
CURRENTS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

VOL. 3 NO. 1, FALL 2010

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Teaching to Listen & Learning to Engage

Josna Rege

We begin Volume Three with two timely pieces about teaching graduate students, a subject we haven't yet covered in *Currents*. The first, "A Model for Teaching Academic Listening and Responding," by Li-Shih Huang, is an essay addressing itself to particular communication challenges faced by international EAL (English as an Additional Language) graduate students in the English-medium classroom. International students comprise a significant and growing proportion of the graduate-student population in English-speaking countries such as the United States, Canada, England, and Australia.¹ In this context, Dr. Huang's model, comprising six key dimensions involved in developing listening and responding skills, assumes a particular urgency. As she points out, the "distinct academic communication needs of these students . . . can no longer be left unaddressed if universities are to compete for international students and/or wish to distinguish themselves as world-class destinations for international education."

Our first teaching report also focuses on teaching graduate students, and on the benefits of team teaching to faculty and students alike. "Turning a Plague into a Posy: Team Teaching Graduate Courses at a Small Campus," written by Eva Roa White, Sarah Heath, Christopher Darr, and Michael Finkler, an interdisciplinary team of faculty from English, History, Communication Arts, and Biology respectively, asks four questions that will be of wide interest and applicability, particularly in institutions with small graduate programs: "What impact did the course's design have on graduate learning? How beneficial for students was it to have four faculty members, each presenting their discipline's perspective on the same topic? What were the advantages of teaching a course like this for faculty? And finally, could this course become a useful model for graduate courses on small campuses?"

"Lots of Moving Parts: Is Service-Learning Sustainable in a College Classroom?," our second co-authored teaching report, presents another interdisciplinary team-taught course. Jessica Skolnikoff, Robert Engvall, and KC Ferrara, respectively from Anthropology, Justice Studies, and Service Learning and Civic Engagement, consider the experience of incorporating service-learning into Human Behavior in Perspective, one of five required courses in their university's core curriculum. As the authors note, rhetoric about service-learning tends to be prominent in university mission statements, but

the reality of making it an integral part of the academic curriculum is another matter. “Teaching, research, and service remain the mission of most universities, but all too often service is lost or consists of efforts left over after our teaching and research is done (and for many, teaching and research leave no time for anything else).” How then, they ask, might they “fus[e] the academic with the civic,” for students and faculty alike? Having reviewed two books on service-learning in our last issue, we are pleased to be able to include this report, which, true to its stated purpose, looks squarely at the pragmatic obstacles to community engagement, not only for the students and faculty, but also for the community members involved in the partnership.

While “Lots of Moving Parts” seeks to align practice with rhetoric by incorporating community service into the academic curriculum, our third teaching report, “Concretizing Interpersonal Violence and Maltreatment,” seeks a balance between the merely scholarly and the overly sensational in teaching sensitive course content at both the graduate and the undergraduate level. Co-authors Beth Russell and Jennifer Trachtenberg present classroom practices “across multiple disciplines (for example, psychology, family studies, social work, sociology, public health, nursing, political science, and history)” that meet the challenge of “keep[ing] students engaged in critical, analytical, and academic considerations of off-putting and disheartening course content, while honoring the heterogeneous personal experiences and emotional values present in the student body.”

As always, Current Clips and Links, compiled by our Editorian Assistant, Brian Burgess, serves up an interdisciplinary smorgasbord. This issue features Women’s Studies/Women’s Issues Resource Sites (which, among other things, includes links to 700 Women’s Studies programs around the world), Center for History and New Media (digital resources designed to “democratize History”), Teaching College Math (a

resource-rich mathematics professor’s blog, e-Literate (a blog addressing issues of technology in higher education), and The Global Text Project, community service on an international scale.

In this issue our Reviews section features our first website review, something we have always included in principle but have never delivered in practice. We hope that Sean Goodlett’s review of the website of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching will inspire *Currents* readers to propose their own candidates for future reviews. Book Review Editor Matthew Johnsen has issued a call for active reviewers and offered a hyperlinked list of print titles for review.

In closing, some news from our home institution: On October 26, 2010, Worcester State officially became a university, along with its other sister colleges in the Massachusetts state system. We salute Worcester State University, whose active faculty and student research and many graduate and professional programs now stand to receive recognition (if not commensurate state funding) for what they have been steadily advancing for years. ■■

Notes

1 In the United States alone, almost half of all U.S. students beginning doctoral study in 1996 came from elsewhere; by 2002, so did nearly one-third of all graduate students. The proportion is over 50% in engineering, economics, and the physical sciences, and in certain fields, much higher (COSEPUP, 2005; Lederman, 2010).

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A Model for Teaching Academic Listening and Responding

Li-Shih Huang

Abstract

As demographic trends change, a growing number of international English-as-an-additional-language (EAL) students attend graduate schools in English-speaking countries. Support for the distinct academic communication needs of these students is essential if universities are to become or continue as world-class destinations for international education. This paper presents a model for facilitating the development of listening and responding skills that English language support units in academic institutions can adapt to meet the needs of their graduate EAL students. Using a research-based approach, the paper defines and explains the six key dimensions--cultural, social, contextual, individual variations, affective, and strategic--that are fundamental for teaching academic listening and responding to graduate EAL students.

Keywords

listening and responding, English for academic purposes, second-language speakers

Dr. Li-Shih Huang, Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics, and the LTC (Learning and Teaching Centre) Scholar-in-Residence at the University of Victoria, Canada, has more than a decade of experience in EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and EAL instructional and curriculum design. She has also been the recipient of TESOL's Award for Excellence in the Development of Pedagogical Materials. Her most recent publications include a book on academic conversation strategies for international graduate students and articles in journals such as *Language Teaching Research, System, and ELT (English Language Teaching) Journal*.

Introduction

If you follow the news or feature stories from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the TESOL organization, the British Council, or the International Development Program (IDP) of Australian Universities and Colleges, you will find it hard to ignore the number of posts and news items related to the recruitment of international students who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Even if you are not a follower of recruitment and enrollment trends, you will probably observe an increasing number of EAL students at your own institutions. As demographic trends change, more international EAL students are attending graduate schools in English-speaking countries. This change necessitates a serious look at the distinct academic communication needs of these students, which can no longer be left unaddressed if universities are to compete for international students and/or wish to distinguish themselves as world-class destinations for international education.

In my years of teaching graduate students across the disciplines, I have found that many international graduate students who speak or are learning EAL voice the sentiment that speaking and responding are critical to their success; yet, at the same time, these activities present the most challenging aspects of using language in their everyday lives. Most importantly, graduate EAL students express a strong desire to participate in academic dialogue, because they are well aware that this participation may affect their future academic or professional choices and prospects. This paper describes a model for facilitating the development of listening and responding skills that English-language support units in academic institutions can adapt to meet the needs of their graduate EAL students.

Context

International graduate students have several characteristics that set them apart from other EAL learners. These graduate students need to participate in academic dialogue at advanced levels: they have daily opportunities to speak English on topics about which they have sophisticated knowledge and are required to share their expertise with others (in their roles as teaching assistants or research assistants). Many graduate EAL students find engaging in impromptu dialogue far more difficult than writing or presenting prepared monologues. Even many learners with high Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores feel that they lack academic speaking skills and regard improving their academic oral communication ability as very important. The launch of the new TOEFL academic speaking test, which involves mainly listening and speaking, also indicates the importance of speaking for academic studies. In my recent work on needs assessments (Huang, 2010a), which involved 525 participants, including 95 graduate students and 93 instructors, 18 (i.e., 49%) out of the 37 items that graduate EAL students rated as very important skills were related to

speaking and listening. Likewise, 20 (i.e., 50%) out of the 40 items that instructors who teach graduate EAL students rated as very important skills were related to speaking and listening. When instructors were asked to identify skills that their students needed support in developing, 44.4% were related to speaking skills. A growing number of language-support units are including academic discussion skills and oral presentation skills in their program design; however, the connection between listening and speaking remains overlooked because of the traditional focus on writing, despite the fact that listening is the most frequently used modality. This focus is understandable because universities value academic-writing ability, and students are expected to gradually (and automatically) develop the ability to listen (Field, 2008). As Field pointed out, “There is still plenty of evidence that listening is undervalued” (p. 1).

This paper describes a model for facilitating the development of graduate EAL students’ listening and responding skills that English-language-support units in academic institutions can adapt to meet their students’ particular needs. I first provide a description of what is entailed in the research-based approach underlying this model. Then I describe the model used for teaching listening and responding for academic purposes and accompany it with examples of pedagogical activities that can be implemented in the classroom.

A Research-Based Approach to Teaching Listening and Responding

Numerous studies have highlighted a mismatch between students’ perceived needs and expectations and those of instructors (e.g., Huang, 2010a; Sherman, 1992; Thorp, 1991). A research-based approach to the teaching of listening and responding in academic settings implements classroom activities that enable teaching to begin at points where learners perceive that support is needed. This is accomplished through pedagogical activities designed to determine and prioritize

what instructors will teach and what students will learn by engaging students in regular self- or group-reflective tasks (as the example in the next paragraph illustrates). For individual students, regular self-reflection helps gradually increase the accuracy of their diagnoses of the challenges they face in their own daily encounters. This process plays a critical role in helping each learner become an active transformer of his or her own skill development in listening and responding. Sharing and reflecting as a group helps foster a community of practice that encourages a recursive cycle of learning, which consists of a mediated cycle of self-assessment, goal setting, strategy exploration, and re-evaluations; it is this cycle that leads learners to the stage of self-regulation.

Beginning the teaching of academic listening and responding with an informal session where students brainstorm about their listening and responding challenges will enable students to reflect on their learning needs. These reflections give the instructor a starting point for developing the structure and content areas of the course. When listening and responding in academic settings at the graduate level, students often identify various issues, such as the following: “I can’t grasp what the main points and relevant details are in seminar discussions,” “I have great trouble understanding and answering questions during presentations,” and “I am at [a] lost [*sic*] when I speak to my supervising professors.” Categorizing students’ comments often reveals the following most commonly encountered settings:

- » Listening to lectures
- » Listening and responding in interpersonal communications
- » Listening and responding in group settings
- » Listening and responding in seminars/class discussions
- » Listening and responding in departmental presentations
- » Listening and responding in conference presentations

The research-based approach is implemented through integrating research-like activities that provide opportunities for learners to reflect on the reasons why listening skills are difficult to acquire.¹ This sharing serves several important purposes. First, learners feel that they are not alone in their language-learning endeavors when the reasons are shared among learners. Second, many graduate students are researchers or aspiring researchers themselves, and their motivation and learning outcomes will be enhanced by both (a) linking their challenges with findings from research about listening and responding in the field of second-language acquisition, and (b) further basing the teaching process on sound theory and empirical evidence. Third, ongoing individual or group-based reflective activities raise learners’ awareness of challenges that they may not have noticed or that they may have misdiagnosed during their learning.

In the first unit on listening and responding to lectures, for example, a challenge that students commonly have self-identified and shared has been limited vocabulary: “I need more vocabulary because I am having trouble grasping the main points.” Using a sample listening exercise on a topic that would be of interest to graduate students (e.g., an article on using the journal-impact factor as a measure of journal quality) and that requires them to comprehend information at both micro and macro levels would demonstrate that learners are often processing information from the bottom-up (i.e., processing individual sounds, words, or sentences in their attempt to capture the meaning of every word and sentence), rather than using an integrated approach in which learners integrate both top-down and bottom-up (i.e., bringing prior information or knowledge to bear in making predictions when there is an information gap and in understanding how different pieces of information fit together) approaches to maximize listening comprehension. Enhancing an integrated approach to listening must first involve

familiarization with macro cues (i.e., topic introduction, organization, review of previous information, sharing of new information, summary, and conclusion cues) and micro cues (i.e., repetitions, important information, nonverbal cues, and tangential information)² that commonly occur in lectures, but that EAL students may not clearly understand. Such practice will enable students to grasp the main ideas and their supporting information, and thus distinguish between important information and minor details.

A Pedagogical Model for Teaching EAL Listening and Responding

The model of EAL listening and responding provides an integrated approach that draws on theory and research findings in the field of second-language acquisition. Building on Flowerdew and Miller's (2005) work, the model encompasses six interrelated dimensions: cultural, social, contextual, individual variations, affective, and strategic. All of these dimensions are involved in facilitating the development of both listening and responding skills (Figure 1). Each dimension of the model is presented in the following sections, along with an example to illustrate how pedagogical activities fit into the model.

Cultural Dimension

Cultural factors that come into play in communication have been well researched in the field of intercultural competence. The cross-cultural dimension involves the consideration of such main factors as high/low context, power distance, individualism and collectivism, tolerance of ambiguity, and gender differences. Briefly, context is related to whether what is being communicated is already assumed or understood by the speakers involved (i.e., high context) or whether speakers must communicate most of the information explicitly through the spoken exchange of messages (i.e., low context) (Hall, 1976). The former may involve more indirect, circular communication patterns,

whereas the latter may feature direct and linear discourse in communication and provision of contextual information to listeners, such as facts, figures, statistics, and other pieces of background information. The power-distance preference has to do with how cultures distribute power, rank, and status among members (Hofstede, 1997, 2001). Speakers from large power-distance cultures tend to prefer formal language that indicates distinction in the social hierarchy and to be reluctant about criticizing authority, whereas those in small power-distance cultures tend to value critical questions and challenging arguments (e.g., Lustig & Koester, 2006). The differences between individualist and collectivist orientations may manifest in speakers' individual initiative and expression of opinion versus preferences for group decisions and consensus. The role of gender in communication is another important factor in academic listening and responding: is gender equality or inequality accepted as the norm?

