



Reflections

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Faculty Engagement in Teaching Development: Part 1

BY DEBRA DAWSON, DIRECTOR AND GAYLE MCINTYRE, RESEARCH ASSISTANT, TEACHING SUPPORT CENTRE

The Teaching Support Centre (TSC) has recently been involved in a multi-centre research project funded by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) on faculty engagement in teaching development (partners included Lakehead University, Laurentian University, Queen's University, Ryerson University, and the University of Guelph).

- **Phase One** — a review of the literature related to faculty engagement in teaching development activities at universities. This report was published on September 25 and is available on the HEQCO website (<http://www.heqco.ca>).
- **Phase Two** — a follow-up on the literature review involved investigating how faculty engage in teaching, where and how they acquire their knowledge and skills, and what faculty do to improve their teaching methods. First, we conducted three focus groups with faculty who had won teaching awards. Next, the findings from these focus groups informed the construction of a survey that went out to all instructional faculty in July. While the results from the survey will not be published until early 2010, we would like to share some of the findings of the focus groups here at Western.

Focus group research at Western

Who were the participants?

- 18 Teaching Award winners — seven had 1

to 15 years experience, and the remainder had 16+ years of experience.

How did you learn about teaching at the beginning of your career?

- **Learning by doing**

— the two most common responses across the three groups were that faculty had learned through experience and by watching others teach. Many described how they learned through trial and error or by osmosis.

- **Courses on teaching** — others had taken courses in teaching as part of graduate work, had participated in the August course for new faculty offered by the TSC, or had been formally taught to teach in a school of education.

- **Mentored** — mentors were mentioned as important to learning about teaching, particularly having a PhD supervisor who was very pro-teaching. One professor described how she sought out teaching mentors through "asking people whom I trusted as teachers to help give me some sense of what's the best way to approach this."

- **Others** — the strong discipline-specific teaching community outside the institution

"Watching more senior people was the most significant thing, and stealing from the best."

was mentioned as a way of learning about teaching in the discipline; also student feedback during the course; self-reflection after the first year to see how to fix things; and using teaching evaluations to change one's own style.

How do you currently learn about teaching?

- **Mentoring** — many faculty mentioned they learn by being a mentor to junior faculty and teaching assistants, and discussing teaching with mentors and colleagues.

"I still watch a lot of others, I attend other people's lectures. I read the evaluations with a strong glass of wine and with a grain of salt. I try to attend a number of workshops, Fall Perspectives, Spring Perspectives and search out various workshops that are going on. I try to get involved in participating at the instructor level because you always learn from each other that way."

- **Training others** — several participants had provided training for new faculty and TAs, facilitated teaching workshops and faculty development sessions within their departments, or they had taught courses in graduate programs on teaching and learning.

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- **Talking to colleagues** — some had discussed literature and teaching practices with colleagues who focus specifically on pedagogy in their disciplines. A common refrain amongst focus group participants was that talking to newer faculty members and graduate students helped to keep them up-to-date with new ideas and energized about teaching.
- **Feedback** — they learned by receiving feedback from their undergraduate students both from formal assessment through the written comments on teaching evaluations and informally by paying attention to how students react in class, and making notes on what goes well. One faculty member kept a teaching journal and recorded impressions of what students do and don't get, and how problems were solved.
- **Journal club** — one group of faculty members had recently started a journal club to discuss pedagogical literature. This group meets once a month to discuss a recent article and also teaching challenges related to the topic of the article.
- **Teaching & learning circles** — by forming a departmental teaching and learning group that offers help when needed, and participating in peer consultations where they visit each other's classrooms and provide feedback and opportunity for reflection.
- **Scholarship of Teaching and Learning** — through doing research on their own teaching. This included publishing in disciplinary educational journals, receiving a teaching grant from the TSC, conducting a study on the core courses in a program, and editing a discipline-specific journal on education scholarship.
- **Other activities faculty engaged in to learn about teaching included** —
 - attending workshops and guest lectures on teaching and learning;
 - reading discipline-based journals and books on pedagogical issues;
 - finding other syllabi on the Internet and looking at how others structure their courses;
 - following developments within a disciplinary community that is interested in teaching; and
 - visiting programs at other institutions and corresponding with people who run/teach them.

What do you wish was available when you started teaching?

- **More mentoring** — many faculty mentioned that they would like more mentoring, both structured and informal. For example, a set of directions or expectations when first starting out; more direction from the department chair; acculturation to the norms of institution; a supportive culture where new faculty wouldn't be afraid to ask about teaching problems; peer evaluation; opportunity to observe good teaching; and to be assigned a teaching mentor (who is different from a research mentor) to discuss teaching problems.

"A thoroughly integrated network of teaching mentors and teaching talks that the department emphasized formally and stringently that teaching is an important part of what we do"



- **Support for scholarly teaching** — another common request was for a strong teaching culture within the department: teaching workshops and discussions within department; a culture of sharing resources and ideas; encouragement to take courses and attend workshops; explicit recognition that good teaching (not just research) is valued; discussions about good teaching (not just teaching to get good ratings); a network of teaching mentors and teaching talks formally endorsed by the department; and overall, a norm that expected scholarly teaching.
- **More training on how to teach** — some respondents mentioned that they would have liked more training in graduate school. One faculty member mentioned that if training in teaching was a formal part of the degree program, it would show that good teaching is valued within the discipline.

