Reflections

Newsletter of the Teaching Support Centre, The University of Western Ontario

The Learning Republic: Fostering Civility in the University Classroom
An Interview with Dr. Zopito Marini
BY NATASHA PATRITO, EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPER, TEACHING SUPPORT CENTRE

Zopito Marini is a professor of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University. He is an expert on the psychological and social factors that contribute to bullying among adolescents, but his interest in teaching has recently led him to a new research focus – classroom civility. Transferring his expertise in schoolyard bullying to the university context, Zopito investigates the impact of uncivil behaviour on the learning environment with the aim of developing strategies to establish and maintain positive classroom norms. Recently, we had an opportunity to sit down and chat about several issues related to classroom civility.

NP: Is there an accepted definition for 'classroom incivility'?

ZM: Before we get into incivility, I want to define classroom civility because it offers faculty and students something positive to aim for. From my point of view, acting civilly implies that a person is willing to take on the responsibilities of citizenship. In a civil classroom, the efforts of each individual facilitate the engagement of the entire group and promote learning. That, of course, describes an ideal world. Uncivil behaviour certainly exists, and I define it as any action that disrupts the learning process and negatively impacts the classroom climate.

NP: That definition seems to encompass such a wide range of behaviours from minor annoyances, like ringing cell phones, to very serious concerns, like threats of physical violence. Is it important to differentiate among incivilities?

Zopito Marini

ZM: Variations in the degree of incivility are definitely important to keep in mind because the level of incivility should inform the type of action that's taken to address it. I work with a 4-tier classification system:

<u>Low</u> - these include mainly passive annoyances like reading the newspaper or falling asleep during class. Individual apathy and lack of participation falls into this category for me as well.

<u>Medium</u> - these disruptions by one student affect others in the class and include things like the misuse of technology (ringing cell phones, surfing the net) or the domination of classroom discussions.

<u>High</u> - these actions are openly hostile and aggressive. An example might be a public attack on some personal trait of a student or faculty member or the use of offensive language during an in-class or online discussion.

<u>Extreme</u> - these situations cause concern for your own personal safety and that of your students. These issues demand immediate action.

Safe Campus Community

Western's new *Safe Campus Community* initiative, including a chart showing ways to identify, prevent, and respond to violence is available at:

http://www.uwo.ca/police/safecampus.htm

NP: When one thinks of classroom incivility, very often student-initiated problems come to mind. What role, if any, do faculty play in initiating or perpetuating classroom incivility?

ZM: This isn't strictly a student problem. We're all citizens of the classroom – instructors, TAs, lab demonstrators, and students. Uncivil behaviour on the instructor's part, like showing up consistently late for class or responding harshly to student questions, is just as contagious and destructive as any student incivilities. As faculty, we have both an opportunity and a responsibility to set a positive tone in the classroom, and we should share our perspectives on civility with other members of our teaching team, like TAs, so that behavioural expectations are consistent through all aspects of a course.

NP: Are students less civil today than they have been in previous years?

ZM: Anecdotal evidence would suggest that things are getting worse and incivility is increasing, but I have to stress that there is little quantitative data to support this observation. What we do know for certain is that the forms of incivility are changing, particularly with the increasing role of technology in education. On-line discussion forums, blogging, wireless Internet access in classrooms and other advancements have introduced new opportunities for learning, but they have also become new venues for incivility.

NP: You mentioned anecdotal evidence. Are faculty and students reluctant to share their experiences with incivility or do we lack quantitative measures to assess these issues?

ZM: When I became interested in classroom civility and began to look into the existing literature, the thing that surprised me most was the lack of empirical evidence that was available. I worry that our view of classroom civility may be skewed when the majority of literature examining this issue is based on interviews with a small number of individuals. In general, it is difficult to get faculty or students to speak, on the record, about civility issues even when we ensure anonymity. From the faculty member's perspective, speaking about classroom incivilities may call their classroom management skills into question. Students, on the other hand, don't want to be perceived as "tattle-tales."

NP: How have these concerns informed your approach to civility research?