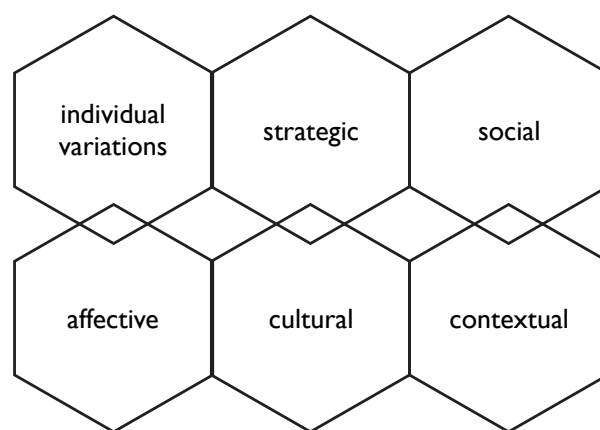


Figure 1. Dimensions in the pedagogical model for teaching EAL listening and responding.

The cultural dimension is incorporated into teaching by providing learners the time to reflect on and share personal speaking encounters where their personal preferences in relation to these cultural factors may come into play. A student in my class, for example,

finally understood why his supervisor repeatedly said that he was not answering the questions during question-and-answer sessions at departmental presentations, committee meetings, and departmental seminars. He realized that the factor of high-low context was clearly at play. By identifying discourse markers in listening and analyzing his own circular, providing-the-background-information-before-the-main-statement discourse (Huang, 2009), he became aware of the importance of stating the main idea so that his listeners would know the purpose for providing the background or supporting information that would follow. Another graduate teaching assistant came to understand why his students were complaining about the “unexpected” assignments that they were supposed to submit and learned that he needed to be more explicit, rather than assuming that his students would be insulted by reminders about tasks that were clearly presented in the course outline in print and online.

In academic communication contexts at the graduate level, understanding what an interlocutor says depends even more on shared concepts, knowledge, and ways of interaction. What speakers say or hear is often embedded in assumptions or ideologies that the community shares. A by-product of such sharing within similar communities is that speakers may consciously or unconsciously convey information less explicitly (e.g., Scollon & Scollon, 1995). Given also the likelihood that EAL listeners will bring their own sets of assumptions and expectations (or culturally influenced schemata³), which may differ from those of their interlocutors, training that activates the “appropriate” background knowledge and expectations needed for listening becomes important (Rost, 2005). Pre- and post-listening activities that raise awareness of cultural and content schemata (Flowerdew, 1994) are key to developing learners’ understanding of extended monologues or dialogues and should be integral

components of the teaching objectives for academic listening and responding.

Social Dimension

This dimension takes into account the complex roles that graduate EAL students must appropriate in academic settings, including communication among peers, between students and instructors, between students and supervisors, between students as TAs and their students, and between students and experts in the context of conference presentations. This dimension is integrated, for example, through role-playing exercises that are based on commonly encountered communication scenarios (e.g., negotiating the topic of a group project; seeing a course instructor regarding a research project; discussing thesis work with a supervising professor; explaining a key concept and responding to students’ questions; and answering challenging questions during a question-and-answer period). These exercises require students to examine the linguistic and strategic choices that they have made or will make in these various roles. Factors explored in the cultural dimension are pertinent to various settings, and the recurring relevance and inter-relatedness of various factors provide opportunities for learners to explore how they come into play while fulfilling particular communication functions in particular roles or settings, so that learners can become aware of those important factors as they self-examine and reflect on their own choices regarding day-to-day speaking encounters. Observation activities also enhance learners’ awareness of nonverbal language (e.g., eye contact; posture; and proxemics, or the personal or culture-specific perceptions about acceptable physical distance between people in different contexts of communication) that reinforces or hinders verbal language (Hall & Hall, 1990).

Contextual Dimension

This dimension deals with how any utterance is likely to reflect the past linguistic experiences of the speaker

and the listener, how particular social groups or particular fields of discourse use language (register), and how language is used in particular recurring situations to achieve communicative goals (genre). The multi-disciplinary nature of most classrooms requires instructors to design pedagogical activities that involve learners in identifying and analyzing spoken texts across various speaking contexts.

Clearly, any process of comprehending input that is written or oral presupposes non-linguistic knowledge about the world, the community, and the family and the dynamics within those groups. Integrated listening tasks (i.e., combining listening, reading, and speaking) enhance comprehension in several ways. First, they provide knowledge of the context that restricts interpretations of the text and discourse that follow. Second, knowledge of specific facts based on what is read, for example, is used to fill in details or gaps in what is heard. In combination with activating one's world knowledge about the topic and understanding the context of communication (the *co-text* in psycholinguistic terms, or the *context of situation* in sociolinguistic terms), what was not explicitly stated can be mediated or appropriately inferred.

Practicing listening to a single text alone is unnatural, because people never listen or respond in a vacuum or in the absence of other texts, written or spoken. The new TOEFL speaking test, which integrates a combination of reading, listening, and responding, clearly takes this dimension into consideration. One pedagogical exercise involves asking learners to read an article in an area that will be of interest to students from various disciplines and that can be understood in discussion where various perspectives are presented or argued. One group of students is required to take on the role of experts who talk about the content of the assigned article. Other group members are required to listen and respond with questions, which may be functional (e.g., questions seeking repetition and

clarification) or more challenging (e.g., irrelevant or outside-the-scope type of questions; "don't know" questions; multiple-questions-in-one type of questions; long-winded questions, and so on) (refer to Huang, 2010d). The expert group then listens to the questions and responds with the information requested. At the same time, members of the expert group practice being precise and concise in their own responses, as well as in acknowledging others' questions, points, or perspectives through paraphrasing. In the following session, roles are reversed, and another article can be discussed. This exercise can be implemented in the format of a one-on-one exchange, a small-group seminar, or a panel and discussion. In addition to listening practice and oral language production, learners must take note of any unfamiliar linguistic expressions that they encounter in various academic formats and settings and consider the following questions: What is the level of formality of the expressions? Do they recognize any particular expressions from other contexts? In what situations were particular expressions used?

Individual Variations Dimension

There is an ever-growing recognition of the complex array of individual learner variables that may affect language learning in the field of applied linguistics (Ellis, 2008; Robinson, 2002). Individual variations must be taken into account in classes about listening and responding in academic settings targeted at graduate EAL students. This aspect can be implemented first by letting participants choose what is relevant, meaningful, and/or interesting to them in the application activities, such as presenting key concepts and responding to questions from the audience.

The second way is through incorporating activities designed to help learners increase their accuracy in self-diagnosing through providing regular reflective opportunities that enable them to practice examining encounters in their own speaking contexts in various academic settings. Research has indicated

that there is often a mismatch between the challenges presented by learners and the challenges identified by instructors (see Huang, 2010a). For example, a student may identify a lack of vocabulary as the main source of the problem contributing to his/her communication breakdowns, when, in fact, communication preferences relevant to such factors as high-low context (i.e., the provision of sufficient contextual clues needed to clarify meanings during conversation) may be influencing the process and outcome of communication events. Another student may present his/her inability to pronounce words perfectly at the segmental level (i.e., individual sounds and phonemes) as the factor that leads to incomprehensible output. The problem, however, may in fact be related more to pronunciation at the suprasegmental level (e.g., stress-timing, intonation, rhythm). Increasing the level of accuracy in self-diagnosing individual problems helps this group of often highly motivated learners seek resources that meet their identified needs and that further promote self-regulated learning.

Affective Dimension

This dimension involves such elements as speakers' attitudes, motivations, and affect. It is integrated in the teaching of listening and responding by providing opportunities for learners to practice engaging in so-called "climate talk" (e.g., recognizing others' contributions, attending, focusing on understanding rather than evaluating, and helping each other clarify viewpoints). For instance, in a listening triad activity, learners may take turns being the observer and the speaker in order to learn about how to recognize the speaker's attitudinal signals (e.g., tone of voice) and to engage in climate talk and to observe how others engage in climate talk verbally and nonverbally with such questions as: How do speakers open the conversation? What expressions do speakers use to keep the ball rolling? What is the level of formality of the talk? What is the physical distance between speakers?

Strategic Dimension

A competence-based listening and responding construct includes both linguistic competence and strategic competence. The field of language-learning strategies is one that has been researched extensively since the 1970s, and my research has shown that strategic competence can be developed in the shorter term. Research has indicated that using specific types of strategies tends to correlate positively with language performance, specifically, the use of cognitive, metacognitive, and compensation strategies. Cognitive strategies involve mental processes related to manipulating the target language for the purpose of understanding and producing language (e.g., attending, translating, inferring). Metacognitive strategies refer to self-management activities (e.g., organizing, planning, monitoring, evaluating) that control cognitive activities. Compensation strategies involve conscious plans for solving a linguistic problem in order to reach a communicative goal (e.g., simplifying a message, avoiding areas that pose linguistic difficulties, paraphrasing, repeating) (Huang, 2010c).

Recent research has demonstrated that, in developing learners' strategic competence, what matters is not accumulating strategies, but managing a repertoire of strategies in response to the communicative task at hand. Over the years, I have studied the development of strategies through the use of simple index cards (Huang, 2006); think-aloud protocols (Swain et al., 2009); and written, individual spoken, and group interactive reflection (Huang, 2010b). In all cases, the goal is to create ways to facilitate learners' engagement in goal-oriented (i.e., strategy-specific), task-specific (i.e., interpersonal, group, seminar, presentation, etc.) reflection. In the method derived from my recent research, the strategic dimension is implemented pedagogically through three stages: before, during, and after a listening/responding activity. In other words, what did you do before listening/responding? What did you do while

you were listening/responding to help you perform the task? And what did you do after completing the task? The idea is not to teach strategies or provide training about strategies to learners directly. Rather, the emphasis is on creating activities that may facilitate “meaningful” strategies (i.e., strategies of personal relevance) that learners themselves develop through inter- (i.e., socially interactive) and intra- (i.e., self-reflective) activities. This approach enables learners to self-evaluate and thus promotes the transfer of strategies to other relevant situations and speaking requirements that are beyond the task at hand and outside the classroom context (Huang, 2010d).

It is important to note that not all the interrelated dimensions presented above are applicable, nor should they be incorporated equally in every lesson and across all listening and responding contexts. The dimensions, however, offer important considerations on facilitating graduate EAL listening and responding skills in their own practice, and should be used flexibly in response to individual student needs and the particular situations they encounter.

Conclusion

A review of services provided by English-language-support units at the graduate level and in journal articles clearly indicates that far more attention has been paid to developing writing skills than other language skill domains in academic settings. The emphasis is appropriate, because academic writing ability is valued in the academy. The overemphasis on writing, however, is often at the expense of other skills and overlooks how skills in the writing domain are connected to skills in the other language domains or the interdependence of skills among language domains.

Graduate EAL students should not be expected to develop their listening and responding skills by osmosis. For advanced EAL learners, listening and responding in academic settings are rather complex operations

that involve processes far beyond the understanding of individual sounds, words, and sentences. For EAL students who are new entrants in an academic community, indicators and customs, from common explicit discourse markers to tacit rules of engagement that underlie practices and interactions in different roles in various academic settings, can be puzzling, anxiety provoking, and frustrating, as they move from the status of “peripheral” to “legitimate” participants (Firth & Wagner, 2007) in the academic community. The model presented in this paper includes important dimensions to consider in the teaching of listening and responding. The role of these dimensions is supported by research and theories, and should be carefully considered in order to meet the learning needs of EAL graduate students across institutions of higher education. ■■

Notes

1 I have used the following graph as a launching pad for discerning the multiple factors that might affect one’s ability to comprehend, and that, in turn, may impede online oral response. Listening in everyday life or academic settings is a challenging skill to acquire because of real linguistic issues (e.g., sounds, words, information sequencing); it is still the most neglected skill in the field of second-language acquisition, even though it is receiving increased attention; an advanced learner is not necessarily a good listener; sometimes speakers are too busy thinking about how and what to respond; people all listen through their own filters; selecting the information received is a natural process that occurs unconsciously; listeners may not have the necessary topic or subject-matter knowledge to process and understand the information heard in real-time; listening/hearing does not necessarily mean understanding; and, finally, other environmental, psychological, and situational barriers may be present.

2 Macro-structural cues may include linguistic cues related to topic introduction (e.g., words that indicate general focus, overview, linking to previous content, and key headings), organization (e.g., words that provide signposts, transitional phrases, lists of key points, patterns of organization), conclusion (e.g., words that provide internal reviews, summaries, and explicit concluding cues). Micro-structural cues may include linguistic cues related to repetition (e.g., paraphrasing, repetitions, and exemplification), key information (e.g., new elements, contrasting ideas, key words or phrases), paralinguistic cues (e.g., gestures, pauses used to signal transitions and emphases, stress, intonation), and tangential information that may manifest in verbal digressions, humor, or anecdotes. Familiarity with linguistic cues not only facilitates listening comprehension, but can also improve speaking skills.