Advice for New Faculty Instructors

- **Join the teaching community** — find a mentor (whether formal or informal), talk to as many people as possible about teaching, and seek out people who teach well. Don't be afraid to ask for help from people about norms and expectations, visit other classrooms, and talk about what goes on in your classroom. Ask about and take advantage of the resources available within and outside your department, and the TSC.
- **Take teaching seriously** — new faculty should request reviews by senior or mid-career colleagues, pay attention to the evaluations, and learn to accept criticism. Establish the importance given to teaching with respect to tenure and promotion in your department.
- **Teach within your own style** — engage students and make sure the lectures are worth coming to; focus less on covering the material and more on critical thinking; be natural and remember that students can spot phonies; avoid using tools or technology you aren't comfortable with; and do not fear being wrong in front of students. As one participant stated, "I think of myself as not the smartest most knowledgeable person in the room, but the most capable learner in the room because I have learned over the years how to learn, and how to martial resources."

Advice for Mid-Career Faculty

- **Shake it up** — try something new and be open to questions and reconsider different ways of teaching. Suggestions included proposing a brand new course, teaching new material, finding ways to shift your focus, and avoiding complacency.
- **Make use of available resources** — be aware and make use of the teaching resources available at the institution; share your experiences through joining or starting a network of people that want to talk about teaching; talk to and share practices with newer faculty in order to learn from each other; and talk about classroom experiences.

Advice for Faculty Approaching Retirement

- **Mentor** — share your knowledge. One participant mentioned that senior faculty should maintain their passion for teaching: "if you love doing it, keep doing it; don't do what you don't love – find something else."

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General Advice for All Instructors

The focus group participants also offered general advice for faculty at all career stages: nothing beats preparation; don't neglect lecturing; help your students at all levels develop teaching and presentation skills; remember that learning doesn't just happen in the classroom; think about teaching with masters and PhD students and reflect on the differences; and "remember how it is to be a student."

Barriers to Learning How to Teach

A lot of discussion ensued about the value of teaching versus research. The opinion was expressed that there was an overemphasis on celebrating research funding award winners and neglecting teaching award winners within the academy. Also, there was a lack of senior administrative attention to teaching, that there were departments where teaching/research/service is not flexible in workload, and in particular that there was a lack of incentive

to improve teaching. There was a vigorous discussion of this issue in all three focus groups.

Summary

All groups emphasized the need for ongoing mentoring on teaching at the start of the career rather than being thrown into the classroom without some form of support or formal instruction in teaching. Many spoke of keeping up-to-date on new pedagogies by speaking to younger faculty and graduate students. This point stresses that the mentoring that goes on in departments is actually a two-way interaction where both the newer and more experienced faculty can learn through the mutual mentoring process. Providing teaching-related workshops either in the department or for the TSC was another way that faculty enhanced their practice.

Many of the younger faculty had taken some formal training in teaching as part of their teaching assistant duties or in formal courses as part of their graduate education or new faculty orientation. This was a decided shift from the

seasoned faculty members who often talked about learning about teaching "by the seat of their pants."

All faculty felt passionate about teaching whether they were at the start or near the end of their careers. This is a role they treat seriously and wished was more highly valued within the university.

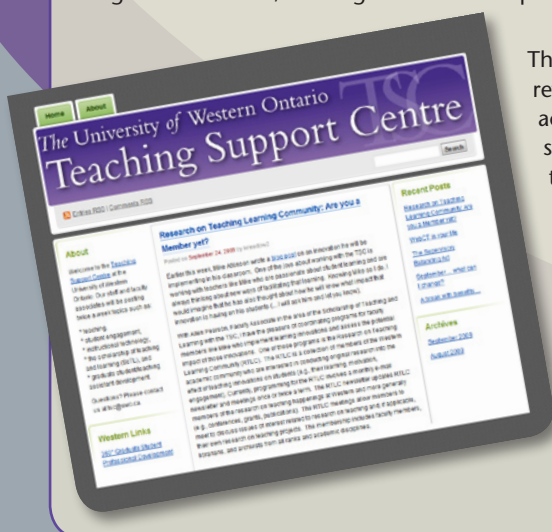
Performing research on teaching is also emerging as a more common method that faculty use to improve their teaching. Given the recent focus on the scholarship of teaching in research-intensive universities, this is an important trend to keep monitoring. Many spoke of the need to receive more formal training in teaching in graduate school. Indeed they recognized that learning about teaching should be an important component of the training for the academic profession. Continuing education on pedagogy was also stressed, as was the need to constantly be learning about new pedagogies. This was perceived as a critical competency of effective teachers.

TSC Blog

The Teaching Support Centre launched a blog on October 1. Our goal is to communicate ideas and issues pertaining to teaching and other issues that are of interest to The University of Western Ontario teaching community. While the *Reflections* newsletter presents articles and updates, it only publishes two issues per year. The TSC blog will be updated twice a week on topics such as:

- teaching;
- student engagement;
- instructional technology;
- the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL); and
- graduate student/teaching assistant development.

The blog posts will reflect the interests and activities of the diverse staff and faculty at the Teaching Support Centre. Visit the blog at <http://uwotsc.wordpress.com>, leave a comment, and let us know what you think!