ZM: We're in the process of launching the first empirical examination of incivility in higher education, and our study is based on anonymous self-reporting by undergrads from first to fourth year. We're using a strategy that has been successfully applied to the quantitative analysis of bullying in the past. Individuals who engage in bullying tend to believe that certain antisocial actions are normal, and a scale has been developed to quantify these attitudes. We're examining whether this same scale can be used as a predictor of classroom incivility.

In a practical sense, participants fill out a questionnaire that asks about their own classroom behaviour, and then they are presented with scenarios – for example: *If you find a wallet on the ground, it is okay to take any money inside.* They are asked to rank the validity of such statements on an 11-point scale. Their self-reported behaviours are then compared against their scoring and we look for trends.

It's an exciting time because the initial sets of data are just rolling in, and we're hoping to use our results to develop concrete strategies that will help faculty members create more civil classrooms.

NP: What are the benefits of promoting a civil classroom atmosphere?

ZM: A civil atmosphere would mean that students come to class unafraid of asking questions and are therefore, less likely to edit themselves academically. Learning would be more free-flowing and deeper because disruptions and distractions would be minimized. Civil environments also reduce stress among faculty, who would have to worry less about meting out discipline, and instead could focus more on the fun stuff: teaching. Imagine a classroom devoid of civility – not only is it frightening, but it's exhausting.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dr. Zopito Marini, Brock University
will give the keynote address on classroom civility at the

Fall Perspectives on Teaching Conference
Wednesday, August 27, 2008
9:00 a.m. , Room 35, Health Sciences Building

Zopito Marini is the recipient of numerous teaching honours including the Brock Chancellor's Chair for Teaching Excellence and the OCUFA Teaching Award. His most important accolades come directly from his students who have repeatedly nominated Zopito as one of Brock University's favourite professors in "The Student's Guide to Canadian Universities."

NP: How does one foster civility in the classroom?

ZM: I look at it in two ways – proactively and reactively.

Proactively, at the beginning of a course, it's important to make your expectations clear. If civil behaviour is important to you, then your syllabus has to speak to it. And I always suggest that people write their expectations in a positive way (*In the spirit of cooperation, we are going to try to minimize disruptions in our class by…*) rather than using threats (*Shut cell phones off or else!*)

Reactively, if uncivil behaviours begin to emerge in the classroom, it's important to address them immediately so that the students understand that you're committed to maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere. That's part of the reason for having a clear statement about civility in the syllabus – so that if unacceptable behaviours do arise, you can point to the statement and remind students that in choosing to participate in your course, they agreed to certain standards of conduct. Set the bar high.

NP: Should students be involved in creating the definition of civility in their own class?

ZM: Absolutely! On the first day of class, I begin by asking my students to brainstorm words that come to mind when I mention civility. They discuss these answers in the first tutorial session and each group comes up with their own unique definition for civility along with a code of behaviour. We post these on-line, so that all of the students can take a look at their peers' ideas around classroom conduct. The more input that students have in defining classroom civility, the more likely they are to buy into that definition and behave accordingly.

NP: Faculty and students certainly have to be on board to promote civility. How can administrators and Teaching Support Centre staff support their efforts?

ZM: I think administrators and teaching support staff have two roles. The first is to get instructors to buy into the idea that civility is in fact important and needs to be cultivated. We can do that by emphasizing the benefits of a civil classroom – less stress, greater learning, more enjoyment for students and teachers.

The second thing that administrators and educational developers can do is provide instructors with the tools to build a civil environment – provide sample statements for syllabi, develop varied activities that can be used to introduce the notion of classroom civility, offer up resources and, most importantly, an open ear.

The University of Western Ontario
Teaching Support Centre

Course Design and Renovation Workshop
May 22 & 23, 2008
9:30 a.m. — 4:00 p.m.

The purpose of this two-day workshop is to facilitate the design or redesign of a course that you will be teaching in the upcoming year. At the end of the workshop you will have completed the necessary steps to create a course structure, identify learning objectives, and design learning activities to achieve those objectives.

