Reflections

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Inside this issue:

Reflections on Teaching at Western:
A Conversation with Dr. Paul Davenport
By Mike Atkinson, Faculty Associate, Teaching Support Centre

After 15 years of being at the helm, Dr. Davenport is leaving Western this July. Reflections caught up with him earlier this month for a chat on teaching.

Reflections: Good morning, Paul. As you know, we want to do a piece on your thoughts and reflections about teaching at Western.

Dr. Davenport: Can I slip in my own course here?

R: Of course!

D: For the past five years, I've taught a course called, "In the Footsteps of the Impressionists." We take the student through Paris and the Left Bank, the Saint-Lazare train station, and the Grand Boulevards, then out to the suburbs where Monet and Renoir painted. In each case, we see about 12 paintings, discuss the context of the artwork, read poetry, and listen to music of the times, and then go on a walk using slides that I have taken in France.

R: Sounds like a great course, but why do you teach this ... after all you're an economist not an art historian?

D: I was asked that question once during an interview with a Toronto newspaper, and I said that if you're going to be in a job where your days are full and often stressful, then you had better have some fun ... you want to come home at night smiling. I do a number of things to have fun such as bike tours, my involvement with Jazz on CHRW, sporting events, etc. But nothing is as much fun as teaching this course.

R: I'm glad you said that ... I often tell new instructors that you have choices in what you teach and how you deliver it, so you really should do what you love.

D: I agree ... I've always resisted the idea that we have research opportunities and teaching loads. Sure there is the hard work of setting exams and grading papers, but I've always enjoyed getting up in front of the classroom and talking about things that are important.

Paul Davenport

R: Teaching has changed over the last 15 years or so ... how do you see the role of teaching at the university?

D: Let me begin with my first impressions of Western, which were that Western had a special commitment to teaching. We are a strong research university and were back when I arrived, but there was a strong interest in teaching, a commitment to teaching that was not present to the same degree in many other research universities. Much of the international reputation of a university is generated by research, but in the public mind that can lead to a de-emphasis on teaching. There are only so many hours in a day, and in the end if what really counts is research, we may not either individually or collectively pay the attention to teaching that we should. Many books have been written about this in the past 20 years, and I believe that Western is on the good side of that spectrum. Our faculty have a real commitment to their students. The students feel it, they talk to me about it, and I was not surprised when that first *Globe and Mail* survey came out showing that Western was number one by a

**New Nomination Deadline for the
2010 3M National Teaching Fellowships**
Moved from mid-November to August 31, 2009
For information, go to **http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/awards.html**

wide margin among 30 or so research-intensive universities regarding quality of education. I hope that that commitment will never change at Western ... although the way we teach has changed dramatically. I started teaching in 1973 when it was a rare event to have an overhead projector in the classroom. I can remember first using an overhead and preparing my charts in advance ... I could get more detail than by using the chalkboard. That really seemed like a big step forward in the use of technology. Now of course, we are in a completely different world where even people such as myself with little technological background can use PowerPoint, move around the classroom, use a movie, and so on. But technology does not change the fact that you need to love teaching, and you need to be committed to it.

R: Some people claim that we tend to rely on technology too much ... does technology need to be in the classroom?

D: I would agree with the notion that we sometimes use technology too much (in particular PowerPoint). I always start out with way too many slides for the talk I'm giving, and I realize that even though I want the slides for my notes, if I do not reduce the number of slides, my message is going to be lost. There are also many talks that I give where something like PowerPoint would just get in the way. There is a balance to be struck. There is another question that we need to consider at a residential campus like Western and that concerns the possibility that all instruction may someday be over the web, so there is no reason to have buildings or residences. I think that a share of undergraduate education is going to be delivered that way without question ... maybe an increasing share in North America, but there will always be places like Western because learning is in large part a social experience. You want to be in that classroom; you want to be in the same room as the professor. You want the social experience of student clubs and residences.

R: So we're not all going to become the University of Phoenix or Athabasca?

D: No. I think back to my own experience and how interactions with people effectively defined what my education was. To imagine that I could have done all of that in a chat room ... I don't believe it. Maybe things are changing so rapidly that my vision will be proved wrong, but I think that there is something fundamentally social about learning that will keep residential universities in business.

R: There is a lot of talk these days about student engagement and NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement), and every time we see the data, we find that universities, in general, are not really up to standards with

respect to engagement. Where do you see this going? How are we going to get there?