Western's Research on Teaching Program

BY ALLEN PEARSON, FACULTY ASSOCIATE
TEACHING SUPPORT CENTRE

In 2008-2009, Research Western launched an internal grants competition for projects relating to the scholarship of teaching and learning. These research grants will fund research projects on teaching at Western that investigate teaching practices or developments. While there is much informal activity on the development of teaching across the university, these grants are given to proposals that meet high standards of research and have the potential to further the understanding of teaching and learning in the university environment.

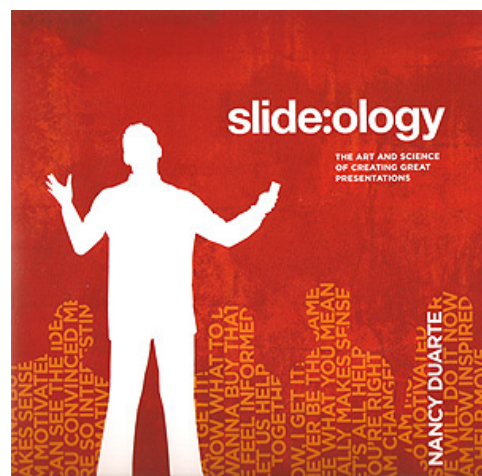
Two research grants were awarded in the spring of 2009, and the projects are currently underway. Joyce Bruhn de Garavito of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures has been funded to conduct a study entitled *Teaching Spanish in Second Life*. This study will investigate the possibilities and potential of using the well-known virtual world Second Life to enable students to learn Spanish. Students will create avatars that can explore, meet people, and interact with them in a Spanish-speaking virtual world.

The second recipient is Peter Krats of the History Department. Peter's study is entitled, *Pointers to Pixels: Technology in Western's Classrooms; methods and attitudes*. This historical study will examine the introduction of technological changes in teaching at Western, looking towards the reasons and causes for these developments. The study will also compare developments at Western with developments at other universities in Ontario.

Look for a new competition in the spring of 2010 (see <http://www.uwo.ca/research>).

Slide:ology –The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations

BY KIM HOLLAND, INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER
TEACHING SUPPORT CENTRE



As instructors, many of us use presentation software, such as PowerPoint or Keynote, to present content to our students. The slides that we create represent an entirely new language of communication and involve a compendium of challenges. Formal training, or experience with thinking visually, is usually the missing piece. If you have an important story to tell, concept to explain, or process to elucidate that involves slides to create memorable experiences, you now have an easy-to-read resource. *Slide:ology* by Nancy Duarte addresses this common failing of using a visual medium, that is, its lack of communication. This book is more than slides and design tricks (it does have those); it is about visual communication for impact.

Slide:ology was written for an audience who has found the common slide presentation boring, uninteresting, or unintelligible. The current crop of presentation software is designed to be easy to use and to create those slides that you need for tomorrow's lecture, but its ease of use does come with some costs. Your obliging software has just created another 'death by PowerPoint lecture.' Nancy Duarte's

design philosophy can make this near death experience a thing of the past. She begins her book with two chapters entitled *Creating a New Slide Ideology* and *Creating Ideas, Not Slides* in which she sets the tone for the entire book. This beginning is reinforced with numerous case studies, most drawn from the corporate world, which illustrate how people use the right set of graphic tools in the 'right way' to make an impact that can change people's minds.

When I first started to read *Slide:ology*, I was slightly annoyed by the many corporate

examples; I was looking for examples drawn from education. I wanted the answer to the question: 'How can I improve my teaching with presentation software?' As I continued to read, however, the question became: 'How can I use these ideas so my students learn better?' When asking this latter question, I was rewarded with a wealth of possibilities.

If you are looking for ideas to improve your students' learning by applying good graphic design and presentation skills, do read this book ... but please read the whole book, and perhaps you, too, will be changed.

New course offering at the Teaching Support Centre

Instructional Skills Workshop for Faculty

Intensive three-day teaching workshop

OPEN TO ALL WESTERN FACULTY

Designed for both new and experienced instructors
Required to attend the full three days (9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.)

LIMITED ENROLLMENT

The Instructional Skills Workshop (ISW) offers you the opportunity to explore, in very practical and hands-on ways, the conditions that give rise to powerful learning experiences among your students. The ISW is offered within a small group setting and is designed to enhance the teaching effectiveness of both new and experienced instructors. These sessions provide new instructors with an introduction to designing and facilitating effective learning activities. The ISW also serves as a laboratory for experienced instructors who wish to refine and expand their teaching practice, to explore new ideas, or to revisit the fundamentals.

Upcoming ISW Workshops:

December 14, 15, 16, 2009
February 16, 17, 18, 2010
April 20, 21, 22, 2010

For more information and registration, go to:
<http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/isw.html>

Western Libraries' New Dissertation Planner


BY TOM ADAM, INFORMATION LITERACY LIBRARIAN, WESTERN LIBRARIES

We hear time and time again that *time* and effectively managing it is a major concern for many students and sometimes a huge stumbling block in being efficient with the work required to succeed academically. For some time, Western Libraries has made the *Assignment Planner* available to undergraduates to facilitate the research process by breaking it down into manageable steps. Over the summer a similar tool was created for graduate students, and our new *Dissertation Planner* (<https://www.lib.uwo.ca/teaching/dissertation/>) is now available. There currently are permanent links to the Planner on the library website from the **Research Resources** area under the **Research & Scholarship** portal and in the **Essay Help** area.