Topics may include:

- Course and Instructional Objectives
- Universal Design for Course Construction
- Structuring an Effective Course
- Selecting Learning Activities
- Teaching Library Research Methods
- Team Teaching and Interdisciplinary Course Planning
- Preparing an Effective Course Syllabus
- Setting Course Policies
- Text Selection and Use of Course Packs
- Blended Learning: Using the web to enhance face-to-face instruction
- Matching Objectives to Assessment Methods
- Alternative Forms of Assessment

Enrolment: limited to 15 faculty members, so that the course goals and topics can be tailored to the needs of the participants.

Registration: see TSC Upcoming Events at:

http://www.uwo.ca/tsc

STLHE 2008 Conference — A WORLD OF LEARNING
Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
June 18 — 21, 2008, University of Windsor

http://web2.uwindsor.ca/stlhe/

Note: Western has an institutional membership with STLHE. This allows the Western community to join the Society at a reduced rate. For membership information, go to: **www.stlhe.ca**

The Language of Teaching: Two New Courses for International Teaching Assistants (ITAs)

BY NADINE LE GROS, LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION INSTRUCTOR, TEACHING SUPPORT CENTRE

*I*magine that you are a classically trained pianist, and you get offered a position in a music school overseas to play the piano. "Great!" you think, and head off for an adventure. When you arrive, you are informed that not only will you be playing piano, but you will be expected to teach students to play … rock and roll. Such a scenario is analogous to what it is for international graduate students to come to study at Western. They have studied in their fields, and they are accomplished in their disciplines. They come expecting to do research and to study. Many do not even know that they will be expected to teach until the Friday before class starts on Monday. And lo and behold, all their classical training leaves them feeling slightly out of step with the rhythm of the Canadian classroom. For although many have studied English for years and years, they have never been taught the language of teaching.

Teacher talk is a special brand of speech, and the talk changes from department to department due to differing epistemologies and pedagogical praxis. What is consistent, however, is the basic need for the use of cues to orient listeners to the instructor's intentions. These cues are called discourse markers, and in teaching, these cues consist of terms to signal the students regarding definitions, illustrations, restatements, identification, introduction to new topics, and summaries (Williams, 1992). Listeners expect these cues, and when they are absent, listeners are disoriented, and they will have difficulty following what is being presented (Tyler, 1992).

The Language of Teaching in Engineering and The Language of Teaching in the Sciences are two new courses being offered in the Teaching Support Centre. The goals of the courses are to help ITAs learn the language structures they need to clarify their speech to make themselves understood by their students. Each course consists of eight two-hour sessions featuring videotaped episodes of teaching assistants and professors teaching. The students receive transcripts of the segments so that they can deconstruct the teaching passages. They are also given handouts with isolated chunks of good teacher talk specific to the task and the disciplines. The classes culminate with the ITAs engaging in teaching episodes specific to the language task of the day, such as defining terms, handling math problems, presenting prelab discussions, posing questions and responding to questions, presenting board work, etc. The Language of Teaching courses will be offered in October 2008. So, if you have some international teaching assistants joining you, help them get into the swing of things by recommending The Language of Teaching.

REFERENCES

Tyler, A. (1992). Discourse Structure and the Perception of Incoherence in International Teaching Assistant's Spoken Discourse. *TESOL Quarterly*, 26 (4), 713-729.

Williams, J. (1992). Planning, Discourse Marking, and the Comprehensibility of International Teaching Assistants. *TESOL Quarterly*, 26(4), 693-711.

Social Bookmarking with del.icio.us

Social Bookmarking is a way of keeping track of the interesting websites you come across and sharing them with other people. Instead of bookmarking or favouriting a page within your web browser, sites like **http://del.icio.us/** allow you to remember interesting sites and access them from any computer. Tagging each site with keywords and adding descriptions to your bookmarks will help you find these sites again later. Visitors to your page can see the sites you have bookmarked and can search for resources by tags or description. Del.icio.us also keeps track of how many people have bookmarked each site so that users can find the most popular sites tagged with particular keywords, or view the bookmarks of other people with similar interests.

