



Jan/Feb

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Contact Information

- Stella Smith, Director
ssmith2@ggc.edu
678-407-5720
- David Robinson, Learning Management Systems Administrator
drobinso@ggc.edu
678-407-5111
- Gautam Saha
Instructional Designer
gsaha@ggc.edu
678-407-5561
- Stephanie Whittington
Technical Trainer
swhittin@ggc.edu
678-407-5560

How Can We (or You) Help Improve Teaching and Learning at GGC?

We invite you to send us ideas for workshops or programs you might be interested in doing or having us organize. We are also willing to work with individual schools to help develop discipline-based programs. Contact Stella Smith to discuss any ideas (ssmith2@ggc.edu).

Special Thanks: Dr. Jason Mosser, Editorial Support for the *The Teacher's Edge*

From the Director

By Dr. Stella Smith

We are nearly halfway through the semester and the demands of our work don't give us much time to reflect on our beliefs as teachers. However, it can be energizing to read what others believe about teaching, especially when their beliefs about the importance of teaching are strong. Here's a short excerpt from a "this I believe" statement written by C. Roland Christensen.

- I believe in the teachability of teaching. ... [G]ood teachers are made, not born. We can observe, analyze, and communicate the artistry of [teaching] to other practitioners. Effective teachers both practice and constantly search and research their own activities; their classrooms are both instructional arenas and laboratories.
- I believe that what my students become is as important as what they learn. The endpoint of teaching is as much human as intellectual growth.
- I believe that the teacher's challenge in evaluating students is less to separate the gifted from the ordinary than to find the gifts of the ordinary.
- And I believe we must communicate our evaluations in a manner that helps students understand their competence, or lack thereof, without destroying their confidence.

Reference: Christensen, C. R. "Every Student Teaches and Every Teacher Learns," in C. R. Christensen, D. A. Garvin, and A. Sweet, eds., *Education for Judgment: The Artistry of Discussion Leadership*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1991. Find Christensen's statement of beliefs on pp. 116-119.

Teaching Topic:

Beyond the Prohibitions: Teaching Students not to Plagiarize

"I don't think teachers teach it well enough. I don't think they teach well enough citing, and what to do, and how to take the words, and how many words you can take without being considered plagiarism. They just say, 'Don't plagiarize.' But they never tell you what to do to not plagiarize." (p. 655)

This assessment was offered by a student named Amy who, along with 60 other students, participated in a study that explored student understandings of plagiarism. It's an interesting study design with equally important findings, one of them being ably summed in the opening quote. The students in this study reported that their teachers did get the "don't plagiarize" message across clearly, but like Amy, many students reported that teachers didn't help them learn how to not plagiarize.

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Another finding revealed how student and teacher definitions of plagiarism are not the same. The researcher raises some interesting questions about this ... but one implication of the finding is that teachers and students need to get themselves on the same page definitionally. And what better way to do that than by using some of the interview questions developed for this study? How about having students write responses to these questions (and there are more like them in the article) early in the course, and then use their responses in an open discussion of the topic? If you assign writing and want to help students learn why plagiarism is wrong as well as how not to do it, this could be time very well spent.

- How do you define plagiarism?
- Describe the circumstances in which you have copied and pasted from electronic text, and say whether or not you believe this constitutes plagiarism.
- Have you ever deliberately plagiarized a paper? What were the circumstances?
- Why is plagiarism wrong?
- What advice would you give faculty to help students prevent plagiarism?

Reference: Powers, L. G. (2009). University students' perceptions of plagiarism. *The Journal of Higher Education*. 80 (6), 643-662.

The Teaching Professor blog by Maryellen Weimer, posted December 8, 2009

Past issues of the Teaching Professor are available at the Faculty Instructional Design Lab, C-2230.



Visit us online:

Did you know that the *FIDL* is not just located in C2230? You can also find us on the Blackboard portal. After logging in click on the “faculty staff” tab and then click on the “CTE” subtab on the left. Also click on the CTE organization hyperlink in the top right-hand corner of the page to see the calendar of upcoming events and access additional resources from previous workshops!

A Teacher Speaks: Tom Lilly on Bridging Outcomes, Assignments, and Grades

For some time now, I have been wondering about how to discuss with my students the relationships between grades, assignments, and outcomes in ways that my students and I can grasp. Students can see the relationship between grades and assignments, and I can explain the relationship between assignments and outcomes. But, for me and for my students, the relationship of a grade on an assignment to course outcomes remains a source of confusion and complexity.