Modeled on the *Dissertation Calculator* created at the University of Minnesota, the tool is straightforward to use. Students simply enter start and anticipated end dates, and launch the planner to generate 18 stages that walk through the process from the beginning to end. E-mail reminders can be automatically forwarded to the student at the significant dates along the way and graduate students can also opt to have their supervisor receive these messages. The reminders let students know what they should have accomplished by that date and the next stage in the process.

DISSERTATION PLANNER

WESTERN LIBRARIES' GUIDE TO SURVIVING THE PROCESS



Need help with the dissertation process?

Enter your desired dissertation completion date below and the dissertation planner will break down the process into manageable deadlines, providing resources and advice along the way. You can also choose to receive e-mail reminders on all the significant dates in the process.

Area or Specialty: ☒ General Dissertation Planner

Starting On: 09 - 29 - 2009

Completion Date: MM - DD - 2009

[Log into 'My Dissertation Planner'](#)

Western Libraries Dissertation Planner

Based on the original Dissertation Calculator from the University of Minnesota Libraries

Using "My Dissertation Planner" students can easily manage their reminders.

At this point we have one generic version ready for use, however the content of each of the stages is totally customizable, and we have built accommodation in the back end to create discipline-specific versions as they are needed. Stages appear in two parts; "WHY" do this, which provides a rationale for the importance of the stage, and "HOW" suggestions for accomplishing the stage, complete with clickable links out to significant resources and web pages to clarify or expand on the information the planner provides. Links also provide convenient

access to the pertinent supplementary material or particular requirements of a department or faculty that are relevant to the stage.

We have created an extensive **Bibliography** and a **Resources** section full of additional information as well as a simple e-mail mechanism to anonymously collect feedback. Try it out, and recommend it to graduate student colleagues. I also am happy to receive comments on this new tool that we hope will be a useful addition to the resources and services for the graduate student community at Western available through Western Libraries.

TSC Welcomes New Faculty Associate



Duncan Hunter with his grandchildren Grace, Callum, and Remy.

DUNCAN HUNTER

PROFESSOR EMERITUS,
DEPARTMENT
OF CHEMISTRY

Duncan has joined the Teaching Support Centre as a Faculty Associate for the 2009-10 academic year. Duncan's primary

role with the TSC, in conjunction with the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, will be to facilitate discussions between leaders of graduate programs at Western. The aim is to inform each other of current practices in graduate curricula and to move towards improvements in curriculum design and practice.

Duncan can be reached at ext. 86736 or by e-mail at: dhunter@uwo.ca



How Much Can We Assume Our Audience Knows?

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

Complete the following sentence:

When you begin writing, assume your audience knows _____. If you were educated in English, chances are you remember the phrase repeated *ad infinitum* by your writing instructors, and you would have said, "Nothing assume your audience knows nothing." You may also remember comments from your papers such as, "Be concise this is too vague....avoid ambiguity....you need to come to some cogent point!" However, if your education took place in an environment where the language of instruction was not English, these dicta may not have been inculcated into your brain. Not every culture values writing (or communication in general) that is concise, direct, and unambiguous; in fact, some even value their opposites. For example, a student said of the French system, "you pose a challenge to the reader. You don't spoon-feed the reader in the sense that 'the purpose ... is this. This is what I am going to do.' No. They say that's too crude, not classy. You kind of drag a little bit. You go here, you talk about the moon and the sky. And then you come to the subject matter ..." (Eland, 2001, p. 97). Such differences in communication have implications for instructors and students in terms of overall communication, teaching, and writing.

The intercultural dimension which would explain these predilections is the high context/low context divide (Hall 1976). Low context communication (LCC) is very direct, its logic is linear and step-by-step, and the speaker is expected to make a point succinctly and explicitly. In LCC, it is primarily the speaker's responsibility to make himself/herself understood, which could result in the perception that something is being 'over-explained.' In addition, it is appropriate for a listener to express a lack of understanding to a speaker in LCC.



High context communication (HCC) is indirect, and its logic tends to be more circular. In addition, assumptions will be made about how much knowledge is shared, and repetition and implication will be used to make a point. The speaker might lead the listener near the point, but the listener will be expected to deduce the point by himself/herself. To explain the point too much would constitute an insult to the listener, because in high context cultures, it is primarily the listener's responsibility to understand the speaker. In addition, in HCC, it can be inappropriate for a listener to express a lack of understanding to a speaker, as doing so might constitute a loss of face to the speaker (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003).

Consider the following conversation:

Supervisor: It looks like we're going to need some people to come in on Saturday.

Student: I see.

Supervisor: Can you come in on Saturday?

Student: Yes, I think so.

Supervisor: That'll be a great help.

Student: Yes. Saturday's a special day, did you know?

Supervisor: How do you mean?

Student: It's my son's birthday.

Supervisor: How nice. I hope you all enjoy it very much.

Student: Thank you. I appreciate your understanding.