For more information:
    Social Bookmarking in Plain English: **http://tinyurl.com/28qhop**
    7 Things You Should Know About Social Bookmarking: **http://tinyurl.com/2cbnhb**
    Teaching Support Centre's del.icio.us page: **http://del.icio.us/uwotsc**

Spring Perspectives on Teaching
Wednesday, May 14, 2008

**Room 3345, Somerville House
9:00 a.m. — 4:00 p.m.**

Marilla Svinicki

FEATURED SPEAKERS

Keynote Session: 9:15 a.m. — 10:45 a.m.
Teach Me, I Dare You!: Changing Students' Attitudes About Who's Responsible for Learning
Marilla Svinicki (The University of Texas at Austin)

Plenary Session: 11:00 a.m. — 12:00 p.m.
Fellowship in Teaching Innovation Award Presentation (2007 Award Recipients)
A New Medicine for Physics: Using Medical Imaging as a Tactic for Teaching Physics
Tamie Poepping, Blaine Chronik, Ian MacDonald, Eugene Wong, Joel Cox, Reggie Taylor (Departments of Physics & Astronomy and Medical Biophysics)

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

1:30 — 2:30 p.m.
The Role of Supervisory Agreements in Graduate Education
Carol Beynon (Associate Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies), Stephen Sims (Associate Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies), Nick Kuiper (Director, Clinical Psychology Program)

Developing Innovative Study Abroad Opportunities
Kim Baines (Chemistry), Ann Bossers (Occupational Therapy), Darwin Semotiuk, (Kinesiology), Sandra Smeltzer (Information & Media Studies), Jeff Tennant (French Studies, International Programs Development Coordinator)

2:45 — 4:00 p.m.
Evaluating Oral Participation in Class
Panel of faculty members TBA
Moderator: Nadine Le Gros (Teaching Support Centre)

What To Do To Get Them Through: Supervising Graduate Student Writing
Johnston Miller (Writing Support Centre & Teaching Support Centre)

To view details and register, visit the TSC website at:
www.uwo.ca/tsc

For more information, contact the Teaching Support Centre
phone ext. 84622 or e-mail: tsc@uwo.ca

The University of Western Ontario
Teaching Support Centre

SUMMER TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE
MAY 26 – 28, 2008

The Teaching Support Centre (TSC) and the Instructional Technology Resource Centre (ITRC) invite you to participate in the **Summer Teaching with Technology Institute, May 26 - 28, 2008, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

This three-day institute will be an interactive and engaging experience, open to all faculty and course developers at The University of Western Ontario. These workshops will be of particular interest to:

- those interested in learning more about using online teaching technologies;
- those currently developing online courses using WebCT OWL; and
- those interested in teaching online courses using WebCT OWL.

The focus of this institute is to highlight the essential knowledge and skills required for the integration of technology into either your face-to-face or distance courses. Participants need not have any experience with instructional technologies to attend; they only need to have an interest in how technology can enhance their curricula.

Participants will be required to bring relevant course materials (such as a course outline, weekly lectures, quizzes, and discussion materials). During the institute, participants will have the opportunity to transform this content into engaging online instructional materials. Participants who complete the institute will have the foundation of a WebCT OWL site and acquire the skills to build, teach, and manage their courses.

Registration:
See Upcoming Events at: **http://www.uwo.ca/tsc**

Limited Enrolment: Enrolment is limited to 25, so please register early.

Virtual Education: Teaching and Learning in Second Life

By Mike Atkinson, Psychology; Tim Wilson, Anatomy & Cell Biology; Jonathan Kidd, Psychology

Today's university students have been steeped in a culture of technology. On university campuses around the world, cellphones, PDAs, and personal computers are approaching ubiquity. At Western, one has only to step into a typical first-year class and the trend is apparent. Our tech support departments have kept abreast of these changes, but as instructors, many of us have yet to tap the true potential of these mediums. In lectures and labs we reach visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners, but they must learn on our terms, in the timeframe available. Texts offer more scope for independent learning, but again, the insight a student may pull from the text is limited to what is on the page. Using computer technology we can reach more students. Also, we can provide them with learning modalities that allow them to explore content on their own terms at their own pace. We can do all of this in a rich immersive environment called "Second Life."

