
- Less than 20 minutes.
- 20-44 minutes.
- 45-89 minutes (45 minutes - 1 hour 29 minutes).
- 90-114 minutes (1 hour 30 minutes - 1 hour 54 minutes).
- 115-149 minutes (1 hour 55 minutes - 2 hours 29 minutes).
- 150 or more minutes (2 hours 30 minutes).
- Rate your preparation for class today.
- I did not do any of the reading.
- I attempted some of the reading.
- I completed all of the readings, but did not understand it all.
- I completed all of the readings and have identified specific questions about the parts I do not understand.
- I completed the assigned readings, reading multiple times if necessary, and understand most of the material.
- I completed the assigned readings, reading multiple times if necessary. I understand most of the material and am prepared to discuss it.
- Rate your contribution to class today. Select one:
- I was absent today.
- It is possible that someone was hurt by my



presence in class today. I was distracting/
texting/sleeping OR rude...

It is unlikely that anyone will mention, remember, or benefit from my presence in class today.

I was distracted...

It is possible that someone would benefit from my presence, but I was not fully engaged/did not contribute significantly.

It is possible that someone would benefit from my presence, I was engaged through most of the class and tried to contribute.

It is likely that someone benefited from my presence in class today, I was fully engaged and found ways to contribute.

It is likely that someone benefited from my presence in class today for a very clear reason, described below.

Specific behaviors that are evidence of my efforts in class today (note all that apply). Select one or more:

I asked questions of classmates or the professor while citing a specific text, theory, or example.

I answered questions posed by classmates and/or the professor to the best of my ability.

I was active in small group work, as explained below.

I listened carefully throughout the class and sought ways to contribute.

I took careful notes throughout the class.

I was actively involved in another way, as explained below.

Today I learned:

People (or a person) who contributed to my learning today was/were:

The way they contributed to my learning was:



How College Faculty Use Self-Directed Learning, Part III: Adjustment to a New Type of Student

Abstract: In this final article based on research done at an open-access institution in the Southeast, faculty explain how they use self-directed and informal learning processes (defined as self-initiative and largely self-directed and assessed) to learn about how to improve instructional delivery to demographics of students whom they may not have encountered before coming to the institution.

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The faculty in this study talked broadly about their learning to improve their instructional delivery. Their self-directed learning gravitated to four areas, as previously mentioned:

- Discipline-specific learning, which may result in publishable or presentable research but often revolves around keeping up with the field one is teaching as it evolves;
- Learning or keeping updated on technology products that either must be learned for the job (the self-directed part coming into play in that the faculty not only choose to learn them but choose to learn them through their own methods rather than utilizing training forums) or learning technology that they have decided will be of value to their students' learning and/or will make their jobs easier (grading, roll keeping);
- Learning to adjust to their role as college professor in this specific institutional environment; and
- Learning to teach, deal with, engage, and connect to the kinds of students at this particular open access college.

In fact, either directly or indirectly, the faculty's comments in the interviews and focus groups tended to gravitate toward this last subject. Their concerns involved understanding the learning needs and strengths of their students, fathoming

the "complicated" lives some of them lead, trying to compensate for deficiencies and/or differences in the students' educational and/or cultural background, and finding and walking a fine line of appropriate rigor and appropriate accommodation.

Age Demographic

Millennial students are a popular topic in faculty development. Although faculty recognize that some of the characteristics of Generation Y are relevant to their students, they also believe that SSC student body, being 71 % first generation college and 20% Latino and living in rural Southern Appalachia, do not fit the standard Generation Y profile. Additionally, 26% of the students are 25 years of age or older, making the mean age 23.5 years and the median age 34, higher than in many colleges, especially the ones that the faculty members attended. These faculty were less than enthusiastic about gearing their instruction to the millennial stereotype; one English professor stated,

People are encouraging us to engage millennial student; to show a cat video maybe isn't related to my content area.