3 Piaget first used the term “schema” (pl. “schemata”) in the 1920s, and educational psychologist R. C. Anderson later expanded it. The three types of schemata that have been acknowledged in reading are: linguistic (for decoding and processing discourse), content (for understanding the content area of the written text or oral discourse), and formal (for recognizing the rhetorical structure of the written text or oral discourse) (Carrell, 1983, 1987, 1991; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). Schemata can change, be restructured, and evolve moment by moment during perception and comprehension.

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Turning a Plague into a Posy: Team Teaching Graduate Courses at a Small Campus

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Abstract

In response to limited resources and the need to grow its graduate program, a team-taught, multi-disciplinary, graduate course, "Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Plagues" was taught by four instructors from the disciplines of biology, history, communication arts, and literature at a small campus. On a campus where a graduate culture is not firmly established, faculty focused on mentoring students and engaging in an interdisciplinary enterprise. This format raised the standards within the graduate program while using a reasonable commitment of time and effort by the instructors.

Keywords

interdisciplinary instruction, team teaching, small campus, graduate education

Introduction

Graduate teaching on small college campuses carries with it a unique set of demands. Small campuses may have limited resources to devote to graduate programs, and those programs are challenged to develop innovative curricula with a small number of graduate faculty. The institutional expectation of generating graduate enrollments is made difficult by the limited number of faculty available and the smaller graduate population. Understandably, academic departments at small campuses typically require that faculty members' teaching be devoted primarily to their undergraduate curricular needs. Thus, administrators simultaneously expect that graduate programs will grow and will serve the needs of the campus and the region, but they are not always able to provide overload credit, leave time, or financial remuneration when instructors take on the responsibility of teaching those courses. Given those apparently conflicting demands, how can small campuses maintain effective academic programs for small graduate cohorts? For the directors of these small graduate programs, a major challenge lies in motivating faculty with scant rewards to teach topical interdisciplinary courses, some of which can be listed concurrently in the different disciplines that drive the curriculum of the graduate program.

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Scholarly sources about team teaching acknowledge its value in diverse academic settings. Chiefly, learning or writing across the curriculum broadens students' intellectual exposure to diverse topics and often serves to bridge unseen perceptual boundaries between different disciplines (Gaytan, 2010; Seabury & Barrett, 2002; van Amelsvoort, van Wijk, & den Ouden, 2010). Students have also been found to perceive team-taught courses differently than those taught by a single faculty member (Yanamandram & Noble, 2005). Therefore, team teaching often involves the participation of an instructor of writing or English so that students may improve writing or communications skills (Seabury & Barrett, 2000). Our graduate students appear to have supported the findings of the positive impact of collaborative teaching upon participants, but we found that by altering some of the teaching approaches the benefits could also be felt by the instructional team.

Essentially, we used a combination of what van Amelsvoort et al. (2010) call the "rotational" and "interactive" approaches to team teaching (pp. 98-99). Rotational teaching involves faculty members developing a course jointly, but sequencing members' leadership of class meetings, whereas interactive teaching occurs when faculty plan and present the course together. The course was planned collaboratively, and classroom time was split between the rotational and interactive approaches. We noticed several benefits from the interactive class periods: students engaged with faculty who had differing perspectives on the topic, and had the opportunity to witness interdisciplinary discussion that otherwise would not have occurred. Faculty benefited too, by a reduction in the time commitment involved in teaching classes, even though they remained heavily engaged in the course planning.

Other authors have commented on the nature of their working relationships in the teams. Some focus on a mentoring relationship between a more senior faculty and junior or student teachers (George & Davis-Wiley, 2000). Research has focused on the benefits of building a collaborative atmosphere (Dyrud, 2010; Lester & Evans, 2009), and more scholarship has examined useful means by which to organize team-taught courses (Conn, 2010; Gaytan, 2010; Lester & Evans, 2009; Rehling & Lindeman, 2010). Within these studies, the importance of adequate communication and planning among faculty is emphasized (see especially Leavitt, 2006; Game & Metcalfe, 2009; Havnes, 2009). In our case, faculty who participated in the course were highly engaged with each other, and the overlapping attendance in individual classes allowed us to model cross-curricular scholarship even while it permitted some relief from traditional course participation that would require our presence at every class.

physiological ecology of reptiles and amphibians has been published in journals such as *Canadian Journal of Zoology*, *Journal of Herpetology*, and *Physiological and Biochemical Zoology*.

One limitation of the available team-teaching scholarship is that it tends to focus heavily on the secondary and undergraduate experience. The publications about graduate-level team teaching are scant, but available (see George & Davis-Wiley, 2000). To date, however, there has been little attention paid to the ways in which graduate team teaching may facilitate educational objectives on smaller campuses. In order to help fill this gap in the literature, this study proposes a “best practices” model that suggests team teaching some courses will not only improve and strengthen graduate curricula; it may also serve as an administrative boon by increasing the willingness of faculty members to participate. Furthermore, it allows faculty from different disciplines to collaborate with peers and stretch their view of their respective disciplines and teaching styles. We hope that this study will contribute to the small body of scholarship about teaching graduate courses, and that it will better serve faculty members on small campuses.

Method and Approach

Our institution, a small regional campus of a larger state system, has approximately 3,010 attendees (of whom just 150 are graduate students). It offers a multidisciplinary degree, the Master of Liberal Studies (MLS), as one of a small number of graduate degrees. Interdisciplinary in scope, the program encompasses three different tracks: (a) the individual interdisciplinary track, where students are encouraged to design their own program of study to achieve an additional credential that will enhance their professional career or offer self-fulfillment; (b) the academic teaching track, which targets students who want to teach at the academic level, includes several options as to the discipline of focus (the two most popular disciplines at our institution are English and communication arts); and (c) the global studies track, which primarily attracts students interested in working for international non-profit orga-

nizations such as the Red Cross or United Way. When a new director assumed leadership of the program in summer 2009, she attempted to develop a new format that would respond both to practical considerations of faculty availability and to the greater desire to improve the quality of graduate education for our students. The graduate program director faced the challenge of providing students with an exclusively graduate curriculum. At our campus, graduate students often have to attend some cross-listed graduate/ undergraduate courses, in which they followed separate syllabi and requirements. The director hoped that increasing the number of seminars would strengthen the graduate culture and yet would not overtax the instructors involved.

To respond to these objectives, the MLS director proposed a team-taught course, *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Plagues*, scheduled for the spring 2010 semester, when the H1N1 virus threatened to become another major epidemic. The director approached faculty in the disciplines that best fit with the topic and the needs of the program, including biology, history, communication arts, and literature. Besides reinforcing knowledge about the biological basis of epidemic disease and its transmission, participants learned about various bridges that cross curricular boundaries. Among these cross-curricular comparisons, students considered the historical contexts in which literature and spoken language were produced; the rhetoric and propaganda about diseases and their cures; the means by which public policy has been constructed and debated; and the ethics of policy implementation when it impacted human subjects. Removing a traditional boundary that marks the divisions between disciplines was a first step in altering the graduate curriculum on our campus. Moreover, our graduate students tend to be older than traditional graduate populations, and an interdisciplinary approach and the team-teaching format have been cited as being “particularly well suited to . . . adult learners” such as ours (Seabury & Barrett, 2000, p.20).

To test the feasibility of this innovative format, participating faculty members decided to conduct a study to investigate curricular issues including the teaching and learning in the course. As such, it presents a new hybrid teaching paradigm and provides an opportunity to investigate the value of interdisciplinary courses taught by a diverse panel of faculty. Specifically, we investigated the following questions: What impact did the course's design have on graduate learning? How beneficial for students was it to have four faculty members, each presenting his or her discipline's perspective on the same topic? What were the advantages of teaching a course like this for faculty? And finally, could this course become a useful model for graduate courses on small campuses? We asked our students for permission to include their statements about the course, and we obtained permission from our campus' Institutional Review Board in an application for using human subjects in our research. We then collected data through the course of the semester by reflecting on our experiences, taking field notes during class sessions, and consulting student comments in online forums. Students who participated in the class granted permission for their online feedback to be included in this article.

Although our results are preliminary and based upon a small sample, team teaching some graduate courses may provide a "best practices" approach for small campuses. Such an approach to an interdisciplinary graduate curriculum could enable administrators on small university campuses to broaden graduate curricular offerings without overtaxing the faculty members involved.

Assembling a Team

The MLS director faced two main challenges in putting together a group of instructors for this course. First, the faculty here are already working at maximum capacity and receiving the benefits of course release time or financial remuneration that the administrators were

able to provide. At our institution, most faculty members teach a full load exclusively in undergraduate curricula. It was therefore a perceived challenge to convince faculty to exceed their usual teaching responsibilities. A second challenge lay in the limited financial resources of our campus. Like most small campuses nationwide, ours often cannot provide significant monetary bonuses or course-release time even when instructors take on added teaching assignments. With very limited financial resources, the director encouraged participation by emphasizing different benefits.

The director suggested to prospective faculty that there were practical and curricular benefits of participating in the course: collaboration between faculty who would not otherwise come together and significantly lower time commitment than if they were to teach an overload course by themselves. She decided that biology, history, communication arts, and literature would provide students with a holistic view of different types of plagues. The course would examine the biological causes and spread of plagues, their occurrences (or recurrences) throughout history, human responses to epidemic disease, the media coverage of these plagues, their representation in literature, and other related issues. Though the topic of plagues was engaging, it required instructors to stretch themselves to accommodate the interdisciplinary enterprise. Just as other scholars have proposed, the faculty saw this expansion beyond the boundaries imposed by traditional curricular and research constraints as liberating and providing them with an opportunity for collaborating on an innovative interdisciplinary project (Conn, 2010; Dyrud, 2010; Gaytan, 2010).

Constructing the Syllabus

This course was an interdisciplinary graduate class that focused on the ways in which plagues—widespread diseases of all kinds—were considered. It addressed a broad span of time, from the Black Death of the 1300s

through the reactions to flu epidemics in the early twenty-first century. The course was designed to be a seminar oriented around student-driven discussion. Brief introductory lectures provided a critical overview and presented issues which were developed further in discussions, weekly written responses, and forum posts.

The main challenge in constructing the syllabus was to design the course in a way that made the most of each instructor's talents. After several meetings and many drafts, the four faculty decided to take a chronological and thematic approach to the plagues, dividing the course in three main sections: the bubonic plague and cholera epidemics; typhoid and influenza; and modern epidemics, especially HIV and AIDS. Each section comprised four class sessions. Each instructor was responsible for one of these sessions. Typically, the first class meeting addressed the biology and spread of the disease; the second meeting the historical developments in technology, policy, and social interaction; the third the role of media, communications and rhetorical responses to disease; and the fourth the portrayal of the disease in literature.

The assigned readings needed to address these different aspects of the plagues. The faculty posted additional articles and web links for the class on a Web-based course management tool. In addition, we presented documentaries, films, and PowerPoint presentations to establish common groundwork that would facilitate class discussions. The assessment of the course (addressed later in this paper) was designed in such a way that the faculty shared the grading in an equitable and collaborative manner.

Our Students and Graduate Culture

Graduate students currently enrolled in the MLS program at our institution are predominantly adult learners, and they often work full time or have significant personal responsibilities in addition to their academic obligations. As admission criteria have changed over

the last several years, the academic preparation and skills of current students vary widely. However, students typically have not been exposed to graduate studies and comment that they do not know what to expect when they first enroll for courses. Perhaps this is because a great many of them are first-generation college and graduate students. Students usually take one or two classes each semester (two courses constitutes a full-time course load). They are required to take an Introduction to Graduate Studies class in the first fall semester after they enroll. Most students complete the MLS degree in two to three years.

Because our campus, like many others, struggles to create, clarify, or strengthen a graduate culture, faculty members must be prepared to mentor students closely (both inside and outside of the classroom). In our case, fostering a graduate culture where one previously did not exist has proven to require focused effort. For example, students in more traditional graduate programs on residential campuses engage in informal discussions, but those chance meetings are less frequent on commuter campuses where most of the graduate students are enrolled part-time and come to campus almost exclusively for the purpose of attending classes. Thus the important peer-based element of graduate education is much less prevalent. Students new to the program often do not benefit from having more advanced colleagues give them advice on how to approach problems or to act as sparring partners to hone their critical thinking skills and formulate or support independent ideas. Faculty members often find that they have to be more proactive in helping new graduate students move to higher levels of analysis, interpretation, and synthesis, and this certainly was the case in the "Plagues" course. The four faculty members had to encourage active discussion and discourse among the graduate students, as often the students acted in isolation from one another. For example, they did not take advantage of the online chat room, which

was offered to them as a virtual meeting place where they could exchange ideas. In many cases, faculty also took time to train the graduate students in the use of instructional technologies that enhanced their ability to locate scholarly resources and to explore deeper levels of inquiry with one another. This lack of preparation is typical for students who begin in the spring semester and have not yet taken the Introduction to Graduate Studies course.

Classroom Management

The class meetings for this course were scheduled to last for two hours and forty-five minutes, with sessions meeting once a week in the evenings. On some nights, we decided that all four faculty members should be present: these included the first night of the course (in order to provide an overview of the class) and another night when presentations were due. For the rest of the class periods, we split responsibility among the four faculty based on their areas of expertise. For instance, the biology member assigned readings on the biology and pathology of bubonic plague, then lectured and led discussion on the appropriate evening. During these sessions other faculty members were free to sit in and join the discussion. Sometimes, one or two additional faculty members attended and participated, while on other evenings the faculty member in charge was the only instructor present. At times, one or two faculty members would attend the first portion of a class session and then leave at the break.