Second Life is a free on-line multi-user virtual environment (MUVE) that allows users to "meet" in virtual space, build and manipulate virtual objects, and converse via text or VoIP. A number of teaching innovations have already emerged from this unique combination of features. For instance, it is now possible to conduct Distance Education online, in an environment where students can actually "see" their professor, listen and watch as they give a lecture (complete with audio and video capabilities), and raise their hands during a lecture to ask a question. As if this were not enough, students can converse with one another during a lecture on private, non-disruptive channels, and instructors can administer online and offline courses simultaneously — conserving resources and offering a more involved, economical experience for distance learners.

The 3D capabilities of Second Life (SL) offer a whole new set of possibilities — both for distance learners and students on main campus. Using the SL client software we can create 3D simulations, models, and demonstrations that students can manipulate, interact with, or store for later use. This can be done using the Second Life program itself, or by importing existing models into the SL environment. Using SL we can give students the opportunity to see what the brain looks like, do a virtual autopsy, track the movements of the solar system from their desks, or even experience a simulated schizophrenic episode. Below are some examples of what has already been done using Second Life:

A eukaryotic cell. Students can observe the functioning of the cell in 3D, and can enter inside it for a closer look. Individual chromosomes and gene loci can be examined.

Faculty offices at Bowling Green State University

To date, there are over 100 universities with a virtual campus in SL. Different campuses host different types of events, but there are scheduled lectures, media screenings, theatrical productions, labs, and virtual office hours available. Practically anything that is possible to do in real life is possible in SL. We have started to explore the potential of virtual anatomy labs and on-demand tutorials in psychology. But this only scratches the surface. We invite you to think about applications in your area and join in Second Life. For more information, check the following: **http://secondlife.com**
http://tinyurl.com/pfhdz
http://tinyurl.com/t4e8t

Supporting Research on Teaching: The Research on Teaching Grants Program

BY KEN N. MEADOWS, EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHER, TEACHING AND LEARNING SERVICES

*T*his year the Teaching Support Centre introduced a number of initiatives to support research on teaching (i.e., the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) at Western. One of these new initiatives is the **Research on Teaching Small Grants Program**. The program is designed to provide grants of up to $2500 to support faculty members, librarians, and archivists who are interested in performing research on a teaching technique, a teaching technology, or some other aspect of their teaching or their students' learning. For the inaugural year of the grants program, numerous excellent proposals were submitted. From these proposals, six projects were awarded grants. Much to our delight, the projects came from a variety of academic disciplines and addressed a range of teaching and learning innovations. A brief description of each project is provided below.

John de Bruyn (Physics and Astronomy) - *Mining Classroom Response System Data*
Dr. de Bruyn and Dr. Jeff Hutter (Physics and Astronomy) are performing a detailed examination of the relationship between students' responses to in-class clicker questions and their performance on course assessments (e.g., quizzes, examinations) to develop clicker questions that more accurately reflect student understanding.

Kevin Fung (Otolaryngology) - *Evaluation of the Success of a 3D Educational Computer Model of the Larynx in Teaching Laryngeal Anatomy*
Dr. Fung and colleagues are evaluating the efficacy of a newly developed three-dimensional computer-based learning module in teaching laryngeal anatomy. Dr. Fung's co-investigators are Drs. Amanda Hu (Otolaryngology), Tim Wilson (Anatomy & Cell Biology), Peter Haase (Anatomy & Cell Biology), and Hanif Ladak (Medical Biophysics).

Roger Graves (Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication) - *Huron University College/ The University of Western Ontario Writing Project: Writing through the Curriculum*
Dr. Graves and colleagues are analyzing course documents (e.g., syllabi, assignment handouts) to determine the range of writing assignments students are required to produce, how faculty members expectations are revealed through those assignments, and ultimately, how the assignments relate to student learning. Dr. Graves' co-investigators are Dr. Theresa Hyland (Writing and Cross Cultural Services, Huron University College), and Boba Samuels (PhD student in Education).

Mark McDayter (English) - *Using Course Design to Promote Co-Curricular Engagement in First-Year English Literature*
Dr. McDayter and Elan Paulson (PhD student in English) are examining the perceived impact of course-related out-of-class learning opportunities (e.g., attending performances of a play discussed in class) on introductory English students' learning and attitudes towards literary studies.