Of course, this professor was being humorous but expresses the underlying assumption that engaging millennial students involves a degree of entertainment as well as technology. This assumption has been built up over the years and bears questioning. Entertainment and technology are not

every college professor's forte, as a geography professor said,

But people get protective of their method. . . . I'm not going to jump on board. When I engage in self-directed learning about tech it's out of necessity, not so much to be innovative. In the classroom we are dealing with individuals, but I don't think you need all the fancy gadgets. I'm a laggard by choice. Just show me how to use the tools, I'm confident and will go on. . . . In geography there's lots of technology, but I want to look at how places form us, and I think technology alienates, anything that gets in the way of me and the students is a bad thing. I see clickers as a way for students to hide.

Emotional Connections

The interviewed faculty expressed combinations of admiration, frustration, and empathy about their students. Frustration relates to motivation (especially in core general education classes) and deficiencies in background. Lack of motivation and deficiencies in background often combined to create passive students who do not understand the effort behind learning, the value of general education subjects, or the full purpose of higher education in general. A common theme expressed by faculty was that students saw college almost entirely as a career-enhancer rather than a life-enhancer.

Faculty evaluations of the student body can range from harsh to hopeful, and the teachers tend to use themselves as the point of comparison. An instructor of developmental studies said,

We came to college because we like to learn . . . but the saddest thing I think about people now is they really don't like to learn. If some of them could they would hand us the money and let us hand them the diploma and they would be out of here, and what we have to teach them means little or nothing. I don't like it when people [outside speakers on teaching and learning] assume you can turn them loose and they'll all go

do the right thing. Usually they are going to do nothing.

She went on to say about her own discipline,

If I had a nickel for every student who said I hate to read, I haven't even read a book, I could retire. . . . Because you hear it all in reading, and they absolutely despise reading.

One English professor observed,

There are days here that teaching at this institution feels like teaching thirteenth grade.

A mathematics professor stated,

They want someone to feed the solution, and walk with them hand in hand. But it's hard with so many students, and also with how people's brains work so differently. There are students, who, no matter how hard I try, it's like we are talking in different language.

A young English professor stated,

There are two types of students here, the ones who are here because they want to be but there are some who think it's thirteenth grade . . . and they don't want to be here.

Although the faculty made observations about the students' lack of motivation in certain subject areas, they were also concerned about gaps in their background and intellectual struggles. Faculty often mentioned that they could not assume anything about their students' prior knowledge. A health occupations professor says,

They didn't know how to divide on a calculator. They had no clue how to do that, there's just a lot of things you assume they are going to know.

An English professor stated,

I always assume they know nothing and we are starting from scratch.

A math professor who had taught at several other universities in a long career said,

You've got to realize that this is not a selective campus. Some places I have taught they would have gotten it on their own. It's a piece of cake. You can't make the assumptions here. It's not that they don't know it, they have the wrong idea. You have to get them to where they know nothing, in mathematics.

A math professor said,

It bothers me because I am not [mathphobic] and I don't feel like I have a common ground with my students. I haven't had any problem that my students have. Certain things that are natural and easy for me are not for my students, and I can't understand why can't go from step one to step two the way they should go.

A history professor noted that the learning demands of college are burdensome.

Most of the students who come see me are struggling, that's the issue, these people in the surveys classes are overwhelmed by it, they haven't had to learn this much information, because in history it's often, we just go through hundreds of years and it's hard to keep up.

All of these statements from the faculty seem very critical on the surface. However, they change their tone when the subject turns to the students who are "upper division" and majoring in their subject. A reading education professor stated,

When I do see them in the higher level courses it's interesting because all of a sudden they are new people when they get in the higher level classes, and they realize, heh, this is not what I thought. And my responsibilities are not what I thought when I came in and they become new people.

In a related way, the high percentage of Latino and ESL students at SSC is a struggle for new professors. An education professor asked,

I'm wondering if they do not understand something or is it a language barrier. And I

don't want to be in a position to embarrass or offend, but I need to know, what part of this do you not understand.