(Adapted from: *Figuring Foreigners Out*)

In the above conversation, the student did not want to say 'no' to his supervisor, as that could have constituted a loss of face for his supervisor and would have been rude on the part of the student (from the student's perspective). Instead, the student implied that he would be unable to work on Saturday, leaving it to the supervisor to decipher his point.

Unfortunately, if the supervisor did not understand his point, then the student might be in trouble come Saturday.

Communication in Canada is low context (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1980). Janet M. Bennett, a leading intercommunication scholar, estimates that only approximately 5% of the world engages in low-context communication (personal communication, July, 2006), which means that it is safe to assume that almost all international students in Canada will tend to operate with higher context communication patterns than Canadians (except for students who come from Germany or other Northern European countries).

While one's relationship with context is in large part determined by the norms of communication within a larger society, we *all* go high context at times. We go high context when we are communicating with somebody with whom our lives are closely intertwined. For example, imagine a student was discussing the need for an extension on a paper with a roommate just before meeting his professor. After his meeting, the student

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How Much Can We Assume Our Audience Knows?

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might go home and simply say, "She said yes!" And there would be no ambiguity about who 'she' was unless his friend had forgotten their earlier conversation.

While moments of confusion from different notions of context might result in temporary misunderstandings, a larger concern is when context negatively affects teaching outcomes. When instructors are deeply steeped in our disciplines, we may assume too much understanding on the part of our students, skipping essential steps in explanations and relying on acronyms before our students have grasped concepts sufficiently. In addition, whether we go high or low context in our instructions to students will even affect activities in class. An example of high context instructions could be, "Get into groups and discuss internationalization." The following example with low context instructions would likely get better results: "Get into groups of four. You have 20 minutes. I'd like you to identify five obstacles to internationalization in higher education in Canada and be ready to explain them to the class."

While context will impact on teacher talk and student understanding, it can also impact on how instructors understand students. For example, another time when English-speaking students tend to be high context is in labs, when they assume that their instructors know exactly where they are in their experiments

(Myers, 1994). This assumption then makes it challenging for the TA to guide the students in their labs. This challenge will be even greater if the TA is a non-native speaker of English.

While much communication is negotiated during face-to-face exchanges, differing notions of context are especially problematic in asynchronous communication, such as when a native English speaker professor reads an essay from a student from a high context society. Students with HCC patterns might have difficulty isolating causality in their papers, as they may have difficulty distinguishing what is salient from a given context (Nisbett, 2003). The result of this would be a paper which included far too much 'extraneous' information and which could be difficult to read for an LCC instructor. In addition, students may also use words such 'maybe,' 'perhaps,' or 'probably' – to avoid appearing assertive (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). However, as much of Western academic discourse is argument focused, a weak argument can result in a paper seeming weak.

While we may never have exactly the same sense of context as those with whom we communicate, having a notion of the dimension of context can help us negotiate understanding. Just telling a student that he is being vague is ... well, vague. Without an understanding of the dimension of context, students will be confused by their instructors' advice to make their points clearer.

An awareness of the dimension of context can improve all forms of communication and result in less confusion, fewer negative attributions, and greater learning.

For examples of how HCC/LCC impact on supervisor and classroom communication, please see:

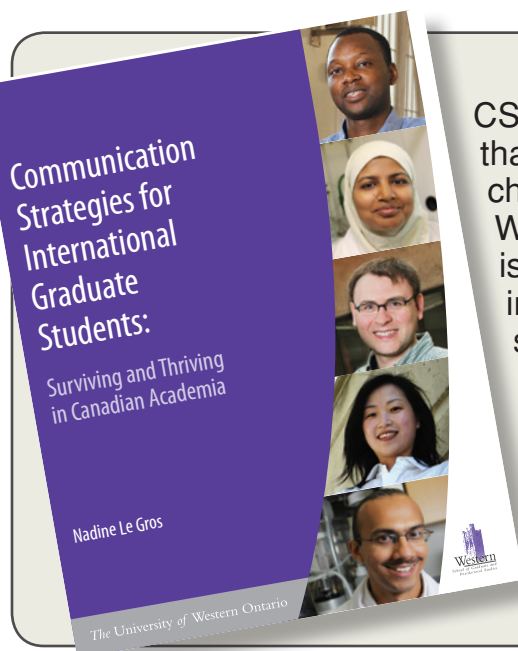
Western Guide to Mentoring Graduate Students Across Cultures by Nanda Dimitrov
http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/pdf/PG_3_MentoringAcrossCultures.pdf

For examples of how international graduate students can develop their communication skills, please see:

Communication Strategies for International Graduate Students: Surviving and Thriving in Canadian Academia by Nadine Le Gros
<http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/csigs.html>

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CSIGS is an e-manual that is available free of charge to everybody at Western. This resource is especially valuable for international graduate students and anybody who works with them.

For information on how to access this book, go to: <http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/csigs.html>

NEW NOMINATION DEADLINE

for the 3M National
Teaching Fellowships

Moved from mid-November
to August 31

For information, go to
<http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/awards.html>

A New Online Journal for Research on Teaching in Canada

BY KEN N. MEADOWS
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHER, TEACHING AND LEARNING SERVICES AND MANAGING EDITOR, CJSOTL/RCACEA

The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CJSOTL), La revue canadienne sur l'avancement des connaissances en enseignement et en apprentissage (RCACEA) the official journal of the *Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (<http://www.stlhe.ca>), is a new open access online journal dedicated to publishing quality peer-reviewed articles in French and English. The articles shed new light on the teaching and learning interests of post-secondary education in Canada, including quantitative and/or qualitative research reports and essays examining issues in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

The focus of the journal is primarily on the scholarship of teaching and learning in Canadian post-secondary institutions. This focus is based on the recognition that the curricula, policies, requirements, and structures of Canadian post-secondary institutions are often distinct from their international counterparts. However, submissions from international colleagues that have relevance to the Canadian context are welcome.