D: Good question. The Premier has expressed the view that universities should demonstrate how funds are actually being used to further students' education, and in the Rae report there was explicit reference to NSSE as a tool we can use. We have been looking at the NSSE studies to see what we can learn, and in the case of Western there has been some improvement in many of the scores. We are not where we want to be, but we are improving a bit. Do I have a magic wand to wave so that we can get there? ... no I don't. Consider some of the issues, e.g., how often when you write a paper is it graded by the professor and are the comments written in his or her own hand. We (all Ontario universities) were all surprised when we saw that score and that students reported that this was a rare event in their university education. We realize now that because of financial constraint over the last 25 years, the student-faculty ratio at Ontario universities has doubled, and we have a lot more very large classes, and it is just not feasible for a single professor to provide comments ... there are constraints. Nonetheless, I find the NSSE questions interesting because they ask us to do better, and we have to find ways to arrange our teaching resources and increase them if we can so that more and more students can experience the benefits of direct interchange with the faculty such as receiving comments from the professor.

R: Do you think that this is something that has to come from the top down? Is it the case that the senior administration has to say, look, we want faculty members to correct their own papers and write comments?

D: I don't think that the university works that way. The role of the senior administration is to encourage people to look at the NSSE scores and think about the issues. I just cannot image that we would have one solution. What works in Social Science may not work in Medicine. So we need committed faculty at the department level and overall support from the senior administration.

R: Following on that comment, what are your thoughts on *Ivory Tower Blues* (by Cote and Allahar)? They take a pretty edgy and some would say controversial view on today's students.

D: I am on the record publically for this since I took part in the open meeting at Western last year. First, let me say that I enjoyed reading their work. It is always a joy when a book comes out on Canadian universities written by Canadian professors ... so much comes from the States. We need to encourage more research on these issues in Canada. There is no doubt that in our lifetime universities have gone from a fairly select place where maybe 7% of the population graduated back in the sixties, where now maybe a quarter to a third of the population experience university. This does lead to a greater diversity at the university, but I don't see a great number of students at Western who are here because of peer pressure or because they simply don't know what to do. With the entrance

grades we have in place here, we are getting the kind of students who are willing to work hard because they had to do that in high school. And they choose to come to Western.

R: There has also been considerable talk about the OCAV guidelines, (six statements of degree-level expectations drafted by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents), which are due to be implemented in the next few years. Will this represent a challenge to Western?

D: Having guidelines for courses is a good idea, but the biggest problem I see is that these guidelines may represent over-management and no one wants excessive management in their courses. Asking people to think about course objectives is healthy, but mandating them is not. We need to keep talking about these issues, but not in terms of enforceable rules.

R: Several universities have implemented the "lecturer with tenure" stream at their schools. Thus, a faculty member could decide to spend all or most of their time in teaching-related activities and progress to the rank of Senior Lecturer (as opposed to Full Professor). Do you see this happening at Western?

D: In a way, we are part way there at all Canadian universities as evidenced by the great number of part-time faculty we employ. While this approach has some merit, I am most wedded to the teacher-researcher model, and I do not see most of the major research-intensive universities moving away from this model.

R: Any advice for graduate students who are seeking an academic position?

D: Make sure that this is your real passion. Twenty years from now, you do not want to be looking back and asking yourself if it was worth it. I am very glad that I made academia my passion.

R: And one final question ... Apple or PC?

D: Apple. Although I do use a PC at the office for email, I use a Mac at home. You don't think I could do all those fancy graphics for my course on a PC do you?

Editor's Note: NSSE is the National Survey of Student Engagement, an instrument used in the United States for many years and at selected Canadian schools in the past three years. The OCAV guidelines are six statements of degree-level expectations drafted by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents. They include guidelines for depth and breadth of knowledge, communication skills, etc. for various academic degree programs. For more information, see the following link:
http://www.lib.uwo.ca/files/teaching/OCAV_UDLE.pdf

The University of Western Ontario
Teaching Support Centre

Course Design and Renovation Workshop
May 21 & 22, 2009
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
- Matching Objectives to Assessment Methods
- Alternative Forms of Assessment

Enrolment: limited to 12 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 2009 Conference — BETWEEN THE TIDES
Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education
June 17 — 20, 2009
University of New Brunswick
http://www.unb.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**

Communication Strategies for International Graduate Students: Surviving and Thriving in Canadian Academia

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

International and newcomer Canadian graduate students represent 25% of the graduate students and 30% of the teaching assistants at Western. They bring with them excellent academic credentials, awe-inspiring amounts of dedication, and good intentions. Faculty bring discipline-specific and pedagogic expertise, directions for mentoring, and good intentions. Undergraduate students bring an enthusiasm for learning, an ability to adapt to new ways of communicating, and good intentions. And yet despite these marvelous qualities and intentions, communication between all these parties sometimes goes awry.