A biology professor said,

Well, the student I spoke about earlier who didn't make the grade in the Anatomy and Physiology course, honestly, her English ability held her back, literally. She spoke poor English and I'm sure her reading comprehension was affected. If she could have gotten that textbook in Spanish, she probably could have gotten a C instead of a D. But I don't know how to broach that.

Consequently, the faculty have to find their way through the needs of students. A full professor of biology stated:

When I talk about the students, we're not here for the very best students, and we're not here for the worst students, we're here for the middle of the road students.

Learning to Adjust

Faculty also expressed frustration about the complicated lives of their students. Their lives are complicated by jobs, children, caregiver status, and sometimes poor decisions in their pasts that might mean court dates or financial woes. The frustration about the students taxing lives outside of the campus is borne of empathy. As one biologist stated,

I was actually just grading finals before I came over, and a girl in my class, she didn't make the grade she needed, she's going to have to retake it, she's been so torn up about it because she's a mom who has had to spend time away from her child to study and she feels like a failure. And you know we spend a lot of time talking about that, but the more I knew her the more I understood why she was so upset. Oh, you've spent time away from your children to study and still experienced this. I may not have children but I know how hard that must be.

An historian in his early years of teaching at the

institution said,

It took some adjustment, the students, and I found this when I was teaching as a grad assistant at Purdue, thinking that all students were going to be like I was, focused and dedicated, I wasn't like that all the time, but by the time I finished I had to adjust down. When I came here I had had some experience teaching, I found that the students here, again, it was an adjustment because of all the demands they have on them. Most of them are not full-time students, so there had to be adjustments with that.

In this environment, two phrases get repeated. The first is “You have to teach the students you have, not the ones you want;” this came from a former professor at the institution years ago, and when faculty start to commiserate about how the students are not like those at a university, someone will repeat it. The second has variants, but essentially speaks about learning as a journey that the faculty is taking the students on, sometimes unwillingly, but one the faculty guides. As one biologist said,

If you can get to where the students are, you can take them by the hand and bring them to where they need to be, but if you can't get to where the students are, you can't help them. If you don't know where I am coming from, you can't get me over to position A.

This metaphor is interesting because it speaks of the professor's responsibility to analyze the students' learning needs and deficiencies, but inherent in it might be a sense that the students lack self-efficacy. Similarly, the reading educator stated,

Not to demean my students, but they don't know if I don't teach them. I come at it with the base that they don't know it. I don't assume they know it, I assume they don't know it. I think that's the difference in where you are.

In short, one of the first tasks—and yet an ongoing

one—of the professors is to develop a realistic and fair assessment of their students. One biology assistant professor said it eloquently.

I don't mean it in an insulting way. We have to acknowledge it—there's a box for collecting food for student who are living in the dorms. If my students have to worry about how to feed themselves and their kids, the class is not the biggest thing. The institutions I attended in the past, they were paying \$100,000 dollars to get a degree there, and living in the dorms. But when your physical needs are not met, and professors are bringing food to be sure you have enough to eat. When I say 'Our students,' we have to acknowledge it. Maybe it's more normal than in the past. It's not {research university}. I couldn't have done this thing where I am 19 with two kids and in school. My students are doing that and they are getting A's in my classes. And I think it's because of the personal relationships. The personal relationships—their life is happening and I'm a sliver of it.

Only after the faculty have rethought their assumptions and expectations about the students' abilities can they go to the stage of adjusting their teaching practices. This, too, is an ongoing self-directed learning project. It is ongoing because the students change, and it is self-directed in this case because it takes a lot of trial and error and experimentation, and the faculty did not express that faculty development sessions could give them a magic key for relating to “our kinds of students” (a common phrase). An education professor stated,

I have found that I have to be really specific and write everything out.

A math professor early in his career said,

It's been a lot of trial and error, I guess. Things that have worked and haven't worked. Things that worked for a while and then they don't. . . . That's been my experience with the clickers. It worked well

for a few semesters and then I found that I wasn't getting the benefit from them and I found that I could do the same thing without the clickers and I didn't really need to spend the money for them.