Much of our confusion stems from habitual thinking about the meaning of grades. Most of my conversations about how a student is “doing” in the class, or what “more” a student can “do” to be “successful” in the class, revolve around grades on specific assignments. These grade-centered conversations persist, despite the rare conversation that I’ve had with students, where we reflect upon the course to see what was effective in their learning and my teaching. Those conversations are the most positive interactions I’ve had with any student. Students come away with a more informed perspective of what has led them to where they are and what skills and experiences can help them reach where they want to be. I come away with a clearer vision of how, when, and where to change my teaching. Everyone comes away better for the experience, so why not work to experience it more frequently?

My recent tinkering with BbVista has shown me the challenge of bridging grades and outcomes has much to do with not having a tool to visualize the relationship. Over the last two semesters, I have begun using two new (to me) BbVista features, the “Goals” and “Grading Forms” tools, to help me gather information in order to discuss student learning and my teaching.

The BbVista Goals tool allows instructors to list course outcomes and to attach any combination of them to features of the BbVista site: assignments, lecture notes, discussion boards, learning modules, and so forth. The Grading Forms tool allows instructors to create grading rubrics for papers, homework assignments, even discussion board posts and automatically update the course Grade Book. An additional feature of the Grading Forms is that it collects performance data for each evaluation category defined in the rubric so that statistics released about class-wide performance on an assignment reflect performance for each category of evaluation.

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The efficiency of these tools is cool enough to warrant use, but integrating them and discussing with students how to “see” grades and outcomes together has affected my teaching in some positive ways. One thing I do now is at the beginning of the semester show students how an assignment corresponds to the course’s goals, and how a specific grading form will measure their pursuit of those goals. I also show students how different assignments share outcomes and how the evaluation tools for each assignment measure a pursuit of those common goals. Students come away understanding how skills and experiences essential for one assignment correspond to others.

For assignments that use the same grading form, I show and discuss grade results for the various evaluation criteria on the grading form. Over eight weeks in a class, students can see a shift in the class’s pursuit of a goal, as that goal relates to a common skill or idea tested on an assignment. If we don’t see an improvement in that area, we discuss ways that I can change to foster improvement. As a result, I am becoming more flexible in the classroom and strategic in designing courses and assignments.

Dr. Tom Lilly is an Assistant Professor of English at Georgia Gwinnett College.

Want More? Additional Resources plagiarism_{dot}ORG

Here is a website that should be of interest to many of you: *PlagiarismdotORG*, <http://www.plagiarism.org/>. It has helpful information concerning plagiarism. Its main purpose is to educate instructors and students on the various types of plagiarism as well as to give educational tips on plagiarism prevention. It also contains information which explains the “What, When, and Why” of citation in course documents and student papers and tips on how to cite sources. Frequently asked questions cover topics such as copyright laws, fair use, and punishments for plagiarism.

Plagiarism.org was founded in 1996 as an educational arm of iParadigms LLC. Now in its 12th year, the site has been redesigned to provide easier access to resources and information. This site is great for both instructors and students!

Georgia Gwinnett does have a license for Turnitin. Please come to the FIDL, C2230, and we will set up an account for you. Afterwards an email with a password and basic instructions for Turnitin will be sent to you.

Looking Backward, Looking Forward

Looking Backward:

After starting the semester in January, we have been busy with CTE events. Workshops included topics on stereotyping, mentoring, planning qualitative research, preparing for faculty evaluations, designing rubrics, and beginning survey development.

We would like to thank Professors Mai Yin Tsoi, Linda Gilbert, Holly Haynes, Jessica Damian, Susan Bleyle, Nannette Napier, and Liza Renzi for leading these events and sharing their expertise with us.

Looking Forward:

The CTE is moving towards midterms with help sessions on Getting Your Gradebook Ready for Midterms on 2/26 and 3/1 from 11am-1pm as well as hosting our “Fine Tuning” Friday help sessions from 1- 5 pm.

In March we will be holding workshops on Data Analysis using Excel, 7+2 Reasons Why We Forget, and a Multicultural Student Panel.

New Additions!

Please come in and visit our new staff members to the *FIDL*, Gautam Saha and Stephanie Whittington. They are here to assist you with your curriculum and technology needs. It is recommended that you call to setup an appointment for a consultation.

Submission Guidelines

The Teacher’s Edge encourages submissions on any aspect of college teaching and learning. The articles should not exceed two or three double-spaced pages, so as to conform to the intent of the newsletter: providing concise, thought-provoking topics that promote discussion among faculty and staff.

Articles may be submitted by GGC faculty, staff, and even students so that all voices are represented for our readers. Our web site gives us rich opportunities for posting ancillary materials to accompany submissions.

Submit manuscripts to Stella Smith, CTE Director.