Eventually, we decided to adopt a combination of what van Amelsvoort et al. (2010) call the rotational and interactive approaches to team teaching (pp. 98-99). Rotational teaching involves faculty members developing a course jointly, but sequencing members' leadership of class meetings, whereas interactive teaching occurs when faculty plan and present the course together. The course was planned collaboratively, and classroom time was split between the rotational and

interactive approaches. We noticed several benefits from the interactive class periods: students engaged with faculty who had differing perspectives on the topic and had the opportunity to witness interdisciplinary discussion that otherwise would not have occurred. We modeled interdisciplinary argumentation in the way that van Amelsvoort et al. (2010) suggest. One faculty member who was in charge of the session would be accompanied by a second faculty member for the first half of class, and then would lead discussion after his/her colleague left for the evening. Such an approach was beneficial for practical reasons and illustrated the pros and cons of these two approaches to team teaching.

For instance, one session that was led by the communication arts faculty member was attended by the biology member for the first half of the class period. During the first "interactive" segment of class, discussion centered upon the political nature of funding for AIDS research. The biology faculty member was able to talk from experience about the nature of NSA funding, and the communication faculty member pressed for discussion about the broader issue of value-charged political rhetoric and how President Ronald Reagan's political agenda influenced the lack of serious AIDS research funding in the early 1980s. The interaction of the two faculty members was key to exploring the problem in its full complexity. In the second half of the class period—the "rotational" period—the biology member left, and the communication member observed that without his perspective, the discussion turned to a more communication-centric discussion of rhetoric and ideology. While this is certainly a valuable topic area, the communication arts member observed that the discussion was far less interdisciplinary in nature.

We noticed several benefits from having multiple instructors present: students engaged with faculty who had differing perspectives on the topic and had the opportunity to witness interdisciplinary discussion that otherwise would not have occurred. We modeled

interdisciplinary argumentation, and student comments suggest we were successful at this aspect of teaching. For instance, one student commented that she felt as if she had a “team of experts” to draw upon:

The class nights I enjoyed most were when all four teachers were in the room. It was an incredible experience to get questions from any of the four disciplines answered immediately! The discussions and insights offered because of the expertise in the room was amazing—unlike anything I’ve ever experienced in a classroom. Going back to a one-prof class will seem almost boring after this.

On the other hand, some students commented that having all four faculty members present during discussion was “intimidating.” This may be due partially to the small class size (the session in question was attended by six students and four faculty members). We discussed the issue in an instructor meeting and came to the conclusion that too many faculty members in attendance was having a detrimental effect on student discussion. As a result, we decided to limit future attendance to two faculty members per class period in order to sustain our interactive efforts and to model interdisciplinary consideration of topics in most classes.

For example, we were able to continue or extend discussion from week to week even though the attending instructors changed. The communication member attended a class period led by the historian, who discussed the Progressive Movement of the early 20th century and its influence upon public policy regarding plagues like typhoid. The next week, class was led by the communication member, and the historian was not present, but the instructor was able to maintain continuity since he had attended the previous class session. Although we were not all present at each of the class periods, we were able to maintain a significant degree of interaction throughout the semester even while we limited instructors’ participation in each class session.

Grading/Assessment

Collaboration was crucial when we engaged in grading. For short paper assignments, which were graded by a different faculty member each week, we developed a grading rubric and discussed our standards in an effort to maintain consistency. We found that having a uniform set of rubrics for all assignments allowed us to reinforce a consistent set of standards, regardless of who was responsible for grading individual assignments. For the larger projects, like the paper proposal, annotated bibliography, and final paper, we graded the assignments as a team, holding weekly meetings to discuss student work and assign grades. When students submitted or presented each of these assignments, we provided commentary that partly was devoted to their individual areas of expertise, but which also could focus on broader concerns like cogency or argumentation. These comments were distilled, usually into a set of three or four recommendations for continuing work on the project. In most cases, we suggested additional sources that would help students to engage fully the course content or would improve their ability to develop their thesis statements. These comments were given to students in written form (often via email or handouts), and were presented as a cohesive response from the teaching team. In short, we learned that by collaborating on key decisions, and imparting those decisions to the students, we were able to improve the course and the quality of student work.

Communication

Communication among the faculty was generally smooth. We met weekly in person to review what had occurred in class discussions, to talk about concerns with the students, and to introduce plans for upcoming course meetings to ensure that we had sufficient overlap between instructors. The faculty periodically compared graded papers to ensure that their standards for evaluating students were consistent. When any issues arose,

faculty addressed the problems in person and via email and, after a short discussion, arrived at a consensus about how to proceed. The faculty realized that students might approach a single faculty member but could avoid consulting with others, so we resolved that any “official” conclusions delivered to students or responses to specific inquiries would take place only after the faculty had arrived at a unified response. Consistency of communication, in our opinion, was critical, and though it took extra effort to establish a cohesive message, it helped to ensure that students could follow a uniform set of instructions for all assignments.

Even so, communication between faculty and students presented some unanticipated challenges. For example, the lead instructor and MLS director was often approached outside of class—she was the primary agent for allaying student concerns about the class in particular or the degree in general. As a consequence, she bore a much greater share of the burden of informal conversations with students outside the class, a challenge that was compounded by the novelty of the course and its unusual format. Having four faculty members also made communication more difficult than it would be with a single instructor, as policy matters and grades had to be determined by the entire group.

Negotiating roles and responding to student feedback during the course’s implementation had the beneficial result of raising our expectations of our graduate students, but it required significant effort. Faculty members had to adjust frequently to student input and to assume greater responsibility on some issues, even while we relinquished control in others.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

As a whole, the Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Plagues course proved to be a successful enterprise for both students and faculty. After considering our experiences in this new format, we concluded that in order to be a useful model for graduate courses on

small campuses, several factors should be considered. We believe that our most significant changes took place in three areas: changes in graduate culture (both in terms of strengthening students’ intellectual vigor and in terms of students taking ownership of their learning process); constructively collaborating with administrators about the uses of faculty time and financial demands of sustaining a graduate program; and the nature of working on an instructional format of our own design.

We concluded that graduate students clearly benefit from the interdisciplinary team-teaching format. One student commented on the opportunity to experience the connection between disciplines and their practical applications:

Before this class, I knew nothing about plagues and pandemics. The books and most of the readings this semester were VERY engaging. This class opened for me a whole new area of interest, especially pointing out the importance communication (or the lack thereof) plays in emergent times. Whereas, before I tended to look at communication in a vacuum (or close to it), now I see it as one critical piece of the puzzle. Only with an interdisciplinary solution that brings all the pieces together—science, communication, social, political, etc. can we hope to wage a successful and effective war against the next plague.

Another student saw the benefits of interdisciplinary team teaching in terms of intellectual stimulation,

I realize that four professors is not feasible for each class, but even having two in a class simultaneously adds a dimension to the experience that you don’t get in a normal classroom environment. . . . Another rewarding aspect is the feedback received from different professors on the weekly responses. Writing for four professors is challenging, but the written feedback is rewarding.

Students in the “Plagues” course clearly felt challenged by the team-taught, interdisciplinary format, and felt that the interdisciplinary approach helped them attain a better understanding of the topic than a traditional single-instructor, non-interdisciplinary approach. This finding concurs with the literature on team teaching (see especially Game & Metcalfe, 2009).

We do still have concerns about continuing the development of our graduate culture. Although the interdisciplinary team approach can be a positive force in terms of student success, the lack of an established graduate culture—which we perceived to be the case at our institution—can create a major challenge for student success in these interdisciplinary courses. In our case, the interdisciplinary format of the “Plagues” course sometimes created a daunting challenge for students by requiring them to synthesize and incorporate the material from all fields from week to week. As one student noted,

The most challenging aspect of the course for me was to be able to include some reference from all of the week’s readings into the weekly response while also incorporating connections to previous material and an outside source. This is mainly due to the volume of weekly reading requirements.

This student perceived the reading load and the interdisciplinary focus of this course to be challenging. We realized that some students’ abilities to draw connections between diverse works will need to mature further over time. Thus, interdisciplinary courses may be perceived as more difficult than “regular” courses by graduate students at institutions that do not have pre-existing strong graduate cultures.

We determined in our case that the issue of graduate culture can be addressed both inside and outside the classroom. In the team-taught interdisciplinary classroom, we aspire to improve higher-order analytical thinking within the graduate culture. To achieve this goal, future meetings of these classes could benefit from

altered assignments that deepen analytical evaluation of the interdisciplinary course connections. On a larger scale, the faculty agreed that graduate students need to have their own dedicated seminars in order to establish and maintain a graduate culture on campus. Students in the “Plagues” course reported positive feelings from being able to collaborate and commiserate with one another. The need to move to an all-graduate seminar curriculum is what prompted the director to design this team-taught, interdisciplinary seminar that could be listed concurrently with different disciplines.

Another important element is that there must be a strong sense of graduate ownership in the program. Put simply, while faculty can promote graduate culture, it will not develop completely until students assume some role in its promotion. Our graduate students took this imperative seriously. For example, this year, a group of MLS students took a significant step in that direction by forming a graduate student organization which has taken upon itself to create a newsletter, a student guide and a mentoring program for incoming students. The organization collaborates with their faculty advisor, thus enjoying another source of mentoring. By addressing the needs of these new students, the “senior” graduate students are creating a community and support system for them. The key will be to cultivate a graduate culture that will also meet the needs of the students grandfathered into this new system, as this newer system is more focused and competitive. A 140% enrollment increase from fall 2009 to fall 2010 suggests that students are receptive to the new developments in our programs.

Administrative support made possible the changes in the character and quality of our graduate culture and curriculum. For example, the administration was able to dedicate further funding for more graduate seminars. Effective in fall 2010, the administration agreed to create a budget for the MLS program and to increase the allotment for faculty who participate. In spring 2010,

when each of us took on the “Plagues” course as an overload assignment, we split the remuneration four ways. In the future, faculty who participate will earn more than they did previously, and they will continue to claim graduate course instruction in their teaching portfolios. Over time, increasing the monetary remuneration should offset more adequately the time commitment shared by graduate instructors. However, we would urge graduate directors and/or other administrators to be careful when recruiting potential members for such team-taught courses. We discovered that even though we thought we would spend significantly less time than a single professor would on a course, we still devoted more than the equivalent of a quarter-time appointment—time commitments for team-taught courses are not simple mathematical formulas based on the number of instructors involved. On a positive note, our administration also permitted the creation of a physical space on campus reserved for the graduate students to meet and exchange ideas. In practical terms, on campuses with limited resources, this approach may be one way to encourage participation with a modest financial commitment. As well, the corresponding enrollment increase we enjoyed might be a factor that could encourage other campuses to consider improving the quality of a graduate academic program. A comparatively small investment on our campus allowed faculty to sustain the quality of their undergraduate curricula, even while they contributed to the expansion and improvement of one graduate program.

The adoption of a different instructional format proved to be the most important factor in our overall success. It was worthwhile for both students and faculty because it provided more “experts in the classroom” for the students and limited teaching responsibilities for the faculty. Although van Amelsvoort et al. (2010) argue that the interactional approach is superior since it maximizes the benefits of including two or more faculty members, we found that it was not an effective

tool on our campus. This approach requires the entire team to be present and active in every class session, but classes with low student populations may feel intimidated by a comparatively large faculty presence in the classroom. In our case, four instructors in a small class proved unwieldy. Another consideration was the equitable sharing of responsibilities. The rotational approach proved the best suited to this purpose. By assuring that more than one faculty member was present at nearly every class meeting (even if the additional faculty member did not stay for the entire session), we were able to achieve the benefits of the interactional approach as well by modeling interdisciplinary approaches to problems and to argumentation itself. The overlapping participation of faculty members from one class to the next maintained a sense of continuity, even while it diminished significantly the time commitment of instructors compared to the traditional requirement imposed upon a single instructor.

We recommend that others consider this instructional approach for several reasons. First, it allows faculty who may be receiving scant monetary rewards to join such courses without feeling that the increased workload is “not worth it.” Second, it allows both faculty and students to benefit from the interaction of experts from diverse disciplines (as Game and Metcalfe [2009] argue in regard to the interactional format, faculty learn from each other, but there may be a different application in this method in that students learn in practical terms how to approach problems from interdisciplinary perspectives). Finally, academic administrations can develop and strengthen their graduate programs without sacrificing the quality of existing curricula. While it is clear that our primary focus has been on graduate-level learning, we believe that this approach has a number of possible applications for undergraduate classes on small campuses. It would lend itself particularly well to courses that promote interdisciplinary learning such as Honors seminars, senior capstone courses, or First-Year

coursework. Although untested at the undergraduate level, the combined benefit of interdisciplinary faculty interaction and a reduced commitment in the classroom should have obvious potential for application on a variety of small campuses, whether in its graduate or undergraduate programs.

In the end, the faculty of the Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Plagues was left with answering the very important question: could this course become a useful model for graduate courses on small campuses? Or, in other words, can we turn the plague of scant resources into a posy of innovation? Provided that administrators consider these factors, our answer is yes. ■■

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Lots of Moving Parts: Is Service-Learning Sustainable in a College Classroom?