Because of required ongoing, constant assessment, faculty at SSC cannot avoid evaluating their performance and trying to change. A history professor said,

I was an education major and I taught junior high for a year and I think a lot of how I learned to teach is trial and error, and that's how I keep going. If things aren't working I want to fix it. . . So now, while it's still done, I feel much more informed. I feel like the adjustments I had to make last time were much less than after the first time. It's getting better.

Perceptions of Foreign-born Professors

As mentioned previously, four of the faculty members in this study were born outside of the U.S: one male professor in Peru, two female in China, and one female in the UK. In the case of three, English is not their native language. Their observations involved the lowered work ethic, the expectations, and the outspokenness of their students.

The male professor stated,

I am concerned because the material is easy to read, but when the questions are asked in a different way but the concept is the same, they should be able to grasp the concept and apply in a different context and get the answer right. And I told them this is not about memorization, it is about creating critical thinking, you need to learn the concept and apply in a different context. They will complain that the test questions are wordy or opinionated, several comments, but I say, guys, these are standardized tests, kids from California are taking the same tests.

One of the Asian professors stated,

The other major students they will accept it as the teacher designs it, but education

majors will criticize the professor's design and teaching. I do not see it so much during the semester but on the student evaluations at the end . . . They will complain. Like, we haven't learned this. In class they might say, why don't you explain it like this, why don't you give us another example? If I don't give enough examples, or if the examples I give them are not helpful, I will have to try another one.

The professor from Europe remembered her early years at the institution.

[Starting to teach] here was such a challenge because there are so many things that are different about the two educational environments . . . At [elite European university] I was constantly being challenged to renew my understanding of the material. . . culturally the expectation of hard work getting you the grade is still ingrained in the population where it's not here. So when I came here I had to get used to some things. One was continuous assessment. . . I'm expected to do quizzes with these guys. Multiple choice tests were completely new to me.

To an extent, this professor found herself on her own. To address her concerns, she started her own self-directed learning.

I definitely contacted a lot of colleagues . . . I read a few books. . . it was about the cultural differences in college [My Freshman Year]. . . it really helped me to understand the culture of American universities and how we need to change that . . . I asked for suggested readings, I read journals. . .

At the same time, the foreign-born professors do not believe in making it easy for the students. Although this sounds reasonable, some faculty expressed the belief that over the years a culture has developed at SSC that student learning is best facilitated by patience and longsuffering of the faculty, that it is expected (at least in the eyes of some faculty) that they should "bend over

backwards” to teach students. Some professors succumb to this cultural feeling while others fight it. When faculty get together, this is a topic of debate. For example, the common practice of lecturing; lecturing has a bad name in faculty development, but many professors—notably historians and biologists—at SSC defend lecturing because of the amount of material they are held accountable to teach. And if lecturing is not considered the best method, so be it. A biologist stated.

I think we have gone too far in handholding the students. We have lost sight of the fact that the student’s education is the student’s responsibility. . . I should not be asked to go above and beyond and do side things that are supposed to extraordinarily motivate the student outside of the classroom. That’s not my job. That’s how I feel.

Methods of Achieving Self-Directed Learning Outcomes

As these excerpts show, one of the biggest challenges to faculty at SSC is adjusting to the type of student who faces them in classrooms. In addition to this adjustment, faculty used self-directed learning processes to learn technology, to learn to adjust to the expectation of this environment, and of course, keep current in their discipline. These are the topics and goals; from this data, what can we say about *how* they use self-directed learning to navigate these waters? The methods are not surprising, but perhaps their prioritization and the spin they put on it is.