Bethany White (Statistical and Actuarial Sciences) - *Service-Learning in Statistics at The University of Western Ontario*
Dr. White and Dr. John Braun (Statistical and Actuarial Sciences) are investigating the perceived impact of a new course-based service-learning initiative on third-year statistical and actuarial sciences students' statistical problem-solving ability.

Tim Wilson (Anatomy and Cell Biology) - *Can 3-Dimensional Lectures Potentiate Learning Opportunities?*
Dr. Wilson and Ashley Clausner (MSc student in Anatomy & Cell Biology) are comparing student learning of wrist anatomy across three anatomy teaching modalities, pictures presented via PowerPoint, models, and stereotopic three-dimensional projections from the Anatatorium, each paired with a standard lecture on the topic.

Congratulations to all of this year's grant recipients. Their commitment to excellence in teaching, learning, and research is truly admirable.

The Teaching Support Centre welcomes the opportunity to continue supporting this year's grant recipients as well as other faculty members, librarians, and archivists interested in research on teaching through our various programs and services. For more information about these programs and services, please visit the TSC web site at **http://www.uwo.ca/tsc**.

Western Libraries Update

BY TOM ADAM, INFORMATION LITERACY LIBRARIAN, WESTERN LIBRARIES

Website Under Construction — Have Your Say

Western Libraries is nearing the end of its website redesign project. The new site is scheduled to launch in time for the fall term. Our website has long been the best starting point for an effective search for academic information, and the redesign aims to make the process easier. Incorporating a structure and layout that will simplify information discovery, reducing the number of clicks necessary to locate resources and services to enhance the process for example, our website will also expand to include new, value-added content useful for all who teach or research at Western. NGWIT, Western Libraries' Next Generation Website Implementation Team will be seeking input and feedback from our key stakeholders and appreciates your assistance in making the website the best it can be to anticipate the needs of the Western community. Watch for opportunities over the next month or two to test drive the new site and have your say in refining and enhancing its development.

Encore is coming...

In tandem with the new website is Western Libraries' collaborative partnership with Innovative Interfaces, our integrated library system provider in the development of Encore, a new Web 2.0 catalogue searching platform. Rather than the traditional process of searching for library resources, Encore offers next generation users the familiar single search box they are accustomed to seeing every day as they surf the web. However the results that return are drawn exclusively from Western Libraries' extensive and exhaustive collections. Searchers never arrive at a dead end with Encore. In addition to displaying the materials in our collection that meet the search parameters, the results screen also provides simple mechanisms that facilitate editing and yielding more precise results. Refining by author or title, or adding more specific subject related terms from the tag cloud, is as easy as clicking in the appropriate place and in seconds the screen redraws with the new results. Encore is currently in use in several international institutions. Our implementation at Western is the first Canadian application, and our partnership with Innovative ensures we are on the cutting edge, influencing the development of Encore as it grows and matures.

A-Students — Information Literacy Instruction

Western Libraries' instructional librarians are always keen to work with teaching faculty to weave information literacy skill development into the fabric of courses and programs at Western. Information Literacy involves the competencies necessary for students to achieve *straight A's*, to realize academic success while they are at Western, and more importantly to set the foundation for lifelong learning. *A*ccessing information effectively, critically *A*ssessing it, *A*ssimilating this new information into your knowledge bank, and responsibly *A*pplying it are the key skills information literacy instruction can help foster in your students — and you often also reap the benefit of receiving well researched, well written and well documented assignments. Contact your Subject Librarian to set up a consultation to determine how best to integrate information literacy into your course.

If you have any questions or comments, please give me a shout at the Teaching Support Centre or via e-mail at **tadam@uwo.ca**.
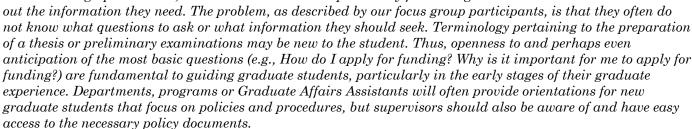
TSC PURPLE GUIDES

New!