The journal provides a forum for a broadly defined spectrum of "educators" to exchange and integrate ideas and information on teaching and learning in post-secondary education. *CJSOTL/RCACEA* is intended for professors, academic staff, educational developers, academic librarians, learning resource specialists, and graduate students.

The journal solicits contributions from educators from Canadian colleges, including the Collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel (CEGEP) in Québec, as well as universities. By including colleges, the journal provides a forum to address issues in teaching and learning that are specific to these institutions as well as issues that transcend institution type.

Although a national journal, *CJSOTL/RCACEA* would not have been possible without the considerable support provided by members of the Western community. Specifically, staff and faculty members with the **Teaching Support**

Centre, Western Libraries, and Information Technology Services were instrumental in the development of the journal. Also, **Research Western** and the **Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council** provided financial support through the *Scholarly Journals at Western* program.

For more information about the journal, including submission guidelines, please visit us at <http://www.cjsotl-rcacea.ca>. The deadline for submissions for the inaugural issue of the journal is **November 8, 2009** with that issue planned for publication in **January 2010**.



The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
La revue canadienne sur l'avancement des connaissances en enseignement et en apprentissage

TSC Online Resources

Purple Guides

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

The Purple Guides address key issues in educational development, and are designed to foster a culture of excellence in teaching, learning and mentorship among both faculty and graduate students at Western. New this year: "Curriculum Review" and "Mentoring Graduate Students Across Cultures".

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

<http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/csigs.html>

CSIGS is an e-manual primarily for international graduate students and anybody who works with them.

Curriculum Review/Learning Outcomes

<http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/curriculum.html>

Resources on curriculum change and review, including information on developing Learning Outcomes, as well as the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents (OCAV) Guidelines for University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations.

Course Design

http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/course_outline.htm

Includes Western's policy on course outlines and scheduling, as well as resources on course planning and design.

Graduate Supervision

<http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/gradsupervision.html>

Resources for faculty on graduate supervision, as well as information on programs and resources to enhance graduate supervision and raise its profile and importance across the campus.



Faculty of Science Learning Development Update

BY TOM HAFFIE, FACULTY ASSOCIATE, TEACHING SUPPORT CENTRE
AND LEARNING DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR, FACULTY OF SCIENCE

I am happy to update the Western community on the progress of several ongoing initiatives as well as exciting new programming for 2009-2010.

Ongoing:

- 1) **Appreciative Inquiry:** This project is collecting the experiences of “intensive” learning from a wide variety of members of the Faculty of Science. These insights will provide valuable perspective to curriculum reviews and other programming.
- 2) **PRESSWestern:** Use of classroom personal response systems (“clickers”) has expanded to 20 more faculty teaching over 2,000 students in engineering, nursing, psychology, statistics, physics, biochemistry, and biology.
- 3) **BioLiteracy Project:** This HEQCO-funded research supported the introduction of a writing-to-learn curriculum into first-year Biology tutorials as an “intervention” designed to improve student engagement. The project is now in the data analysis phase.

New:

- 1) **Science Discovery Café:** In collaboration with the Centre for New Students, the Faculty of Science plans to build a sense of community among first-year Science students by arranging ongoing small group meetings, each co-facilitated by a faculty member and an undergraduate peer mentor. Although groups are free to follow their own interests, the main outcomes for the Café are expected to include i) an expansion of supportive academic relationships, ii) an improved understanding of the process of research and the nature of knowledge that it produces, and iii) a greater awareness of the structure of the university and the range of academic careers that it provides.
- 2) **Faculty of Science “Study Day”:** The Faculty intends to make use of December 10, 2009 (on which there are neither scheduled classes nor exams) to offer a suite of programming for faculty, graduate students, and post-docs. The keynote address will be by Dr. Lionel Laroche, P. Eng., on “Reaping the benefits of cultural diversity in the academic world.” Additional sessions will be offered on such topics as mentoring women in Science, effective grant writing, budgeting, encouraging innovative teaching, and curriculum review.
- 3) **“More than just a Book Club”:** This program is intended to promote ongoing “good talk about good teaching” among interested faculty, grad students, and post-docs through facilitated discussion of engaging ideas in higher science education. Although often anchored by consideration of influential books, this group will also plunder the science education research literature, blogs, and popular media, and may also embark on expeditions to various classrooms and campus locales.
- 4) **Faculty of Science Graduate Fellowship in Learning Development:** This Fellowship creates a professional development opportunity for graduate students with an interest in the scholarship of teaching and learning in Science. Held in lieu of a traditional teaching assistantship, the Fellowship will allow graduate students to support faculty conducting educational research, consult with departments on course and curriculum development, and develop programming for various groups.