Reflection—and reflection-in-action

The word “reflection” was not overused by the faculty in this study. In fact, some were unfamiliar with the idea of reflective practice as a method of learning and some did not see the value of it. In some cases, it did not appeal to their particular learning style, so the lack of knowledge may have been individual or related to discipline. On the other hand, two stated that reflection was of more value to them than workshops or formal learning situations. What several of them did offer was that

they found themselves needing to use “reflection-in-action” in the classroom environment, sometimes taking new tacks or rewriting lectures and lesson plans in the middle of the class. This change in approach was due to the perception that students did not understand or needed something different. Being able to adjust and adapt quickly to students was valued by these faculty. As one nursing professor said,

[To me, reflective practice is] Sort of reliving or rethinking something that has already been done, or a practice, and to evaluate it, break it down, to look at it critically, what worked, what didn’t work, maybe different results based on a change in action, and the end result being able to learn from it, ways to do it differently. Because there’s more than one right way to do something, so you might come up with three or four scenarios and all would be equally right, and each one would give you a different result, and one of those results are necessarily better than the other, but a way to look at that. . . I do it after every class. . I’m so immersed in the class; it’s hard to cue in. But if something happens I am able to make a change, to change directions, if things are out of hand, I can’t think of an example, sometimes things change in a situation.

One method or source, although mandated, for reflective practice is the College’s online assessment system that was instituted after an accreditation review. Although the faculty stated that it is time-consuming to write the reports, many admitted that it did facilitate reflective practice, even if required. A full professor of English stated,

I reflect on everything I do and how it works. . . Our assessments at the end of the semester, as in WEAVE, that is a kind of reflective practice . . . If you don’t reflect on it, what good is it? You just keep doing it without reason or purpose.

Another English professor, in the early stages of her career at the college, stated,

I really think the expanded assessment we are doing for [the accrediting board] has actually helped. We have to fill in those boxes [in the assessment system] with something, so it might as well be something useful. If you put the reflection in there, not only have you done [it], you can look at it the next time you can see what you were thinking and it will be there next semester when you need to look at it and see what worked and what didn't work. . . . This kind of assessment builds on itself.

An assistant professor of biology saw it a different way:

I like assessment because I like statistics, and that is what assessment is, a big ball of statistics.

On the other hand, an assistant professor of English believed:

The other thing that came to mind is the assessment, I don't really feel that that is very good at motivating changes in the courses, and it just feels like an administrative duty. The changes I would want to fix in my classes often don't align themselves with this, so I don't think it's a tool to make me a better teacher, it's a tool to make [the accrediting board] happy and check off some boxes.

This professor added the reflective practice is a part of her learning,

I've always gone to the next level by journaling.

However, her desire to journal was not widely shared. Many of the faculty members resisted the idea of reflection as a journaling, internalized, solitary, introspective process. In fact, I detected a resistance to too much questioning of assumptions or trying to find ways to change just because it was a trendy concept or even if the method had evidence behind it. In fact, when the Action Research team reviewed the transcripts, one member observed:

They felt the pressure to do new gadgety

things but they didn't. They seemed to settle on what worked in the classroom for them but didn't use the things that they thought were silly or unnecessary. They were different, not a right way to do it. . . . These three have pretty healthy attitudes toward it, they would look into the new things, and if they felt it was something interesting, they would use it.

Informal Learning

Reflection as talk, however, was more valued by the faculty, and few felt that there was enough time for it. Informal learning from colleagues through sharing meals, book groups, and even the extensive course redesign initiative is prized by SSC faculty, according to these interviews and focus groups, but not readily available. Some wanted to know what other departments were doing; others were happy to learn primarily from their disciplinary colleagues, as was this historian:

A lot of feedback about being better teachers relates to changing your teaching approach or not lecturing as much and I just haven't seen anything as an historian that has convinced me in survey courses that I can give up the lecture and still have the student learn the material. And that's largely why I haven't gone with these theories.

This professor elaborated that part of his attitude toward teaching is rooted in his perception of appreciation in the culture.

So I feel appreciated by my students and history colleagues but other than that, I don't think anyone else cares what I am doing down here, not much. Unless there's going to be a problem. But I do feel appreciated that way.