One of the biggest challenges facing international graduate students involves finding the right balance between showing initiative while simultaneously sounding appropriately polite and compliant. Due to the power dynamics in some of their countries of origin, some students might expect more explicit direction from their supervisors. In addition, they may be unaware that taking initiative is a critical component of success in graduate education and thus may not do so for fear of appearing to challenge their supervisor's authority. In a meeting, this might manifest as an inability or perceived unwillingness to respond directly to questions or suggest alternate approaches in research. Alternatively, the students might come from countries where communication patterns permit cross-talk – interruptions – and therefore might interrupt a lot in their enthusiasm to contribute. Either pattern of communication could impact negatively on the communication during meetings.

Communication Strategies for International Graduate Students: Surviving and Thriving in Canadian Academia is a new manual that will be available online to the Western community to support international students and their mentors. The guide will:

Available on WebCT OWL. To gain access, please e-mail Nadine LeGros at nlegros2@uwo.ca

- help students communicate clearly in meetings with faculty;

- familiarize students with Canadian expectations of instructors;

- inform students about how to give and receive feedback;

- demonstrate how to write appropriate letters and e-mails;

- facilitate students' transitions to Western and Canada;

- help faculty understand cultural patterns that may contribute to misunderstandings … and much more…

Communication Strategies for International Graduate Students: Surviving and Thriving in Canadian Academia will be available on WebCT OWL in May for the exclusive use of the faculty, staff, and students at Western. The manual currently contains 21 chapters with topics such as Developing Productive Working Relationships with Your Supervisor, English Language Skills, and Canadian Academic Assumptions to help international students understand some Canadian university norms – and to help their mentors realize how many Canadian academic norms are not universal. As the manual is electronic, new units will be added on an ongoing basis. To access the manual, please send your Western user name to Nadine Le Gros at **nlegros2@uwo.ca.**

Western's Research on Teaching Program

BY ALLEN PEARSON, FACULTY ASSOCIATE, TEACHING SUPPORT CENTRE

For several years, the Teaching Support Centre supported a research competition for research on teaching. That research program is now a part of Research Western's Internal Grants competition: **Western's Research on Teaching Program**. This move allows the research program to continue and incorporates the program into Research Western's standards and processes. The move to Research Western puts the program on a sure foundation and will support high quality research on teaching at Western. Faculty, librarians, and archivists who are contemplating research on teaching should check the Research Western web site **www.uwo.ca/research** for more information. The adoption of this program by Research Western is a very positive development. It demonstrates Western's commitment to the scholarship of teaching and learning and to the improvement of learning. During the time the Teaching Support Centre sponsored the program, 12 projects were funded. Dr. Ken Meadows of the TSC coordinated the program and will continue to work with the Research on Teaching Learning Community. We look forward to continued research on teaching at Western and appreciate the commitment Research Western has made to the program.

Spring Perspectives on Teaching
Wednesday, May 20, 2009

Room 35, Arthur & Sonia Labatt Health Sciences Building
9:00 a.m. — 4:00 p.m.

FEATURED SPEAKERS

Opening Remarks & Refreshments: 9:00 a.m. — 9:30 a.m.
John Doerksen, Vice-Provost (Academic Programs & Students)

Keynote Session: 9:30 a.m. — 10:45 a.m.
Getting Students to do the Readings
Linda Nilson (Clemson University)

Dr. Linda Nilson

Plenary Session: 11:00 a.m. — 12:15 p.m.
Laptops in the Classroom: Constructive or Disruptive Technology?
Facilitator: Linda Nilson (Clemson University)
Panelists: Brock Fenton (Biology), Kim Luton (Sociology), Pascal Munyankesha (French), Graham Smith (Geography)

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

1:30 p.m. — 2:45 p.m.
Bringing the World to the Western Classroom: Internationalizing the Curriculum
Jack Bend (Pathology), Amanda Grzyb (Information & Media Studies), Rob MacDougall (History), Tim Newson (Civil & Environmental Engineering)

"I Rest My Case" - Implementing Case Studies in Science and Engineering Classrooms
Natasha Patrito (Teaching Support Centre)

3:00 p.m. — 4:00 p.m.
Using Threshold Concepts in Teaching: Critical Concepts in the Teaching of the Disciplines
Jennifer Boman (King's University College)

Using Annotated Bibliographies to Enhance Scientific Literacy
Linda Dunn (Western Libraries), Patricia Gray (Biology)

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 25 – 27, 2009

The Teaching Support Centre (TSC) and the Instructional Technology Resource Centre (ITRC) invite you to participate in the Summer Teaching with Technology Institute, May 25 - 27, 2009, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. in the Instructional Computing Lab, Room 4230, Support Services Building.

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

- those interested in learning more about integrating technology in their instruction;
- those currently developing or teaching online courses using WebCT OWL; and
- those interested in discovering what other faculty have found successful or not so successful with teaching technologies.