H1N1

The TSC has created some web-based material to assist with planning for the continuation of classes under the pandemic (H1N1) influenza virus. For information, please go to: <http://www.uwo.ca/tsc>

Experience Faculty Mentoring

Friday, November 6, 2009
2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Room 121, Weldon Library

Do you recognize a need for mentoring in some areas of your career? Are you called upon to mentor colleagues? Explore mentoring with new and experienced colleagues. Share your ideas and experience mentoring.

For information, go to
<http://www.uwo.ca/tsc> or
e-mail: mlennon@uwo.ca

Research on Teaching Learning Community (RTLCL)

Friday, November 20, 2009
1:30 p.m.—3:00 p.m.
Room 120, Weldon Library

Are you currently conducting research on your teaching or your students’ learning or are you just generally interested in research on teaching? If so, the Research on Teaching Learning Community (RTLCL) is for you. The RTLCL meets each term and provides an opportunity for members to discuss issues related to research on teaching including the successes and challenges they face with their own research on teaching projects.

If you would like to be added to the RTLCL mailing list, please contact Dr. Ken Meadows at kmeadow2@uwo.ca.

Women in Academe Learning Community

BY NANDA DIMITROV, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, TEACHING SUPPORT CENTRE



Over 80 women faculty, postdocs, and graduate students representing all stages of their academic careers spent a whole day discussing the characteristics of and conditions required for successful mentoring during the TSC's *Mentoring Women* event in May 2009. During the morning, a panel of faculty shared the challenges and opportunities they encountered at each career stage, followed by World Café discussion groups in the afternoon that identified ways in which Western could increase the availability and visibility of currently existing mentoring programs for women and created recommendations for how we can create and promote new opportunities for mentorship.

Research on mentorship in academia indicates that mentoring is critical for

traditionally under-represented groups in higher education. During the discussions at the *Mentoring Women* workshop there was also strong consensus that women academics benefit from and need different types of mentoring at different stages of their careers - especially during the transition points between career stages. Having multiple mentors is particularly important during the first few years of graduate school, when scholars move from a postdoc to a new faculty position, and during the years leading up to tenure. Many of the younger participants at the event were surprised to find that the need for mentorship does not end with tenure, and that mid-career women who serve as mentors to junior faculty also need and have mentors themselves as they

adapt to life after tenure, work towards promotion to full professor or transition to administrative positions. Successful mentorship does not happen easily. It requires initiative and a proactive approach on the part of both mentor and mentee.

If you are interested in reading more about the recommendations for creating a culture of mentorship that emerged during the day's discussions, a five-page summary is available on the TSC website at <http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/womenacademe.html>

To continue the conversations that began at last year's *Mentoring Women* event, we are establishing an informal **learning community for women in academe**. Join us for a brown bag lunch on Monday November 9th and Monday December 7th from 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. in the Teaching Support Centre to meet with colleagues from across campus, to discuss resources and mentorship opportunities, ask questions about managing research and teaching, or creating work life balance. More dates are planned for winter and spring. Faculty, graduate students, and postdocs are all welcome. If these dates do not work with your schedule, join *Women of Western*, led by Dr. Amanda Moehring (Biology), at 4:00 p.m. at the Grad Club on the first Wednesday of every month.

Teaching Awards and Grants

WESTERN TEACHING AWARDS

Edward G. Pleva Award for Excellence in Teaching

Angela Armitt Award for Excellence in Teaching by Part-Time Faculty

Marilyn Robinson Award for Excellence in Teaching

Deadline for receipt of dossiers: **December 15, 2009**

Information and guidelines can be found at: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/senate/sutaregs.pdf>

EXTERNAL TEACHING AWARDS

3M Teaching Fellowships

Deadline for nominations: **August 17, 2010 (internal); August 31, 2010 (external)**

Details at: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/3Mteachingfellowships>

OCUFA Teaching Awards

Deadline for nominations: **May 2010**

Details at: <http://www.ocufa.on.ca>

WESTERN FUNDING INITIATIVES

Fellowship in Teaching Innovation

Application Deadline:

March 1, 2010

Details at: <http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/awards.html>

International Curriculum Fund

Dean's Deadline: **January 15, 2010;**

RD&S Deadline: **February 1, 2010**

Details at: <http://www.uwo.ca/research>

Research on Teaching Grant

Deadline: **Spring 2010**

Details at: <http://www.uwo.ca/research>

TED Talks

BY KIM HOLLAND, INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER AND MIKE ATKINSON, FACULTY ASSOCIATE, TEACHING SUPPORT CENTRE

One of the most engaging sites on the web can be found at <http://www.ted.com>. TED stands for Technology, Entertainment and Design and is devoted to the concept of spreading big ideas. Every year since 1984, 50 people, each a leader in one of these three areas, are invited to Long Beach, California and asked to give "the talk of their lives." However, they have a maximum of 18 minutes to accomplish this task. There are 1,000 people in the audience, no breakout groups, and four days of total engagement.

TED is sponsored by the Sapling Foundation, the brainchild of Chris Anderson, a successful magazine publisher, who believed that ideas are the single greatest force for world change. Indeed, the central goal of TED is the spread of ideas by providing a platform for the world's leading thinkers. On the website, TED (n.d.) asks us to consider the following:

- An idea can be created out of nothing except an inspired imagination.
- An idea weighs nothing.
- It can be transferred across the world at the speed of light for virtually zero cost.
- And yet an idea, when received by a prepared mind, can have extraordinary impact.
- It can reshape that mind's view of the world.