Jessica Skolnikoff, Robert Engvall, and KC Ferrara

Abstract

Engagement in the immediate community has long been a stated goal of most colleges and universities. Grand university mission statements (including our own) often convey a “commitment to community service.” While our rhetoric is lofty, how do we actually commit ourselves to pursuing this objective? How might we truly “engage” a community of scholars with the larger community? Is “true” service-learning sustainable in a college classroom? This paper addresses one method of engagement that exists on our campus: one section of the Core Curriculum “Human Behavior in Perspective,” has been transformed into a service-learning course. This course integrates the model of service-learning into the educational curriculum. In practical terms, this course provides interaction between college students and residents of a Rhode Island Women’s Shelter.

Keywords

service-learning, campus/community engagement

Introduction

Aristotle insists that the cultivation of moral virtue is at least initially a matter of practical training and habituation: “one becomes courageous and just, much as one comes to be a good builder or musician—in large part through practice” (Carr, 2006, p. 425). This work describes a specific instance in which we have provided an opportunity for students to “practice” moral virtue. If we might all agree that it is virtuous to assist those in situations less favorable than one’s own, then these students had an opportunity to engage in a service-learning program that also afforded them the opportunity to do something virtuous. Most of us, in our day-to-day routines, seldom have such a chance (or perhaps we don’t take the opportunity) to actually engage in something virtuous. But beyond the issue of service’s “virtue,” lies the question of how the academy values that service and whether there can be a future for a faculty member who fully engages himself or herself in a mission of service. This paper, then, combines a dual focus: (1) a recognition and discussion of the inherent tension between university support for service and a simultaneous emphasis (at least in the form of reward and tenure structures) on the more prestigious research

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track and (2) a specific description of faculty members' efforts to incorporate service-learning into their teaching curriculum. The tension is ever present in academia, even in instances where service to the community might seem to fulfill an obvious need. After Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, Tulane University administrators faced a series of difficult decisions, and faculty were encouraged to emphasize service-learning. While few could argue with the wisdom and virtue of such a renewed emphasis (especially on a campus and in a city devastated by flooding), there still remained hotly contested debates concerning the effect such an emphasis would have upon more traditional faculty research. Primarily, publications alone have traditionally been the faculty path to success (Mangan, 2010).

Naumann and Terosky (2007) described the dilemma facing faculty members: "service has emerged, paradoxically, as necessary for institutional welfare and as unacknowledged in faculty work lives" (p. 284). The irony of the tenure process is such that our youngest and often our most vibrant faculty members must deemphasize altruistic service initiatives and pursuits while they focus on more traditional avenues of publication and self-interest. Sadly, this does not simply push service to the back burner of academia, but often leaves it off of the stove entirely. By the time faculty members become tenured and promoted as far as they can go, they may be so exhausted by the process that their devotion to service initiatives may prove to be less than it might have been. If only we encouraged them to pursue service with the zeal with which they pursued publishing, we might find ourselves with more worthwhile service initiatives and with a far greater impact on the communities we ostensibly serve.

Teaching, research, and service remain the mission of most universities, but all too often service is lost or consists of efforts left over after our teaching and research is done (and for many, teaching and research leave no time for anything else). Jaeger and Thornton

(2006) wrote of the uncertainty that surrounds the concept of service within the university context. Those involved in altruistic public service initiatives are not always rewarded within the university setting. In fact, they may be marginalized: set apart from those more visibly involved in publishing and other "more accepted" forms of scholarly activity. The reality of faculty socialization tells us that those involved in connecting with the public may be seen by their colleagues as less productive or less valued citizens of the academy. In essence, being a good citizen within society is sometimes at odds with being a good citizen within the academy.

Defining "service" is a bit like defining philosophical terms like "goodness" or "virtue." What counts as service in the mind of one person or one administrator in the case of a professor seeking tenure may not count as service in the mind of others similarly situated. Does service require volunteerism? Does service require work that produces tangible benefits? Does service have to engage those viewed as "less fortunate?" These questions illustrate the difficulty with defining a concept like service to the satisfaction of all. Basically, all we can do is to promote the engagement of our faculty, staff, and students with the community in a way that at least arguably benefits the larger community. Whether the actions we take or their visible beneficial results should count toward a faculty member's tenure, or toward a student's graduation requirements, or to improve the image of the university within the community is a question that cannot be answered in this paper. But the lack of a common definition accepted by all should not inhibit our efforts to build further engagement.

At our university, three distinct forms of service in which our students participate have emerged since 1998. Community service is defined as a co-curricular service experience that addresses the symptoms of social issues, such as hunger. This may take the form of one-time or long-term experiences, including commu-

nity service work study programs. Civic engagement is a process by which students are active in the political process and use their voice, collective and individual, to advocate on behalf of others (Ferrar 2007; Howard 2001). This may take the form of voter registration drives, letters to the editor, and protest. Service-learning is a curricular experience led by a faculty member in which equal emphasis is placed on academic content, meeting community needs, and exploration of the student's civic values (Ferrara, 2007). This last form of service is what is addressed in this paper, in which we will lay the groundwork, both theoretical and practical, for our efforts to engage the academic curriculum by integrating service-learning into actual courses and coursework. We will explain in practical terms how and why we did what we did. We begin by describing the evolving place of service at our university and showing how our efforts, along with other initiatives, provide hope for a future in which service is no longer relegated to "poor step-child" status among the teaching, research, and service siblings.

History of Service at Our University

Community service was formally introduced to our university community in 1990 with the establishment of the Volunteer Center, run by a graduate intern on a part-time basis. The Volunteer Center provided limited community service opportunities for undergraduate students, such as one-time experiences at animal shelters and senior centers, that lacked social context or adequate reflection activities. The program maintained a low profile, involving only students in leadership positions in the Department of Student Life. This humble beginning, like the beginnings on most campuses we presume, provided little direction or potential for integration of service-learning into the more traditional academic aspects of the university. There was little to no consideration of any interrelationship between community service as an extracurricular

activity and service integrated into the curriculum and faculty research.

Between 1994 and 1998, service-learning expanded. As at many universities, the concept of service-learning had become more prominent. Students had also begun to arrive at the university with some background in service acquired in high school. Change began with a grant and a push (at least rhetorically) from the administration. Personnel changes played a part as well. The first widespread and visible "organized" service-learning activity was referred to as the "Day of Service," which took place in November of 1994 and involved fifty students and staff in a day of service to the local area. The first Alternative Spring Break was launched in March of 1996. In September of 1996, the Volunteer Center moved under the Career Center. The rationale for the move included both centers' relationships with the non-profit community and common experiential learning goals of application of academic skills to real-world challenges, career exploration, and values clarification.

Service on our campus became more prominent in 1998 with the establishment of the Feinstein Service-Learning Program (FSL), which replaced the Volunteer Center. The program was created as a result of a gift from a local philanthropist who funded similar programs throughout the state. Through the FSL program, the University instituted a service graduation requirement and established its first service-learning courses. Even though the initial graduation requirements were minimal, they nevertheless established a campus commitment to the idea of greater service to the community as a hallmark of a liberal arts education.

This shift from co-curricular service to curricular service-learning resulted in FSL's move to Academic Affairs, where it was housed in the School of Education and was facilitated by a member of Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), with the assistance of an advisory board. The FSL program included a manda-

tory pre-service orientation for all students and the inclusion of themes of civic responsibility and community in all freshman level writing courses. The first sustainable partnership between the University and local community involved a reading program in which college students interacted with local children in the K-5 school community.

In 2002 the language, “commitment to community service,” was added to the University’s mission statement/core values, and service-learning is now considered a “core requirement” of the University’s academic experience (Roger Williams University, 2010, p. 3). The program was moved again to the College of Arts and Sciences, where all core curriculum courses are taught. Under the direction of a full-time professional coordinator, the program expanded further to develop strategic partnerships with several community-based and non-profit organizations. Particular consideration was given to service opportunities that offered the three necessary criteria for the academic service-learning requirement: relevant and meaningful service; enhanced academic learning; and purposeful civic learning (Howard, 2001, p.12).

The Community Connections Program piloted in 2005 is now in its sixth year and involves over thirteen hundred participants. The program, a collaboration between FSL and the Division of Student Affairs, involves all incoming students in a day of service alongside returning students, faculty and staff. The mission of the Community Connections Program is to continue the orientation process for new students by providing a common service experience that actualizes commitment to service and meets the real needs of organizations and individuals in the local community. Co-curricular departments such as Athletics and Student Programs & Leadership began to incorporate service into existing programs and established new service initiatives. The addition of a VISTA volunteer to the FSL program in 2005 enabled the University

to evaluate current partnerships, explore new partnerships, and participate in programs such as AmeriCorps Scholarships for Service.

Quantitative data on service activities of full-time undergraduate students shows immense growth—149 hours in 1998/99 vs. 50,406 in 2008/09 (Roger Williams University, 2009). Currently, more efforts are being directed toward long-term service, which is regarded as having more impact on the student and the community partner. These initiatives include non-profit internships, community service work-study positions and curricular projects that last at least 12 weeks. A new general education program, which will replace our current Core Curriculum, will emphasize social responsibility through academic content, service-learning courses, and opportunities for faculty development.

A qualitative review of campus-wide service activities shows the emergence of three distinct categories of service: community service, service-learning, and civic engagement (Ferrara, 2007). The University has begun a conversation to define how each of these areas manifests itself on our campus and how each can contribute to our students’ development as future citizens. Service-learning is of particular interest because of the potential for fusing the academic with the civic, regardless of major. “Studies have shown that service-learning is an effective pedagogy for helping students explore their values around diversity and civic responsibility; develop leadership skills; and, ultimately, enhance their engagement in the classroom and at college in general” (Strage, 2000, p.5). Engagement in the classroom might best be accomplished at our university through the integration of service-learning into our interdisciplinary core curriculum.

Our Project: An Interdisciplinary Service-Learning Course

Our project grew out of the experience of one of the authors of this paper, Professor A, an anthropologist

who teaches a Core Curriculum course called Human Behavior in Perspective. At our university, all students, regardless of major, take five interdisciplinary Core courses: Discoveries in Context; Events in Context: History and the Modern World; Human Behavior in Perspective; Ideas in Context: Literature, Philosophy and the Ascent of Ideas; and Aesthetics in Context: The Artistic Impulse. All the Core courses are guided by the following three questions: Who am I? What can I know? With what I know, how should I act?

Human Behavior in Perspective is taught by anthropologists, psychologists, and sociologists with the common thread of social science methodologies woven throughout the courses. Every course has its own theme, exploring issues pertinent to children; the death penalty; identity; and so on. For the past five years, Professor A.'s Core course has focused on some aspect of homelessness. One book used in the course, Elliot Liebow's (1993) *Tell Them Who I Am*, an ethnography of homeless women in Washington, D.C. resonated strongly with the students, some of whom have indicated that they remembered it years after taking the course. Service providers who work with the homeless were invited to speak to the class about homelessness. Through this course, we hoped that students would learn to see people in a different light—and the stories of real homeless women provided the lens through which that happened. In the discipline of anthropology social issues are routinely addressed in the course readings, but the Core course allowed Professor A to share this perspective with students from architecture, business, sciences, social sciences, engineering and construction management. This course provided an opportunity to educate students from all majors on a critical social issue, by putting real faces onto the abstract discussion of homelessness.

Professor A had always been a proponent of service-learning; she invited the Coordinator of the FSL Program (another author of this paper) to her

classroom to discuss service-learning opportunities available at the university, and she and the Coordinator served together on several committees. When Professor A was granted a course release, we seized the opportunity to redesign the Core course together. As all of us in academia understand, a course release or other administrative concession is almost always necessary to allow a faculty member the time to properly develop a new program. We learned that having a positive relationship with a collaborator is also critical in making the end result a success.

The FSL Coordinator agreed to this collaboration for two reasons: she viewed Professor A as an ally in promoting service-learning, and she sensed an opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of how service-learning impacts the professor as well as the students. The hope would be that the professor would be even more engaged long-term in promoting service-learning in the classroom. While the tenure status of the professor would not necessarily be the primary concern of the FSL Coordinator, nevertheless there is the reality that those professors with greater university status may be more comfortable with using service as a key component of their individual course requirements, as they would be less concerned with tenure implications.

After brainstorming about the new course, we came up with the idea of connecting the course with its service-learning component to citizenship and social change: participation in service-learning would help foster students' realization that they could be active advocates for social change. At this point we started to investigate matching students in the class with a homeless shelter for women and children.

Several factors influenced the selection of a community partner for this service-learning course. We were committed to choosing a site that offered students the opportunity to interact with people, but there were logistical constraints and limited sites available, as our university is located in a suburban area with few soup

kitchens or shelters nearby. We needed to find a site that offered a variety of volunteer shifts compatible with students' curricular and co-curricular schedules. Finally, we needed a site that could accommodate 450 volunteer hours over 12 weeks.

Ultimately, we found a match in a transitional shelter for women and children located seven miles from campus and accessible by public transportation. The instructors and shelter director signed a "Community Partner Agreement" that outlined expectations of each stakeholder: the University, the shelter, the faculty member, and the student volunteer. The expectations of the University would be to enhance the overall learning experience of the student by giving him or her the opportunity to integrate real-world experience with his or her academic base; the University would also benefit from the free positive publicity and community interaction. The expectations of the shelter were both to get more volunteers for their programs, as well as to expose the women at the shelter to wider perspectives beyond their own experiences. The expectations of the students ranged from a simple desire to pass the course to the more altruistic notion of helping their community.