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 do not need to have any experience with instructional technologies to attend; they need only to have an interest in exploring how technology can enhance their curricula.

Sample content will be provided for you to work with, but please feel free to bring any of your course materials that you would like to use during this institute. Participants will have the opportunity to transform this content to engaging online instructional materials. Participants who complete the institute will have the foundational skills for selecting appropriate teaching technology to build, teach, and manage their courses.

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

Limited Enrolment: Enrolment is limited to 18, so please register early.

Appreciation in Trying Times
A positive approach to educational renewal at Western

By Natasha Patrito, Educational Developer, Teaching Support Centre

When flipping past news channels or quickly scanning the front pages of national newspapers, it is becoming increasingly difficult to avoid words such as *crisis, unemployment, lay-off,* and *recession.* Financial pressures are forcing numerous institutions, including our own, to make very difficult decisions regarding infrastructure, programming, and staff. Amidst all of this doom and gloom, is there anything to appreciate about Western's current situation and the challenging decisions that our various constituents face? Proponents of the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach to organizational change would respond with a resounding 'Yes.'

When making crucial changes to departments, courses or curricula, we often ask ourselves 'What's not going well?' and subsequently, 'How can we fix it?' This traditional approach to problem-solving has been described as a deficit approach because it focuses on inadequacies and inefficiencies. Critics argue that deficit thinking mires institutions in negativity and actually perpetuates the problems that these organizations are trying to solve.[1] Appreciative Inquiry flips the traditional problem-solving approach on its head by focusing exclusively on the positive. It asks groups, units, and departments about their greatest successes – 'What is it that this group is doing very well?' – and seeks to uncover the conditions that support these successes so that a greater proportion of attention, energy, and resources can be focused along positive directions. For example, rather than asking "What's wrong with my students? Why aren't they doing their readings? Why do they appear so disengaged from the material?" an AI approach would reframe the question, asking "Think of a time during class when your students were interested and asking questions. What was happening in the classroom? What factors contributed to this apparent engagement? How might the classroom dynamic be different if these teaching techniques were incorporated more frequently?"

Introduced in the late 1980's by David Cooperrider and Sruresh Srivasta at Case Western Reserve University, AI has become an increasingly important theory in organizational development. In the two decades since its inception, this approach has been used by private, public, not-for profit, community, and academic institutions worldwide for a variety of purposes including the creation of vision statements, strategic planning, conflict resolution, and program evaluation. Recently, AI was used by students and staff at The University of South Dakota in the evaluation and renovation of their MA program, *Technology for Training & Development.*[2] Students in the program interviewed peers and faculty members, asking questions such as, "What has been the highlight of your time in the program thus far? Who was involved, and what did they do to make it such a good experience?" or "Based on your experience so far, what do you value most about this program? In what elements of the program has this core characteristic been most evident?" This process unearthed new perspectives on the curriculum and spurred students and faculty to collaborate in the analysis of the AI data and in the design of program changes. The experience at The University of South Dakota highlights a number of the benefits of the AI approach: the method is highly collaborative; it gathers the opinions of all stakeholders and it actively involves these stakeholders in the process of renewal.

At Western, the Faculty of Science is undertaking its own AI project to explore the conditions that lead to *intensive learning* among undergraduate science students. The academic plan of the Faculty of Science lists seven primary objectives, the first of which is "to establish a national reputation as a *learning-intensive* Faculty." An AI approach is being used to uncover when and why science undergraduates experience learning intensity by addressing the following questions: 'How do various members of the Faculty of Science describe undergraduate learning intensity? What conditions currently exist to foster these experiences? How can we create more learning intensive opportunities in the future?' The Faculty as a whole - students, staff, faculty members, alumni and emeriti – have been invited to participate in face-to-face and online surveys to describe their contributions to peak learning experiences. The large-scale project, spearheaded by Tom Haffie, and sponsored by the Faculty, the Teaching Support Centre and the Science Students' Council, is in its early stages and interviews are ongoing. The facilitators of this effort hope that, by collecting stories of intense learning happening in science lectures and labs across campus, themes will emerge to guide the Faculty in the development of broadly supported programs and/or pilot projects that build on these identified strengths.