- It can dramatically alter the behavior of the mind's owner.
- It can cause the mind to pass on the idea to others.

Many ideas are presented at the annual TED conference, and the best of the best are available as video-on-demand from the TED site. Here you will find video clips (usually about 3 – 18 minutes in duration) on hundreds of topics. Here are just a few examples:

- Jill Taylor, a neuroscientist, talks about her own personal experience of a stroke,
- Biologist Richard Dawkins discusses the existence of God and the universe,
- Johnny Lee discusses how to reverse-engineer a Wii remote to create an interactive white board,
- Michael Pritchard demonstrates his inexpensive, completely portable water purification system, and
- Philip Starck discusses the importance of design.

There are over 500 talks available, with more



added every few weeks. Talks are rated for their degree of inspiration, beauty, and plain old jaw-dropping ability. In each issue of *Reflections*, we will review one of these talks and try to give you a feel for the enjoyment and intellectual engagement of great ideas.

In the first review we are going to look at

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New TSC Partnership with Academics for Higher Education and Development

Academics for Higher Education and Development (**AHED**) is a Canadian bi-lingual non-governmental organization incorporated in March 2007 with charity status in 2008. **AHED's** mission is to support developing countries in building capacity in higher education. **AHED** fosters this goal by sending as volunteers working and retired professionals and academics, including faculty, staff, and administrators, on projects in the developing world to assist in building and improving tertiary education there.

To find out how *you* can become involved with this organization,
go to www.ahed-upesed.org

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Clay Shirky on institutions vs.

collaboration, (TED, 2005, July 14). He views web 2.0 technologies as enabling new kinds of cooperative structures to grow as a way of getting work done in business, science, the arts and education as an alternative to the self-limiting centralized institutional structures. Shirky starts by asking two simple questions, "How do groups get anything done?" and "How do you organize a group of individuals so the output of the group is coherent and of value, instead of just being chaotic?" From these two questions, he describes the historical solution to this organizational problem that is to build an institution. Unfortunately, the economic framing of the underpinnings of constructing an institution results in high coordination cost. With communication costs falling with web 2.0 technologies, and since communication costs represent one of the biggest coordination costs, it is now time to rethink the need for institutions. This is the thesis that Shirky describes so well in this 18-minute TED video.

Shirky explains that there is a new way to organize groups by putting cooperation into the infrastructure by designing systems that coordinate the output of the group as a byproduct of operating the system without regards to institutional models. Here he uses a question to illustrate how this might work. The humorous initial question is, "Where can I get a picture of a roller-skating mermaid?" He then proceeds to show a number of 'mermaid' photos, which he did not take, and then tells us how he found them. Shirky used Flickr, a photo-sharing website, that allows tags (labels) that the person uploading the photo can attach to it so as to provide some identification. Shirky states that, "tagging is a cooperative infrastructure's answer to classification." Instead of turning over the classification of the photos to a professional class of librarians to organize the photos, Flickr turns this over to the user. While this choice of tags could lead to chaos of

confusion, it does not, because if the person uploading the photo wants it to be found, tags must seem reasonable.

Shirky spends some time discussing the costs of coordination that institutions face:

- Forming an institution you take on a management problem in that you have to hire more employees to coordinate the work of others.
- The institution requires structure-- economic, legal, and physical, all adding to costs.
- Institutions are inherently exclusionary, you can't hire everyone who has the talents that you need, or in the Flickr case, the photos you want.
- As the result of this exclusion you create a professional class.
- There is a tension between institution as enabler or obstacle to group work.

Today, with the new communication systems, you leave people where they

are to create a cooperative system that coordinates itself and which is far more cost effective. Shirky sums up at the end of the video that if management is rigid and reliant on information monopolies, institutions are going to come under increasing degrees of pressure for change. This does lead one to pause and question.

Please do visit the [TED web site](http://www.ted.com), as you are sure to find some provocative and interesting videos.

REFERENCES

TED. (n.d.). Who owns TED. Retrieved from <http://www.ted.com/pages/view/id/42>

TED. (Producer). (2005, July 14). TED talks. Clay Shirky on institutions vs collaboration [Video podcast]. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/clay_shirky_on_institutions_versus_collaboration.html

Mentoring Graduate Students Across Cultures

The supervision and mentoring of graduate students is a challenging exercise in effective interpersonal communication even when the faculty member and student share the same cultural background. Now take a faculty member who works with students from China, India and Iran, add cultural differences in communication styles into the mix, and the likelihood of miscommunication increases significantly.

In this workshop we will discuss the cultural differences that impact supervision and mentoring across cultures most frequently, and identify strategies for building effective cross-cultural mentoring relationships. Through the discussion of a video case study and participants' own mentoring experiences, we will work together to develop concrete mentoring strategies that will help supervisors promote independence and initiative in their mentees, bridge power differences in the relationship, set boundaries, and support students in the successful completion of their theses.

Date: Friday, November 13th, 10 a.m. – 12 noon
Location: Room 258, Weldon Library
Facilitator: Nanda Dimitrov
Register: Upcoming Events for Faculty at: <http://www.uwo.ca/tsc>