*T*he second publication of our Purple Guide series is now available. The ***Western Guide to Graduate Supervision*** offers advice from experienced supervisors here at Western and shares good practices from the literature on graduate supervision and from other universities around the world.

If you would like to receive a free copy of this publication, or a copy of our first purple guide on ***Mentorship in Academia***, please contact the Teaching Support Centre by phone at ext. 80346 or e-mail: tsc@uwo.ca.

Excerpt from page 10:

While juggling the multiple demands of academic life, it is easy for faculty to overlook new graduate students' lack of knowledge about the experience they are embarking upon. Indeed, students also bear the responsibility for seeking out the information they need. The problem, as described by our focus group participants, is that they often do not know what questions to ask or what information they should seek. Terminology pertaining to the preparation of a thesis or preliminary examinations may be new to the student. Thus, openness to and perhaps even anticipation of the most basic questions (e.g., How do I apply for funding? Why is it important for me to apply for funding?) are fundamental to guiding graduate students, particularly in the early stages of their graduate experience. Departments, programs or Graduate Affairs Assistants will often provide orientations for new graduate students that focus on policies and procedures, but supervisors should also be aware of and have easy access to the necessary policy documents.

Additionally, there are aspects of the graduate education experience that only a supervisor can communicate. These are generally the unwritten or implicit aspects that are keys to success in the field. A common observation from our faculty focus groups was that it is important to inform graduate students about how advisory committees operate because they are new and unique to graduate education, and would not be part of the prior educational experience of the student.
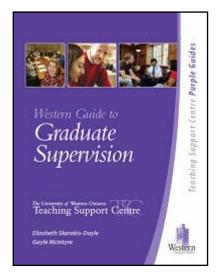
Clearly articulated expectations and regular communication are recognized as hallmarks of good supervisory practices in the research literature and, as we expected, have emerged as foundational characteristics of effective supervision across our disciplinary focus groups. As such, they also cut across the other major themes emerging from our focus group discussions. Flowing from these foundations, our participants identified specific characteristics of effective supervision which we have organized into four sections: (1) flexibility, (2) availability, (3) respect, and (4) being a mentor. The subsequent sections of this guide are based upon these essential characteristics, but the thematic threads of clear expectations and good communication as discussed above run throughout each aspect of the supervisory endeavour.

TSC WELCOMES NEW EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPER

*N*atasha Patrito has joined the Teaching Support Centre as Educational Developer with the specific aims of supporting and advancing instructional efforts in the sciences and engineering. Natasha, who will complete her doctorate in Physical Chemistry in early May, is an award winning scholar and TA, as well as an experienced member of the TA Training Program Instructional Team. Natasha will couple first-hand knowledge of the academic research environment with her passion for teaching in the implementation of new faculty and graduate student development programs designed to address the unique needs of natural scientists and engineers.

Natasha is always interested in talking to Deans, Chairs, faculty members and students about innovative approaches to science education and can be reached at ext. 84651 or by email at **npatrit@uwo.ca**.

BOOK REVIEW — UNDERSTANDING ESL WRITERS: A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

BY JOHNSTON MILLER, GRADUATE WRITING COUNSELLOR, WRITING SUPPORT CENTRE & TEACHING SUPPORT CENTRE

Writing in a new language involves a new set of challenges and expectations, and native speakers often have difficulty understanding the issues that non-native speakers go through. *Understanding ESL Writers: A Guide for Teachers* by Ilona Leki attempts to bridge the gap between the native teacher and the non-native student.

Leki begins with a brief review of teaching English as a second language as it applies to writing. The remainder of the book details the diverse backgrounds of second language students and how this translates into their writing. Leki's thesis revolves around the idea that non-native students learn to write using some of the same methods as native students, but there are several key differences that necessitate extra attention from educators. Differing attitudes towards plagiarism, feedback, and the writing process, among other issues, complicate the process of teaching good writing.