Achieving the expectations described in the paragraph above played an important role in the development and instruction within the course. The course in which it all came together, Human Behavior in Perspective, was collaboratively taught twice. Both the Coordinator and Professor A learned a tremendous amount in the process of developing and planning a course together. We developed new team-teaching approaches and shared our different perspectives.

This course continued as we learned what worked and what we could improve. It was never only we, the instructors and students in the classroom, who shaped the course. We learned from the community partners and collaborated with them in a relationship of true reciprocity. "Reciprocity suggests that every individual, organization, and entity involved in the service-learning

functions as both a teacher and a learner. Participants are perceived as colleagues, not as servers or clients" (Jacoby 1996, p. 36).

Course Sustainability

This writing assumes that even though the rhetoric surrounding service-learning continues to be much stronger than the reality, university administrators are generally in agreement that service-learning is a necessary and valuable piece of a student's experience. We follow that up with the notion that while it is difficult, faculty members can be persuaded to incorporate aspects of service-learning into their own courses. Only then can we assess the follow-up question: whether service-learning is sustainable in a college classroom. As we taught this course, we learned that there were several clashes of cultures at any given time: academic vs. co-curricular, student vs. instructors, mandatory service vs. voluntary service, university vs. community partner, students vs. homeless shelter women, to name a few. As our title suggests, incorporating service-learning in a course entailed adding even more components to a course, many of which, such as logistics and culture clashes, were beyond our control. This made it hard to maintain consistency within the curriculum. Most instructors view all courses as works in progress, but can adding so many variables to a course like this become a permanent part of the fabric of a university and larger community?

While the complexity of the project posed certain problems, it was the infrastructure of both the university and the community partner that challenged the sustainability of this course. Our community partner experienced several staffing changes during our twelve-month partnership, including two complete changes of administrative leadership. Despite what we characterize as good communication throughout the semester, we were not notified of any staff departures and were most often told of these changes by students when they

arrived in class. The new leadership was not notified of our involvement, leading to chaos at the site. Students who had become comfortable in their volunteer roles were met with, “Who are you?” when they arrived for their shifts. At one point, we e-mailed a request for art supplies for a project to our site contact; the reply was, “She no longer works here – who are you?” The result was that we spent a significant amount of time re-introducing ourselves, explaining the program, re-establishing expectations, and re-structuring volunteer schedules, once in the middle of the semester. Though each new administration was interested in continuing the partnership, the constant turnover caused anxiety for instructors and students, as well as for their community partner and the residents of the shelter. On several occasions our students arrived and found that there was no work for them to do. Most importantly, the goal of the partnership was never communicated to the mothers at the shelters. Once we were made aware of this mistake during the first semester, we scheduled an on-site orientation with the mothers. When we arrived, even the staff was unclear as to why we were there, because communication at the partner agency was so bad.

There were also significant infrastructure problems at the University that interfered with the course. Collaborating on the creation and teaching of the course allowed for the strengthening of the course and the partnership, which enabled us to develop further programming ideas such as hosting the mothers from the shelter for a day on campus. The hope was that this would build not only a stronger connection for this particular Core course but stronger commitment to the course on the part of the University and of faculty. We also believed it would be a fitting addition to the university’s outreach programs, and would honor the mothers who graciously allowed our students into their home (shelter) every day. A campus visit would allow these women a window into higher education and give

them a sense of the environment in which our students live. However, funding and support for this initiative could not be secured. This reality again reflects the disconnect between the altruistic rhetoric and the bottom-line reality.

At the time this initiative was conceived, Professor A was one of only two anthropologists in her department and had obligations to her major, specifically to teach two sections of a new required course. This meant that she would not be teaching the Human Behavior in Perspective course, and since this course was still in its infancy it was dropped. Similarly, the FSL Coordinator is the only full-time professional in that program, and her involvement in this service-learning course was purely voluntary. It would not have been possible to continue this type of hands-on commitment to the professor, the students, and the community partner without adding staff to the FSL program.

Many universities have woven service into the school curriculum. For example, Providence College offered the country’s first major in Public Service with the establishment of the Feinstein Institute of Public Service. Several other institutions, including Quinnipiac University and Butler University, have established service-learning course criteria, which our university lacks. Absence of clear criteria can lead to various interpretations of service-learning and an uneven delivery of service to the community. It can also create disparate experiences for students.

Finally, our university does not identify service-learning courses in registration materials. Unfortunately it has not been possible for us to reach students who seek service and experiential learning opportunities during the registration process: either they hear which courses include a service component, or they don’t. This shortcoming prevents students from intentionally selecting service-learning courses. At the same time, it means that students may enroll in classes without knowing that there is a service-learning component

and may be unpleasantly surprised when they find out that they have signed up for a class which requires them to invest significant time working at an off-campus site. The first time the course was taught, for example, none of the students were aware of the service component and subsequent travel and time commitments. This led to some dissatisfaction among the students that may have been passed onto the community partner. The second time around, each student was notified by e-mail that the course was service-based; the time and travel commitments were clearly outlined. Students were given ample time to withdraw from the course and find another section. Universities that seek to incorporate service-learning into the curriculum should create methods by which students are informed and given the ability to incorporate service-learning intentionally into their courses of study.

Our goal was that this course establish an ongoing relationship between our students and the homeless women and their children. However, infrastructure problems negatively impacted the students and the shelter families. We had hoped further that the experience could foster a viable partnership between our university and the homeless shelter. While a genuine partnership was not forged immediately, what did emerge is the importance of choosing a community partner which views itself as a partner in the education process rather than merely a recipient of services. This process often includes several attempts at relationship building. The University has abandoned relationships in the past that have not been true partnerships in favor of new relationships with facilities and organizations who engage as true partners, participating in developing syllabi, facilitating pre- and post- reflection, and evaluation.

Social Justice through Service

Perry (1984, p. 344) spoke of “useful intellectuals” and the need for these educated people to employ their

expertise for social benefit. University administrations and faculty have long struggled with the need for achieving practical results for students and community while remaining true to their intellectual foundations. The theory of the beneficial nature of the university and community partnership has achieved widespread acceptance, yet the practice is much more challenging to achieve. Talking about social responsibility is a great classroom exercise, but actually implementing social responsibility, as was the function of this core course, proved difficult. Students are sometimes prone to lament “theory” without practice; professors sometimes disdain the impatience of students who want “practical” and “useful” tips for the “real world,” without dedicating themselves to the theories that inform the practice. Our hope here is to merge these two desires into both a theoretical and practical application of a genuine university-community partnership. In essence, this presents a chicken-and-egg phenomenon: do we need to change student perceptions before we embark on a service-learning course, or will the course change student perceptions? Our position is that while there are unresolved problems with making the course as effective as it might possibly be, it is nevertheless a valuable exercise for students and faculty alike to engage themselves in more curricular-related service experiences.

The push for greater assessment of the programs on college campuses is increasing. What are students actually learning? What are professors actually teaching? What added value actually occurs over the course of a students’ time on campus? Many new efforts to evaluate teaching and research have been and continue to be debated, and how effective they are or are not continues to be a source of friction between administrators and faculty members. While assessment of how we do what we do is controversial, the benefits are not. Our students’ work in the community enhances the place of the University in the public eye. Non-measurable outcomes (at least at this point) as seen in some of the

intangible benefits that accrue to the participants make the experience valuable, even if that value is not easily described or quantified.

We began this paper with a discussion of the disconnect between the sometimes grand rhetoric of service to the community that many universities are beginning to tout in their catalogs, and the reality of a meaningful and practical implementation of that service. While the disconnect between the rhetoric and the reality of implementation surely exists, there is little dispute as to the value of student service. Simons and Clear (2006) found that students showed improvements in diversity, political awareness, and interest in a better-functioning community and civic engagement through involvement in service-learning. Simply put, what's not to like about service-learning? If it genuinely improves students' awareness and self-efficacy, isn't that among the primary goals of the educational process at any level, including the university level?

Engagement in the life of the community has long been a stated goal of most colleges and universities. Grand mission statements (such as our own) often focus on a "commitment to community service" (Roger Williams University, 2010, p.3). While the rhetoric is lofty, how can an actual commitment be made to community service? How might a community of scholars be engaged with the larger community? Keckes (2006) perhaps put it best: "How can my discipline contribute to the common good, and how does that look in my department?" (p. 2). A larger debate over the value of "forced" service versus entirely voluntary service centers on the value of student interaction with those less fortunate. Reality tells us that in today's colleges and universities, many students would not have that interaction were it not encouraged. In essence, the need to pursue social justice at the university is no different from the need to pursue it everywhere. That requires addressing the enemy of social justice, namely social distance. Lessening the distance between college students, many

of whom are relatively privileged, and those they might serve, may go some distance toward an overall improvement in society's perceptions of the need for greater work toward social justice. How can any one-term focus on service actually create a sustained sense of social justice in the student? Lessening social distance and allowing students to recognize that differences among us are less important than the similarities we share may be the best way to change hearts and minds. The Human Behavior in Perspective course attempted to integrate students with a less privileged population -- one with which they otherwise likely would have no contact. This integration provided for the type of interactions that lessen the social, economic, and political distance between different groups of people, thereby benefitting both the students and the community members.

Social justice through service is not a new concept. In fact, books such as Coles (1993) *Call to Serve* or the "Bellah" books, *Habits of the Heart* (1985) and *The Good Society* (1995), center on reaching the soul of our citizens and seeking in everyone, those contributions that actually create a "good society," or at least the best society that can be mustered.

Moving Forward

Transforming a "typical" college course into an on- and off-campus experience with people outside of the campus community has many benefits. Students benefit from such "real world" interaction away from the rather "artificial" environment of some college campuses. The residents of the homeless center benefit from the positive interaction with students who sometimes must seem to be a planet away from them, given what can be some truly arduous life circumstances. Expanding the program to include shelter residents through a common discussion of readings and participation in course projects would truly integrate students with the non-student participants and would effectively

link our university with an off-campus service agency. Such linkage would provide genuine engagement in the life of the community far beyond any mission statement.

There are, of course, logistical constraints that must be acknowledged. These constraints require that university administrators recognize the time and commitment that faculty who engage in these interactive experiences must devote to ensure the success of the program. A committed faculty must be backed by an administration willing to deal with the stresses that might be placed on a given discipline or a program when faculty members are allowed to engage fully in the community off campus. Staffing and funding issues must be addressed in order that the commitment might be as genuinely strong as it is rhetorically inspired. From a larger University standpoint, there may be a need to actually “teach to the concept” in order that the value of community interaction and service becomes a core value of the University.

Students must be taught to appreciate the linkage between personal and social responsibility. Partnerships like this one have not been given university priority, and therefore words stated in the classroom may ring as hollow (and be given as little attention) as a typical university mission statement. Hersh and Schneider (2005) seemed to speak to this linkage:

The very same characteristics typically associated with “personal responsibility” are inextricably linked to the development of social responsibility as well. Personal responsibility and social responsibility involve the moral obligation to both self and community, and both forms of responsibility rely upon such virtues as honesty, self-discipline, respect, loyalty, and compassion. (p. 8)

Not all of the students involved in this course found comfort or satisfaction in the effort to forge relationships with women at the shelter. Some were downright frustrated at what they perceived to be inadequacies

on the part of some of the women. In some cases, they felt the women weren’t doing enough to extricate themselves from their difficult situations. Perhaps the students might someday understand the irony involved in that many of those who resent the women’s inability to support themselves at a time of crisis see themselves as models of “personal responsibility” even though they are being supported by and having their educations paid for by their parents. While that may perhaps sound a bit convoluted, it all boils down to the simple premise: “To whom much is given, much is expected.” That statement may be truly an exercise in taking personal responsibility for doing all that can be done to serve our fellow citizens.

Reweaving social webs will depend in part on the efforts of dedicated local leaders who choose to pursue their goals through the sometimes slow, frequently fractious, and profoundly transformative route of social-capital building. But reweaving will also depend on our ability to create new spaces for recognition, reconnection, conversation, and debate. Creating these spaces will require innovative uses of technology, creative urban and regional planning, and political will. (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003, p. 294)

Perhaps there are no better “leaders” than professors and university staff committed to making community service part and parcel of their professional existence.

Colleges and universities cannot unilaterally provide the resources required to remedy all the problems in their neighborhoods, but they can seek to minimize the disruptions they bring to the communities in which they are located and they can (through both institutional policies and the voluntary activities of their personnel) help to catalyze the efforts of other groups to remedy community problems. (Long, 1992, p. 185)

Acting as a catalyst in bringing agencies together seems like a particularly natural role for those of us involved in higher education. The concept of civic engagement, as well as “civil discourse,” is a topic of discussion at many universities. These concepts are gaining traction with university administrators and are beginning to resonate with parents, community leaders, faculty, and students who recognize the value of full engagement with the community. Strengthening one’s commitment to volunteerism is becoming a core value of this university and others); it is even entering the all-important discussions surrounding strategic planning. As universities continue to compete for students, how they market their focus on civic engagement will affect how they are perceived and how successful their programs can be. Service-learning has already become a part of secondary schools’ curriculum, and students want to pursue such engagement opportunities in college as well.