Additionally, some disciplines were far more open to informal learning practices than others. A long-term associate professor of biology who sought to change teaching practices said,

This place is the best ever, but you come out to a place like this and you're so specialized and you're assigned to teach

introductory biology, and you say to a colleague. . . Can I sit in your class . . . ? So there is a lot of sitting in on other people's classes . . .

I went to as many [workshops] as I could find and then I buttonholed my friends who had already been doing this stuff. . . And the [the instructional technologist] bless her, she worked me through everything, once I managed to get over the hump.

An assistant professor of English noted that proximity and gender were sometimes the determining factor when seeking out a colleague.

I'll ask someone in the hallway, how would you deal with this? . . . Just the dynamics of [being a female in the classroom] I tend to ask about, the fear about it [not reaching the male students]

Another English professor expressed the value of reflective practice,

Some of the most powerful learning we do as reflective practitioners happens in informal learning environments . . . so that helps to some degree but I don't think it goes beyond talking things out, it doesn't go beyond to a level of depth of thought about the process.

A long-time professor of developmental studies was self-deprecating when she mentioned her dependence on younger faculty.

We stand around and talk about it, and we learn a lot that way. I get ideas from all these younger folks and they are coming at it from a different perspective, and parasite that I am, I feed off it, and they're looking at it in a different way that I think I need to revisit this, dinosaur that I am . . . they give different assignments . . . sometimes they need the dinosaur but on the other hand the dinosaur needs to come up and be a little less [of a dinosaur].

Time crunch affected faculty informal learning a great deal. While some were able to go to lunch regularly with colleagues, others simply could not

schedule these kinds of meeting due to their class responsibilities and other obligations. Getting off campus with colleagues was mentioned as valuable but rare. Additionally, as mentioned before, some disciplines and some personalities just seemed resistant to informal learning opportunities—both taking them and giving them. Two professors stated:

My colleagues are not willing to talk shop unless in a formal situation . . . but then they don't talk. There's only one faculty colleague that I will talk shop with . . . but it doesn't happen much. . . Yes, when I get to talk to someone, which isn't often. . .

And

There are people who have taught decades longer than I have . . . but there's not really those opportunities [to learn from them].

Many of the faculty members mentioned a high-profile faculty member who served as a sort of opinion leader for changing teaching practice. Although the term “communities of practice” would probably not be relevant in this discussion because the connections were so informal and “just-in-time,” faculty members did attribute a great deal of their learning to either seeking out a colleague or group of colleagues who seemed effective in the classroom and amenable to helping others learn. However, this learning was truly self-directed, because formal mentoring of new faculty is not universally practiced at the college, something noted by several interviewees and the AR team members as a problem. Informal learning was also frequently “just-in-time” learning; the faculty member sought out the information when needed but not before.

Formal Learning

For a great deal of what is needed to know to do their jobs, being proactive and planning for the learning was seen as unnecessary. For one reason, technology and policies changed frequently, so waiting until the information was needed made more sense. For another, formal learning opportunities were rated as limited or ineffective (boring, time-consuming, poorly presented) and it

was seen as easier to procrastinate.

As for self-directed learning about instructional practice that took place on a more proactive, planned level, faculty noted in the survey that they read journals and certain key books, especially those offered through book groups on campus; attended webinars, either from the governing board's office of profession development or from textbook publishers; occasionally attended conferences (either disciplinary or teaching-and-learning-oriented); and, of course, attended workshops and speakers sponsored by the Center for Academic Excellence or the former Teaching and Learning Center. From the interviews, however, reviews on these workshops and speakers were mixed. Common comments were that the speakers "did not understand our type of students," "lectured at us but told us not to lecture," "came and went and had no follow-up," or were in other ways irrelevant. The persons interviewed for this study were for the most part among the more active attendees at CAE events, but they were not always satisfied.

This is not to imply that the CAE is not valued; as a biologist said, support of the CAE showed the administration's commitment to the faculty's well-being and professional development. A mathematician appreciated the cross-disciplinary nature of faculty development at the college,

I think if you only stay in math everybody is going to teach the same and you end up with the lecture, homework, lecture, homework kind of format everybody does. That's what we all learned from, the old school method of learning math was pretty much like that, so having outside influences helps with that.