Leki continually emphasizes the need for educators to focus on larger structural issues in student writing, especially in the chapter devoted to Contrastive Rhetoric, rather than the errors in grammar and syntax evident at first glance. That said, the "Sentence-Level Errors" chapter is one of the more enlightening sections of the book. Non-native students often have a better understanding of the rules of grammar than native students, but their writing is often littered with awkward sentences that are easily corrected but uneasily explained. Exposing some unspoken and often contradictory rules of English, Leki points out how difficult it is to integrate seamlessly into a new language and how unimportant a relatively minor grammatical error can be in an otherwise well-formed sentence.

Available in the stacks at the Teaching Support Centre, UWO's Education library and through online book retailers, *Understanding ESL Writers* is a fairly easy and short read (~150 pages) that serves as a solid introduction for those starting to think about ESL Writing. For more advanced and updated content, look for essay collections edited by Tony Silva and Paul Kei Matsuda.

Leki, I. (1992). *Understanding ESL Writers: A Guide for Teachers*. Portsmouth, NH : Boynton/Cook.

SUCCESSINACADEMIA.CA BY NANDA DIMITROV, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, TSC

A new online resource is available for international and new Canadian faculty. The site is described as "an online professional development resource, [which] offers information and hands-on tools and activities to all members (faculty, students, administrators) of the academic community, [who are] willing to create and reinforce an inclusive academic environment where the contributions of all new Canadian and international faculty are valued and nourished."

The website's three areas provide a wealth of information that faculty members will find useful during their first few years at Western.

- **A Place to Discover** presents video interviews with faculty, administrators and students about supports and resources for new faculty in multicultural institutions.
- **A Place to Network** allows faculty to connect with other new Canadian or international colleagues.
- **A Place to Practice** provides information about the Ontario Higher Education system, offers activities that may help faculty and administrators develop greater cultural awareness, and includes case studies about the impact of cultural differences on teaching in a Canadian classroom.

The information on the SuccessInAcademia itself is free. Two links in the **Place To Practice** section connect interested faculty to online resources that require a paid membership: the facdev.ca website, and IATHE's online course on teaching in higher education. While these last two resources are useful, you will find many of the same resources at Western for free on our website, and as part of the Teaching at the University Level course, offered to faculty as a one-week intensive summer course in August.
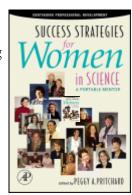
If you decide to explore SuccessInAcademia.ca (**http://www.successinacademia.ca**), please let us know which sections of the website you found most useful in your work.

NEW BOOKS IN THE TSC LIBRARY

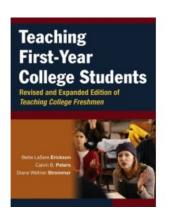## Success Strategies for Women in Science: A Portable Mentor

"Success Strategies for Women in Science: A Portable Mentor is an inspiring and engaging mentoring manual for women, both in the latter years of their scientific training and in the early stages of their careers. It will help aspiring scientists identify the skills they need to be successful and aim them in making smooth transitions." The topics discussed include networking, balancing professional and personal life, career management, and communicating your work to non-scientists.

Pritchard, P. (2007). *Success Strategies for Women in Science: A Portable Mentor.* Boston: Elsevier/Academic Press.

Teaching First-Year College Students

"The book offers concrete suggestions about specific strategies and approaches for faculty who teach first year courses ... based on the most current research on teaching and learning ... it incorporates information about the demographic changes that have occurred in student populations since the first edition was published. The updated strategies are designed to help first-year students adjust effectively to both the academic and non-academic pressures of college. The authors also help faculty understand first-year students and show how their experiences have prepared — or not prepared — them for the world of higher education."

Erickson, B.L., Peters, C.B., Strommer, D. W. (2006). *Teaching First-Year College Students.* San-Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Coming Events in the TSC

Spring Perspectives on Teaching Conference
May 14, 2008

New Faculty Orientation - Teaching at Western
August 7, 2008

Course Design and Renovation Workshop
May 22 & 23, 2008

Course on Teaching at the University Level
August 11 - 15, 2008

Summer Teaching with Technology Institute
May 26 - 28, 2008

Fall Perspectives on Teaching Conference
August 27, 2008

For more information, contact the Teaching Support Centre, ext. 84622; e-mail: **tsc@uwo.ca**; website: **www.uwo.ca/tsc**