Whether a greater focus on civic engagement and service stems from a desire to “do good” or whether it lies at least partly in a desire to market university programs, the end result is a greater commitment to service and more fully engaged students, so perhaps the motives matter far less than the results. Despite the facts that university professors’ careers do not focus on service and that tenure is not often awarded when service overshadows publication, there is still room for service within the context of a broad research agenda. Whether altruism remains viable as the primary inspiration for faculty work outside the walls of academia, one thing remains paramount: “ideally, service should reflect gain in both parties” (Neumann & Terosky, 2007, p. 305).

This experience was the first fully integrated service-learning course facilitated according to best practices that relied on the academic expertise of the faculty member and the service-learning/civic engagement expertise of the FSL director. The course served as a “what not to do” as much as a “what to do” in service-

learning at our university, pointing out organizational issues that were not in the control of either instructor (i.e. service-learning’s weight in tenure review, lack of an SL course classification in the course catalog), and allowing us to learn from mistakes and unexpected issues that arose during both semesters. ■■

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Concretizing Interpersonal Violence and Maltreatment

Beth S. Russell and Jennifer V. Trachtenberg

Abstract

This paper presents instructors across multiple disciplines (for example, psychology, family studies, social work, sociology, public health, nursing, political science, and history) with classroom practices for presenting interpersonal violence or maltreatment content in undergraduate and graduate classrooms. Each activity is described in detail, along with possible modifications for a range of course levels, including lower-level undergraduate, upper-level undergraduate, and graduate. These practices are theoretically grounded in Kolb's (1984) revision of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy, emphasizing the importance of contextualizing course material for students in order to advance critical thinking skills.

Keywords

pedagogical strategies, teaching practices, interpersonal violence, maltreatment

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Introduction

Many academic disciplines teach material on interpersonal violence: from gender studies, public health, nursing, sociology, and psychology programs considering the social and individual costs of abuse of all types, to history, political science, and anthropology courses focused on the sociopolitical and cultural attitudes or ramifications of maltreatment. Many aspects of human nature, social structure, law, and culture are learned from examinations of the worst treatment we level against one another. These examinations are not commonly required, or always warranted, but when students are asked to face these topics, careful preparation of a particular nature is prudent on the part of the instructor.

Presentations of interpersonal violence or maltreatment often walk a fine line between two sources for course material: the dry, complex, and nuanced scholarly material that archives, integrates, and analyzes studies of maltreatment, and the sensational, visceral, and popular material visible in the media and daily lives of society members. Students from all communities come to classes educated, in an informal way, on violence between individuals – certainly expecting to have their suspicions confirmed, their curiosity answered, and, for some students, their personal experiences validated. They are not

often as prepared to have their biases exposed, their assumptions challenged, and their desires for satisfying explanations left unsated. Yet, this is the common experience for a learner first faced with the study of interpersonal violence and maltreatment, regardless of academic area. Increasingly subtle questions arise as the initial surface questions fall aside; there are answers to be had, but workable, efficient solutions for abuse mitigation remain frustratingly elusive. From a pedagogical perspective, this reality poses a challenge to class management: to keep students engaged in critical, analytical, and academic considerations of off-putting and disheartening course content, while honoring the heterogeneous personal experiences and emotional values present in the student body. This paper presents teaching practices that can accomplish this balance: herein are activities that contextualize abstract academic material across a range of disciplines, anchor complexity in specific cultural settings with personal narratives, and invite students to feel invested in their pursuit of knowledge and to feel educated as advocates for change from their fields of study.

Literature Review

Schwartzman (2007) notes that a wealth of information without context and interpretation for students will only overwhelm them without imparting any conceptual gain. Although Schwartzman refers to the unlimited availability of the internet to students, the same basic principle is true regardless of the scope of the source: students benefit when course materials are synthesized and given meaning by anchoring them in the subject matter at hand. Contextualizing material in this way when learning about child abuse, for example, is not only a sure way to frame often off-putting or dense academic work, it is also sound pedagogical practice that moves students toward more advanced learning. The later levels of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of learning objectives require students to go beyond infor-

mation retention to more complex thought processes, and Kolb's (1984) revised approach to Bloom's work emphasizes the importance of applied, contextualized experiences in this capacity.

Learning is improved when context accompanies new material (Ellis & Gabriel, 2010). Cognitive research has demonstrated this on several levels: context aids memory in language learning (Long & Spooner, 2010), to learn material for future use, not just for accurate recall (Kintsch, 1986), and achievement improves when learning material is elaborated upon with personal experiences and applications (Simpson, Olejnic, Tam, & Supattathum, 1994).

In many instances, analyzing, evaluating, and creating through Kolb's (1984) pedagogical lens requires students to extract meaningful content from dense course materials. Sternberg and Spear-Swerling (1996) describe three skills students need in order to use insightful thinking of this sort: selective encoding to filter out important information, selective combination to assemble pieces of information, and selective comparison to relate new information to old information. Depending on the rigor or transparency of the materials and the assessment an instructor sets before them, students face their first obstacle in simply accessing the meaning of their readings. Students need training in unpacking increasingly challenging literature—as in Sternberg and Spear-Swerling's (1996) selective encoding. Instructors can also support the learning objectives embedded in their assignments by ensuring that theoretical information is concretized by making linkages to lived experiences (an example of Sternberg and Spear-Swerling's selective combination). The challenge before instructors, then, is to design courses that stress the application of theoretical knowledge to a variety of settings, from basic to advanced in pedagogical nature.

One approach to this challenge is to include a variety of contexts that span both traditional perspectives on abuse—date rape for example—and perspec-

tives that challenge the traditional (Shor, 1992). When students have been situated to use conceptual knowledge to test historic and novel points of view on victimization, they are positioned to question the media or standard presentation of concepts. Students of media studies, communication, sociology, and other fields often find such critiques a compelling exercise in applying the tenets of their fields to their lifelong experience as consumers of media. Many students may believe they know something about date rape from media coverage or public service efforts in this field, while others are skeptical of what those venues may have presented. If both groups have been given the conceptual knowledge to apply course content to both “academic” presentations on date rape and popular media coverage of the topic, the class as a whole develops critical and analytical skills. As Shor (1992) points out, this process may lead to a creative moment, adding “critical discussion about things students already know and talk about uncritically every day” (p. 58). If that creative moment leads to an original proposal for a new website, public service announcement, or outreach program, then instructors have done the best sort of educating: a learning experience that goes far beyond a summary of the established to the creation of an informed, field-specific product – a laudable pedagogical outcome, indeed.

The following classroom practices are concrete examples of how theoretical knowledge can be contextualized for students at different academic levels. These pedagogical tools are designed to require significant content presentation beforehand so that students are grounded in conceptual course material before they apply those concepts to the tasks described below.

Discussion

Classroom application #1 – ASFA

In this exercise students watch the Public Broadcast Services film, “Failure to Protect: The Taking of Logan

Marr” (Goodman & Helling, 2003) and complete one of the following activities, according to the level of the course (introductory undergraduate, upper-level undergraduate, or graduate level). The film is a documentary of the death of Logan Marr, who was removed from her mother’s care in the course of a child endangerment case in Maine. Logan was subsequently murdered by her foster mother, who was pressuring the state’s child protective services (CPS) to terminate Logan’s mother’s parental rights in order to begin the process of adopting Logan. This case was one of several that contributed to the passage of the American Safe Families Act (ASFA), which promotes permanency planning in CPS casework. The film is available with a companion roundtable interview of the stakeholders involved in the case: CPS staff, the judge who tried and convicted the foster mother, reporters who covered the case, and legal advocates who represented Logan and her mother both before and after the young child’s death.

At the lower level, students watch the documentary and are simply asked to complete a worksheet that requires a fair amount of factual summary that can be tailored to any specific field of study: political science or pre-law students will find different content salient from that which psychology or public health students, for example, focus on though each of these classes might be asked to identify the factors in CPS casework that led the government to legislate permanency planning through ASFA. A class on Interpersonal Violence included questions such as: how long was Logan in fostercare? At the time of Logan’s death, what were the Federal incentives available to states that increased their adoption rates? How many times per head was DSS required to visit foster homes? How many home visits were completed at Logan’s last foster home? At a more advanced undergraduate level, students watch the film and the roundtable and are asked to write reflection papers on both. It may be helpful (and necessary for an economical use of class time) to show the hour-long

film and assign the first reflection paper in one class, then show the roundtable and assign the second paper in the subsequent class. Students should be encouraged to bring in their field-specific materials from other sources, stressing a synthesis of content presented in the film or earlier in the class and of material they must seek out. Instructors can determine whether they want to require academic, peer-reviewed materials for this synthesis or whether students should be encouraged to use popular media materials.

Graduate students can be required to watch both portions of “The Taking of Logan Marr,” but have an intermediate step to complete before watching the roundtable: students must role play their own roundtable before watching the real thing, each student taking on a particular stakeholder’s role. Once the documentary is completed and roles are assigned, students should be encouraged to do a bit of research before the role play is completed. Often, should multidisciplinary roles be assigned, students will want to do a bit of preparation to execute their roles from informed points of view regarding each stakeholder’s investment in the creation and passage of ASFA. Once students return at the next class and complete the role play, they watch the roundtable and are assigned a reflection paper on the entire 2- or 3-class sequence.

Classroom application #2 – *The Tracy Thurman Story*

The film *A Cry for Help: The Tracy Thurman Story* (Clark & Markowitz, 1989), can also be shown in class. The film depicts the true story of a woman who was abused by her husband and was finally brutally attacked by him, while the police watched. Because of Tracy Thurman, the laws in regard to domestic violence changed dramatically. The film allows students to see the lack of police intervention and the manner in which protection under the law was developed. This film can be used to examine maltreatment from many perspectives, including sociology, psychology, pre-law, criminal justice, and political science. After the film, lower-level under-

graduate students work in small groups to answer questions provided by the instructor. An emphasis is placed on making a connection between the film and course content. They must put each of the primary characters in the film into the context of the course. Upper-level students can also work together in small groups to conceptualize the film in terms of the course. For example, students might be asked to summarize the research on why domestic violence victims often stay with their abusers and provide examples from the film to illustrate their points. In addition, upper-level students can submit essays after viewing the film that critique the characters in terms of relevant scholarly research. This additional literature can either be provided by the instructor or assigned as a research task, depending on the time available for the film and assignment.

Classroom application #3 – Safe Haven Laws

In the past decade, many states have passed Safe Haven laws to provide shelter for infants whose parents abandon them. Historically, parents found guilty of leaving a child in this manner were prosecuted criminally, which led to a series of infant deaths as parents left infants in unsafe, hard-to-find locations to avoid prosecution. Safe Haven laws are intended to provide community-accessible locations (i.e., hospitals and firehouses) where a parent could leave his or her child without fear of legal recrimination. Several more states are currently developing such laws, with Nebraska being one of the more visible examples in the popular press. The new Nebraska policy was written without residency requirements or age limits for children, leading parents from other states to attempt to leave their much older children at Safe Haven locations. In one highly publicized example, a father from Florida drove his 11-year-old son to Nebraska to leave the child at a Safe Haven site (Lavendera, 2008). For this exercise, lower-level students are asked to read the popular press coverage of the situation and write letters to the editor describing where the process went awry. Upper-level

students can also read the original legislation to identify the policy loopholes in their letters before reading the revised legislation and writing amicus curia briefs to a federal court recommending or advising against a national policy. Because amicus curia briefs are written from a broad array of academic perspectives, this activity lends itself to many fields: the task is to ensure students understand how their fields' perspectives can be informative for the judicial and legislative branches of government.

Classroom application #4 – Current events journal

The “current events journal” is a semester-long project, where students are asked to keep a journal (one entry per week) relating course material to current events found in the media or to experiences they have had over the last few months. Students must use newspapers, magazines, movies or television, websites, books, personal contacts, and music lyrics to apply to course content. Lower-level students are asked to provide summaries of the media or personal contacts and then apply course concepts to the materials. Upper-level students fulfill similar requirements as lower-level students, but, in addition, they must find outside scholarly material to complement the media and personal contacts they have selected. Upper-level students also have the opportunity to engage in large-group class discussion about current events they have encountered through this project.

This project impacts students on several levels: they have the opportunity to apply course concepts, which helps them more fully understand the material; they come to the realization that interpersonal violence and maltreatment surrounds us (via the ease of locating materials for this project); they may report on violence they have personally experienced; and they may even learn that family members or friends were victimized as they discuss course content with others. Because violence and maltreatment tend to cut across disciplines, it is also examined via multiple lenses in the media

including journalistic, legal, medical, psychological, and historical perspectives among others.

Classroom application #5- Prevention presentations

In this exercise, students spend time throughout the semester creating presentations through which they will act as “agents of social change.” The task is to create a presentation, with a target audience in mind, to prevent a type of interpersonal violence or maltreatment of their choice. Presentations are given to the class at the end of the term. Students are able to choose topics that are most interesting to them. Possible topics might include the following: obtaining a restraining order (legal / criminal justice field); recognizing the signs of abuse for preschool teachers and medical professionals (education, public health and medical fields); developing sample curriculum for group therapy for high conflict couples (psychological field); in-depth analysis of victims' experiences through personal narratives (crucial for many fields); and finding local resources or help (public health). Lower-level students can work in small groups, each leading a small segment of the presentation, whereas upper-level students could work independently. Further modifications of this activity include the following: to adjust the required duration of the presentations; to require upper-level students to develop handouts of additional resources tailored to their target audiences; and to require students to complete peer evaluations based on a rubric designed by the instructor.