A nursing professor explained the connection between self-directed learning and the CAE well:

Yes, I seek out [CAE workshops]. They are organized ways [of learning]. But it's self directed because I have to seek those out, and sign up, and attend. And I'm not just a lump on a log, I'm going to take it forward, even though I didn't generate that program,

but me being there is very much, and what I do with it, is self-directed.

This professor's observation is relevant because faculty are not required to attend any faculty development except a couple of short breakout sessions at the beginning of the year; the only exception would be if a dean or department head recommends it on a faculty member's annual report due to low teaching evaluations. On the other hand, some faculty expressed skepticism about CAE workshops:

I am very down to earth, give me something I can use . . . I thought some of them [CAE events] have been [good], I sound so negative and I don't mean to be, but these people get paid big money, . . . They create these big lists of what we should do . . . and I just sit there and think it doesn't work in our climate, in our culture. These kids are car, class, car, and they are gone . . . and you're not going to be able to do all these things to be with them. I wish you could but you can't.

The following quote by a mathematics professor early in his career summarizes these feelings well.

Going back to grad school, and talking to fellow grad students about what they do, that's probably where I've learned most of the techniques that I've decided work well, and a lot of the stuff we do from the CAE, you hear something awesome and try it. Yes, I would say that most of my learning how to teach has happened more informally than formally.

Conclusion

The three articles that have appeared in the last three editions of this *Journal* give a comprehensive look at how faculty at SSC use self-directed and informal learning processes as opposed to planned training events. Facilitators and planners to instructional development should gain a full appreciation of self-directed learning in order to supplement rather than try to supplant it and to understand the motivations and learning styles of the faculty whom they serve.

Journal Submission Guidelines and Editorial Policies

1. Faculty members (and professional staff) may submit the following:

- Book reviews on scholarly works on higher education administration or issues, college teaching, or adult learning published within the last two calendar years.
- Scholarship of Teaching and Learning research. This is defined as a study in which an activity, strategy, approach, or method that reflects best practices or evidence-based research is tried in the classroom. The faculty member sets up an intervention, executes it, and assesses the impact, employing quantitative or qualitative methods. Articles should indicate that IRB process was followed where applicable, with documentation.
- Literature review that synthesizes, in a relevant and interesting way, the evidence, theory, and/or research on a particular aspect of higher education, college teaching, adult learning, brain research, etc. Professional staff could write about issues in student services or advising, for example.
- Essay of personal reflection of a classroom incident or phenomenon with an evidence- or theory-based approach to interpreting the incident or phenomenon.
- Articles should attempt to have c

2. Style Sheet

- Submissions should be in APA VI format and Times New Roman 12 pt. font. Use APA guidelines in terms of margins. The writer should try to preserve his or her anonymity as much as possible. The editor will redact the name of the writer from the document's title page before sending to reviewers.

3. Review Process

- The submissions will be peer reviewed by three faculty members, whose identity will be known only to editor and not to each other. One member of the review committee will be a faculty member in general discipline represented in the article, one will be a faculty member with an advanced degree in education, and one will be drawn from the advisory committee or other volunteer reviewers.
- Articles will be returned to the writers in a timely manner with an indication of rejection; conditional acceptance (revise and re-submit, with suggestions for doing so), and accepted (possibly with request to edit or make minor changes). A rubric will be used for assessing the articles. It will be available to potential submitters upon request. If none of the members approves the article, it will be rejected. If one of the members approves the article, it will be considered a conditional acceptance. If two approve it, it will be returned for the necessary editions and published when finished. If three approve it, it will be published as is or with minor corrections.

4. Submissions should be sent as Word files to btucker@daltonstate.edu

5. Published articles will appear in the *Journal for Academic Excellence*, which will be available on the Center for Academic Excellence's website and thus accessible by Internet searches.