Any AI process may be broken down into four key steps, referred to as the Four-I model – Initiate, Inquire, Imagine, and Innovate.[1] The Initiate phase establishes the central focus and scope of the inquiry – 'What do we want to explore? Who is to be interviewed and by whom?' During the Inquiry phase, positive questions, specifically designed to tap into individual's peak experiences of the focus topic, are developed and one-on-one interviews are conducted. From the collected success stories, recurring themes are identified and explored in greater depth. During this Imagine phase, stakeholders create a shared vision of the future and describe this

Understanding Threshold Concepts

By Jennifer Boman, Department of Psychology, King's Univeristy College

One of the key challenges we face as educators is helping students move toward deeper understandings and new ways of thinking in their respective disciplines. A useful framework for thinking about student understanding and subsequent curriculum design is the idea of threshold concepts. Meyer and Land (2003) introduced threshold concepts as conceptual gateways or portals that students in a particular discipline must pass through in order to arrive at transformed understandings. Within any course there may be many important concepts that we desire students to master before moving on to the next component of the course curriculum. Meyer and Land suggest that what distinguishes threshold concepts from "important" concepts is their transformative potential. Threshold concepts are fundamental to a discipline and may open up new ways of thinking for students.

An example that illustrates the idea of threshold concepts and transformative understanding is the concept of heat transfer described by Meyer and Land (2006). In their example, a chef experiences a shift in perspective in his understanding of cooking. Meyer and Land first ask that you imagine the situation of two cups of tea (of equal temperatures) sitting on a countertop. You add milk to Cup A immediately but wait several minutes before adding milk to Cup B. Which cup of tea is cooler? Although the most intuitive answer may be Cup A, the correct response is actually Cup B. In the initial minutes of cooling, Cup B is hotter and consequently loses more heat because of the steeper temperature gradient. Meyer and Land suggest that understanding heat transfer as a function of the temperature gradient represents a threshold concept in cooking. Once chefs pass through this portal of understanding they show a new comprehension of cooking. Cooking is no longer just about the mixing of ingredients but involves a complex

awareness of which pots and pans may be best to use in relation to a given heat source and combination of ingredients. In other words, the chef's understanding of cooking has been transformed.

So how do faculty recognize which concepts within a discipline are threshold concepts? Meyer and Land (2003) suggest several key characteristics that help identify threshold concepts. First, threshold concepts have transformative potential in that they require a significant shift in perspective such as the chef's changed understanding of cooking as involving the physics of heat. Second, threshold concepts are typically irreversible. Once a learner arrives at a new understanding, he or she is unlikely to forget it. A cook who understands the concept of heat transfer is unlikely to return to her view of cooking as a simple combination of ingredients. A third characteristic is that threshold concepts are integrative. A transformed understanding exposes interrelationships among knowledge that may have been hidden or previously inaccessible to the learner. Understanding the principle of heat transfer may also help chefs to understand which cooking method (e.g., frying, steaming) is best suited to a given situation. Finally, a threshold concept may involve what Perkins (1999) terms as "troublesome knowledge" whereby students may find knowledge to be conflicting, counterintuitive, or conceptually difficult. As in the heat transfer example described above, the learner needs to come to terms with counterintuitive knowledge in order to come to a new understanding.

Identifying threshold concepts can have important implications for curriculum development. Focusing on threshold concepts in a discipline may mean shifting our thinking about course design from content coverage to a focus on the key understandings that

students need to develop within a discipline. In recognizing that threshold concepts may involve troublesome knowledge, this shift may also entail a willingness on the part of students to enter into uncomfortable or troublesome states. Day (2008) suggests that in some programs students can avoid fundamental concepts that require a shift in perspective by choosing alternate pathways or by finding ways to cope with limited or inaccurate understanding. A focus on threshold concepts may mean allotting more time to helping students pass through certain thresholds. Identifying threshold concepts and assessing whether or not students have passed through them will ultimately help ensure that students acquire the core understandings and thinking skills that are essential to their discipline.

References:

Day, H. (2008, June). 'Uncomfortable knowledge': Are students better learners than academics? Paper presented at the 2nd International Conference on Threshold Concepts, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

Meyer, J. H. F., & Land, R. (2003). Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge: Linkages to ways of thinking and practising within the disciplines in Rust, C (ed.), *Improving student learning: Theory and practice--10 years on*. Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development.

Meyer, J. H. F., & Land, R. (Eds) (2006). *Overcoming barriers to student understanding: Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge*. London and New York: Routledge.

Perkins, D. (1999). The many faces of constructivism. *Educational Leadership*, 57(3), 6-11.

Western Libraries Update

BY TOM ADAM, INFORMATION LITERACY LIBRARIAN, WESTERN LIBRARIES

. . . highlighting two new resources

Scholarship@Western

Scholarship@Western is a new multi-purpose online archive that collects, showcases, disseminates, and preserves Western's intellectual capital. Freely available online and indexed by search engines such as Google, Yahoo, and MSN, it makes content much more visible and accessible, which in turn contributes to the impact and recognition of Western's authors.