Conclusion

Instructors who teach interpersonal violence or maltreatment content to their students are faced with a particular classroom dynamic: one in which students are informally educated on the topic before the first course reading is completed. Given the range of personal experiences likely present in the student body, it is wise to take particular care in designing activities that engage students without diluting the rigor of the

scholarly material available. These activities should be anchored in pedagogical theory that advances students' critical thinking skills without devaluing their personal stakes in the topic of interpersonal violence and maltreatment. The activities presented in this paper are intended to hone scholarship without plunging students into dense academic material without real world application and to utilize the wealth of case studies presented in the popular media without sensationalizing each incident. Regardless of the field of study, assignments that require students to synthesize theoretical information and lived experiences will naturally contextualize material and allow instructors to move away from a dichotomous frame of thinking that places popular media presentations and personal anecdotes against academic scholarship. In the end, students learn to see "real life" as the context for interpreting theory and, more broadly, scholarship. ■■

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Current Clips and Links

A list of links to interesting, non-commercial websites related to teaching and learning. Currents invites reader recommendations and will assume responsibility for seeking permissions as necessary.



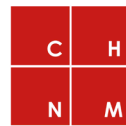
Women's Studies/Women's Issues Resource Sites

is an annotated collection of websites dedicated to women's studies and women's issues ranging in focus from activism to international women's resources to the roles of women in science and technology throughout history. The woman responsible for creating and maintaining this collection has endeavored to include the experiences and knowledge of women from around the world, in a format accessible to all. The site also includes links to over 700 Women's Studies programs from around the world.

<http://userpages.umbc.edu/~korenman/wmst/links.html>

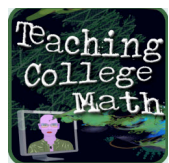
The Center for History and New Media is an award-winning collection of digital resources designed to "democratize history – to incorporate multiple voices, reach diverse audiences, and encourage popular participation in presenting and preserving the past." Each year CHNM's many project websites receive over 16 million visitors, and over a million people rely on its digital tools to teach, learn, and conduct research."

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/>



Center for History
and New Media

Building a Better Yesterday, Bit by Bit

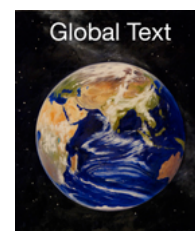


Teaching College Math, by Maria H. Andersen, is a collection of linked resources in higher education mathematics including blog posts, video presentations, and collections of resources. Categories range from algebra to the future of higher education, and the use of technology in the classroom. Tabbed sections will take you to collections of resources, tutorials, and presentations.

<http://teachingcollegemath.com/>

The Global Text Project is an internationally supported initiative to promote higher education as a means to combat poverty and social injustice in developing nations. Through the use of technology, textbooks are made freely available to those in developing countries with the drive to pursue education, but who lack the resources necessary to pay for textbooks and other materials. More than providing access to texts, this program facilitates a broad exchange of knowledge and experiences, contributing to our collective understanding of specific subjects and to pedagogy as a whole.

<http://globaltext.terry.uga.edu/home>



e - Literate

e-Literate is a weblog maintained by Michael Feldstein that covers issues related to technology in higher education with an open invitation for queries concerning use and applications. Topic categories range from social roles in the content and use of technology to the emergence of new trends in technology as applied to pedagogy.

<http://www.mfeldstein.com/>

From the Book Review Editor

Matthew Johnsen

Beginning with this issue, *Currents* is expanding its review section by including website reviews. As an electronic journal, we recognize that often, resources available over the internet can represent important sources of information for professional development. In this issue, the website of The Carnegie Foundation is reviewed with an eye to the resources of particular interest to college faculty.

Beginning with the next issue, Sean C. Goodlett from Fitchburg State University will join me as co-editor of the book review section of *Currents*. Together, we are actively seeking reviewers for the upcoming issues. *Currents'* mission is to improve in higher-education teaching and learning and to explore issues and challenges facing teachers today. We identify books and other resources of current interest to faculty and graduate students in higher education across the disciplines. We are seeking reviewers for the following titles. If you are interested in reviewing one of them or another print or electronic resource that you believe to be appropriate for *Currents*, send us a letter of interest. Please do not send unsolicited reviews.

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Recent Releases for Review

How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching.

Susan B. Ambrose, Michael Bridges, Michele DiPietro, Marsha C. Lovett, Marie K. Norman. Jossey-Bass, 2010, 336 pp., \$38.00 (HC), ISBN 978-0-4704-8410-4.

Cooperative learning in Higher Education: Across the Disciplines, Across the Academy. Barbara Millis. Stylus Publishing, 2010, 256 pp., \$24.95 (PB), ISBN: 978-1-5792-2329-8.

Teacher Action Research: Building Knowledge Democracies. Gerald J. Pine. Sage Publications, 2009, 396 pp. \$43.95 (PB), ISBN: 978-1-4129-6476-0.

Citizenship Across the Curriculum. Michael B. Smith, Rebecca S. Nowacek, and Jeffrey L. Bernstein, Eds. Indiana University Press, 2010, 240 pp., \$24.95 (PB), ISBN: 978-0-2532-2179-7.

Older Titles for Review

*Making Their Own Way: Narratives for Transforming
Higher Education to Promote Self-Development.*

Marcia B. Baxter Magolda. Stylus Publishing,
2004, 356 pp., \$24.95 (PB), ISBN:
978-1-5792-2091-4

*The Online Learning Idea Book: 95 Proven Ways to
Enhance Technology-Based and Blended Learning.*

Patti Shank, Ed. Pfeiffer, 2007, 380 pp., \$50.00
(PB), ISBN: 978-0-7879-8168-6.

*Learning Communities: Reforming Undergraduate
Education.* Barbara Leigh Smith, Jean

MacGregor, Roberta Matthews, Faith Gabelnick.
Jossey-Bass, 2004, \$45.00 (HC), ISBN:
978-0787910365.

The Carnegie Foundation: A Website Review

Sean C. Goodlett

www.carnegiefoundation.org

Since its creation in 1905, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (CFAT) has consistently shaped national policy on higher education. Early in its history the Foundation helped establish the retirement system for college professors that ultimately became TIAA-CREF. In the mid-twentieth century, it played a crucial role in the creation of Educational Testing Services and the Federal Pell Grant Program. By 1970, the Foundation had also developed the influential Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, a system that continues to be useful to higher-education researchers today. After separating from the Carnegie Corporation of New York in 1979, the independent CFAT placed increasing emphasis on the scholarship of teaching and learning. In the late 1990s, the Foundation moved to the hills of Palo Alto, California, where its then-president Lee S. Shulman, succeeded in creating a “Center for Advanced Study” modeled on the Rockefeller Foundation’s Bellagio Center in Italy. In the last two years, under the leadership of Anthony S. Bryk, the Foundation has focused on solving what Bryk calls “high leverage problems” that affect the greatest number of students at community colleges, colleges, and universities. In practice this has translated into an effort to reform developmental or remedial math curricula.¹

The CFAT website exposes this varied policy and research history, and its structure reveals how the Foundation itself is in transition. Those interested in Bryk’s “high leverage problems” will want to navigate to the “Problem Solving R&D” tab. Similarly, those hoping to discover ongoing and previous Foundation work will want to navigate to the tabs of the same name. Higher education faculty looking for useful information on the scholarship of teaching and learning (or SoTL, in this acronym-heavy world) should navigate to the

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1 David Glenn, “Chicago School-Reform Veteran to Head Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 9 January, 2008. See also Courtney Leatherman, “The Carnegie Foundation Shifts Its Location and Its Emphasis,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2 May, 1997. For a more in-depth but dated discussion of the Carnegie Foundation, see Ellen Condliffe Lagemann’s *Private Power for the Public Good: A History of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1983).

“Carnegie Perspectives” submenu of the “Conversations” tab. Here one finds rotating guides to recent SoTL work (“What We’re Learning”), lists of other publications on the same (“What We’re Reading”), daily news roundups (“News You Can Use”), press coverage of Carnegie Foundation policy reports or research (“In the News”), announcements of upcoming events (“What’s Happening”), and opinion essays (“Perspectives”). A condensed version of the same information appears on the CFAT homepage. Lastly, those with SoTL interests will also want to investigate the myriad publications and associated videos in the publications archive, the eLibrary, and the “CarnegieViews” sections of the website.

Bryk, the current President of the Carnegie Foundation, has already left his stamp on the institution. He has honed the emphasis on the scholarship of teaching and learning by introducing a new vision for educational research called “Design, Educational Engineering, Development” (DEED). As Bryk himself has said elsewhere, the goal of DEED is to place “the day-to-day work of educators at the center of ... inquiry and [to] focus attention on solving problems of practice that have genuine consequences for people’s lives.” An example of such practical research is the work done on one of the more intractable problems in the general education curriculum: the deficit in mathematical skills of incoming freshmen.

The problem-solving DEED approach informs much of the Carnegie Foundation’s website. The whole of the “Problem Solving R&D” tab is devoted to the approach and its application to the problems in developmental mathematics. Here we learn that the Carnegie Foundation is working on two curricular “pathways”: one for developmental or remedial mathematics (Mathway) and the other for statistics, data analysis, and quantitative reasoning (Statway). These pathways are aimed at diverse groups of students. In the eLibrary, moreover, I discovered a draft study analyzing

what community college remedial mathematics students actually know; and in the videos located within the “CarnegieViews” submenu of the “Conversations” tab, I found advocates of the redesign of remedial math like Uri Treisman, whose “Joyful Conspiracy” calls explicitly for the “reengineering” of the best models of remedial education “for use at scale.” For Bryk, this has meant gathering “practitioners, students, researchers, and design/developers” who will serve as a “networked improvement community” for all types and levels of higher education institutions.

The resources on the site are not always easy to maneuver through. Clicking on the “Resources” tab will bring you to a list of options that include Carnegie Foundation publications, an eLibrary, research tools, and a “gallery of teaching and learning.” Selecting the first of these will bring you to the full archive of Carnegie Foundation publications. However, clicking on the drop-down submenu for “publications” under the same “Resources” tab will bring you to an entirely different page, one which displays thumbnails of only the most recent publications and a “browse all” button that links back to the full archive. Occasionally, when browsing an individual title one is presented with the option to peruse an entire series, but such subsets of the full archive are not easily accessible. Indeed, my discovery of the various series (i.e., PPP Publications, SoTL Publications, SPECC Publications) was little more than an accident. Moreover, one occasionally finds full-text Carnegie publications in the eLibrary, but not all Foundation publications appear here. In any event, in both the publications archive and the eLibrary a host of professional disciplines – including architecture, dentistry, engineering, law, medicine, and nursing – receive the attention of policy experts. More general policy papers touch on the “business” of higher education, the nature of graduate or more specifically doctoral education, financial aid, and even collective bargaining and unionization at colleges and universities; and a num-

ber of these policy papers tie the goals of college-level learning to the reform of K-12 education.

The remaining two resources on the site are unevenly distributed. The first of these, entitled “tools for sharing,” contains only two survey instruments: the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) survey (2004), which formed the basis of Mary Taylor Huber and Pat Hutchins’ 2005 book, *The Advancement of Learning: Building the Teaching Commons*; and the survey of doctoral students devised for the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate, an initiative that produced *The Formation of Scholars: Rethinking Doctoral Education for the Twenty-First Century* (2008). This latter initiative, aimed at reforming doctoral education in six disciplines, also has its own website. The CASTL survey was designed to gain a better understanding of how and why researchers engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

That the website – if not the whole of the Carnegie Foundation – appears to be in transition is intimated by the last of the resources, the so-called gallery of teaching and learning. As it turns out, the “gallery,” to which one navigates only indirectly, is an altogether different website with its own navigation cues (i.e., menu systems and color schemes). Here one finds Carnegie Foundation initiatives that appear to derive from the Shulman administration. The first of these is the previously mentioned Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate (CID). Two others are CASTL initiatives that feature portfolios of educators teaching in higher ed. and K-12. The portfolios in the higher education section cover disparate topics (e.g., interdisciplinarity, peer-review of teaching, and the teaching of science) and a wide variety of disciplines (e.g., chemistry, history, mathematics, music, nursing, and psychology). However, none of these seems to have been updated since 2006, and only the CID is referred to in the ongoing work section of the site.

The CFAT website bears testimony to the Carnegie Foundation’s ambitious and dynamic research and policy agenda. The latest emphasis on DEED and practical solutions to big problems like Mathway and Statway will undoubtedly have lasting implications for higher education in the years and decades to come. In the end, a few adjustments to the site’s structure seem in order, and it would help if the viewer had a clear indication of the status of CASTL work, if not the whole of the “gallery of teaching and learning.” ■■

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Currents in Teaching and Learning is a peer-reviewed electronic journal that fosters exchanges among reflective teacher-scholars across the disciplines. Published twice a year, *Currents* seeks to improve teaching and learning in higher education with short reports on classroom practices as well as longer research, theoretical, or conceptual articles, and explorations of issues and challenges facing teachers today. Non-specialist and jargon-free, *Currents* is intended for both faculty and graduate students in higher education, teaching in all academic disciplines.

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Currents in Teaching and Learning is a publication of Worcester State University,
Worcester, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

ISSN: 1945-3043 © 2010, Worcester State University