Scholarship@Western is divided into segments which cover different material types such as published journal articles (with copyright clearance) and digitized theses and dissertations. It also functions as an online publishing platform for Western-based online journals, conference proceedings, and working papers. A special feature of Scholarship@Western enables researchers to build personal homepages and showcase publications and presentations.

In short, Scholarship@Western can help disseminate knowledge by providing open access to the academic achievements at Western. Faculty, graduate students, research fellows, academic departments, and research centres are welcome to use it. Scholarship@Western is accessible at: **http://ir.lib.uwo.ca**. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions about it, please feel free to contact Adrian Ho at **adrian.ho@uwo.ca**.

Canadian Electronic Library Collection

Western Libraries recently added access to the Canadian Electronic Library (CEL) Collection to our shared library catalogue made available to us via Gibson Library Connections. Comprised of two major subcollections, The Canadian Public Policy Collection and The Canadian Publishers Collection, CEL contains more than 12,000 titles consisting of books in print and electronic form, documents, pamphlets, and much more.

The Canadian Public Policy Collection is "a collection of monograph publications from Canadian public policy institutes, government agencies, advocacy groups, think-tanks, university research centres and other public interest groups. The organizations included in this collection represent the leading edge of primary research and opinion in all areas of Canadian public policy."

The Canadian Publishers Collection contains material from "over 50 leading Canadian publishers who have partnered with Gibson Library Connections to distribute their current catalogues of copyright materials... These publishers have made over 8,000 titles available for library use through the Canadian Electronic Library."

To explore these rich collections, simply follow the links provided in the Western Libraries shared catalogue (**http://www.lib.uwo.ca**) - do a simple search for the collection, the links are right there. The Canadian Public Policy Collection was purchased by King's University College with access extended for the entire Western community. Access to the 2008 Canadian Publishers' Collection (Collection 1) is enabled by Western's consortial participation in the 2008 Digital Content Infrastructure for the Human and Social Sciences (DCI) Project and the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN).

Fall Perspectives on Teaching Conference

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dr. Allan Gedalof

Wednesday, September 2, 2009

9:00 a.m., Room 35,

Arthur & Sonia Labatt Health Sciences Building

The Lights Still Bright in the Rear-view Mirror

Two years after retiring, I think I might be able to make a start on answering some questions that Debra Dawson, Director of Western's Teaching Support Centre, got me thinking about at the time of my retirement. What still seems to have mattered most about what I did with and for my students and my colleagues and the disciplines within which I worked? How and with what success might I have managed the constant adjustments to all aspects of the academic life, from what we teach to how we teach it to those we teach and even to the evolving institution in which we do our jobs, and all that over a thirty-five year career? And what lights still shine brightly in the rear-view mirror?

Allan Gedalof is a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Film Studies. For 35 years, he taught English Literature, Film, and Popular Culture. He is the recipient of numerous teaching awards including Western's Pleva Teaching Award, OCUFA Teaching Award, and the 3M Teaching Fellowship.

New!

TSC PURPLE GUIDES

## *Western Guide to Mentoring Graduate Students Across Cultures*
by Nanda Dimitrov, Associate Director, Teaching Support Centre

The *Western Guide to Mentoring Graduate Students Across Cultures* is a handbook for graduate supervisors who work with students from cultures around the world. The guide addresses the most frequently occurring challenges in supervision across cultures and includes concrete mentoring strategies and case studies to help supervisors promote independence and initiative in their mentees, bridge power differences in the relationship, set boundaries, communicate effectively and support their students in the transition to Canadian academia.

International students are involved in a dual process of culture learning. In addition to learning about the culture of their discipline, they are also learning about appropriate and inappropriate ways of behaving and communicating in Canadian culture in general. Their ability to communicate in ways that are seen as effective in the academic/professional context is a crucial factor in their success, and faculty supervisors play a very important role in helping them acquire this knowledge. In their role as mentors, supervisors are in a position to clarify expectations and explain the norms of the discipline. Faculty advisors are also able to observe and give feedback on students' behaviour during everyday interaction.

The guide will be a useful resource for faculty members or postdoctoral scholars who supervise "across-cultures." As a result of increasing internationalization at Western, intercultural interactions not only take place between Canadian faculty and students from overseas, but also between Canadian students and faculty from non-English speaking backgrounds, as well as between scholars and students from two different cultures interacting in the Canadian academic context. For example, a Chinese faculty member may supervise Iranian graduate students and work to resolve disagreements through a department chair from Europe.

Faculty, postdoctoral scholars, and students who work across cultures will all find the examples and suggestions in the guide informative as they work to bridge cultural differences during collaborative projects. Postdocs may be able to relate to both the mentor and the mentee role, depending on whether they have the opportunity to mentor graduate students working with them in the lab.
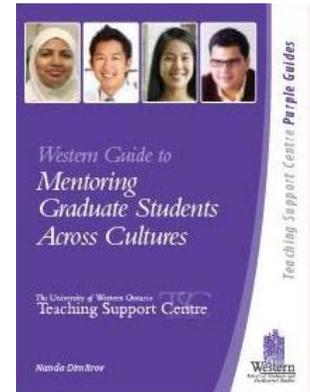
Western Guide to Curriculum Review
by Margaret McNay, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education
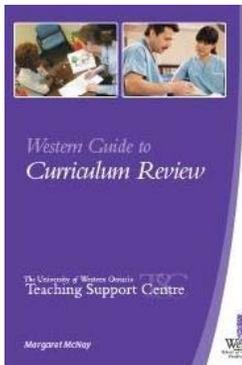
The need to review a curriculum may arise for any number of reasons and may involve an extended, in-depth examination of an entire program or a more limited, focused examination of a single aspect of a program or even a single course.

The *Western Guide to Curriculum Review* offers ideas about how to get started on the review process—questions to ask at the beginning of and during the process, suggestions about information to be gathered and how, issues to think about as you decide what to include in the curriculum, and ideas about how to teach the curriculum involving new and alternative pedagogies. Curriculum is not a simple matter; this guide is written to reflect some of the complexities of curriculum and, I hope, to be thought-provoking and challenging. I hope, as well of course, that it provides just enough of a step-by-step guideline to be helpful with just about any curriculum review project.

Mentoring Graduate Students Across Cultures and *Curriculum Review* will be available in print and online on the Teaching Support Centre website in May.

http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/purpleguides.html

TALES FROM THE CRIPT

BY TIM WILSON, SCHULICH SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND DENTISTRY, DEPARTMENT OF ANATOMY & CELL BIOLOGY

Research dedicated to teaching and learning is entering an era of expansion. Part of this burgeoning is due to funding endeavours spearheaded by the TSC and its Small Grant for Research on Teaching. This brief will highlight one of the projects funded partially by the TSC grant.

Many undergraduates, and all medical and dental students, take some form of anatomical training. Like many experiential learning environments, however, post-secondary curriculum time dedicated to teaching laboratories has either diminished or evolved into something not yet proven to be better. The literature laments over the full impacts of these alterations[1] and warns that outcomes may not be fully recognized until professionals start making anatomically incorrect decisions affecting health outcomes[2]. Furthermore, the rapidity of curriculum change without apparent evidence is disconcerting, should not be approached haphazardly,[3] and should be scrutinized at each step.

The Corps for Research of Instructional and Perceptual Technologies, or the CRIPT, attempts to test, quantify, and create a foundation of evidence-based teaching and learning tools at each step of development and integration into the curriculum. It has received wonderful support from the Teaching Support Centre and other grass-roots groups such as GAMES at the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry to conduct hands-on research of teaching tools. The tools and approaches developed at the CRIPT may be specific to anatomical education, but inevitably the principles extend to broader teaching and learning paradigms. A recent study undertaken by Robin Hopkins, a Masters of Clinical Anatomy student and me, explored a new method of optimizing the shrinking lab time facing anatomy students. In the study, she probed whether students in a gross anatomy lab could utilize stereoscopic (3D) digital models with equal efficacy to cadaveric materials. The digital model is virtual and represents a visuospatial interpretation of the traditional dissection many students experience. Using a pseudo-crossover, pretest-posttest design, Hopkins analyzed student quiz results in addition to sampling self-reported attitudes and perceptions of both learning environments. Furthermore, she created a hybrid group combining gross cadaver dissection with digital 3D renderings of the lab materials. Her results suggest that all lab environments purvey the pertinent information to students equally as no differences appear in pre-test

post-test student scores. In the cross-over component, the results of her assessment of student perceptions are less clear. It appears that the 18-20 year old "digital native" is not ready to let digital anatomy replace gross dissection. Interesting anecdotes flow from qualitative sampling such as "ease of use" of digital models and the lack of the "ick" factor with digital dissection. Deeper themes also surface relating to learning theory tendencies. For example, students have a natural affinity to the method of their first introduction to anatomy (digital prefer digital and dissection prefer dissection methods); curriculum concerns are echoed by the participants such as lack of time to fully complete lab and steep in the knowledge; and even student's interpretation of passive vs. active learning come from their comments.

Although we are just a scratch on the surface, projects such as this will provide the needed data to advance both the *science* of understanding how modern students think and the *art* of curriculum/course design to achieve the best student comprehension and retention. What excites us about this new arm of research is how it fits into both qualitative and quantitative research designs, how it has immediate impacts, and how it's cutting, or sometimes bleeding, edge research extending into unknown territories.

1. Collins TJ, Given RL, Hulsebosch CE, Miller BT. Status of gross anatomy in the US and Canada: Dilemma for the 21st century. *Clinical Anatomy*. 1994;7:275-296.

2. Cottam WW. Adequacy of medical school gross anatomy education as perceived by certain postgraduate residency programs and anatomy course directors. *Clinical Anatomy*. 1999;12:55-65.

3. Terrell M. Anatomy of learning: Instructional design principles for the anatomical sciences. *The Anatomical Record (Part B: The New Anatomists)*. 2006;289B:252-260.
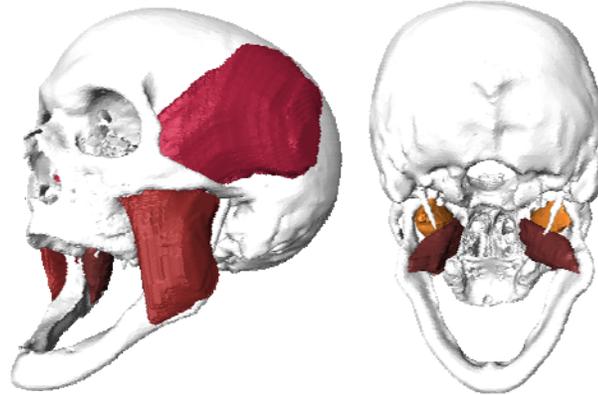
Appreciation in Trying Times *. . . from page 7*

vision in the form of 'provocative propositions' – concrete statements that explain how the system will look or function if the exceptional performance described in the highpoint experiences became the norm. In the final Innovate stage, AI participants plan and implement initiatives that will make their provocative propositions a reality.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the verb 'appreciate' in the following ways: (1) to find worth or excellence in and (2) to raise in value. As stocks plummet and deficits grow, the time is ripe to turn an appreciative eye on the Western community. In this difficult financial situation, AI asserts that the most meaningful lessons to be learned come *not* from an examination of our past failings, but from a thoughtful analysis of our past successes. By reflecting on our strengths and best practices, we can perhaps begin to shift the perception of our current situation from being problem-ridden to being resource rich – those resources being the collective knowledge, skills, passion and good-will consistently demonstrated by Western's staff, faculty, students and wider community members – and make the decisions necessary to move our curricula, programs, and departments in the direction of positive change.

Have we piqued your interest? For more information on the Faculty of Science's Growing Intensity project or to volunteer for an interview, please send an email to **growingintensity@uwo.ca**. To find out more about the process of Appreciative Inquiry and examples of its use in a variety of contexts, please consult:

1. Magruder Watkins, J. and Mohr B. 2001. *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination.* Jossey-Bass/Pheiffer, San Francisco.
2. Kelly, D. K. 2006. *Planning for Sustainable Educational Development with Appreciative Inquiry.* Conference of the International Consortium for Educational Development, Sheffield.
3. Carr-Stewart, S. and Walker, K. 2003. Learning leadership through Appreciative Inquiry. *Management in Education* 17(2) 9-14.
4. Elliot, Charles. 1999. *Locating the Energy for Change: An Introduction in Appreciative Inquiry*. The International Institute for Sustainable Development, Winnipeg.
5. Acosta, A. and Douthwaite, B. 2005. *Appreciative inquiry: An approach for learning and change based on our own best practices*. The Institutional Learning and Change Brief, New York.

TSC Director's Note ... By Debra Dawson

Recently the Teaching Support Centre has been involved in a HEQCO (Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario) research project examining "Faculty Engagement in Teaching Development". This is a multi-institutional study involving six universities led by Fred Evers at the University of Guelph. In the first stage of the research we met with 18 teaching award winners in three focus groups who shared with us their history on how they learned about teaching at the start of their careers and also talked about what types of teaching related activities they are now engaged in. Plus they discussed advice they would give on teaching to those at different stages of their careers. Some of the themes that emerged from our first question included that most learned initially about teaching by trial and error, while some of our newer colleagues were more likely to have had a course or formal education in teaching. Many of the participants were likely to read discipline-related journals on teaching and attend workshops or conferences. We also discovered that several faculty are engaged in pedagogical journal clubs or are performing research on the scholarship of teaching and learning. The discussions were rich, and I greatly appreciated the participation of our faculty. The second phase of the study will involve a survey of our community, as learning about your needs is very important to our work in the Teaching Support Centre. So stay tuned!

Curriculum Design and Learning Outcomes: New Resources!

We have recently updated our resources on these two topics, so check out www.uwo.ca/tsc (under Resources) for more information on how to write learning outcomes (including examples) and web materials on curriculum mapping and the OCAV *Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (UDLEs)*.