

Nov/Dec 2008 - Vol I, No 2

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Drop-in assistance with the CTE staff Fridays from 1-4 in C-2230.

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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.usg.edu).

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

From the Director

By Dr. Stella Smith

This semester, we have had workshops focusing on techniques to impact classroom teaching that have taken the form of teamwork, friendly competition, student engagement, collaborative classroom management and syllabus building. I recently followed a blog discussion on why some teachers grow while others do not. The discussion expanded to include: why do some teachers grow for a while and then stop? Why do some teachers grow in some areas and not others? Can we take a break, stop growing, and then restart?

I fondly remember mentors in the past who guided me through the challenges of new preps, organizational politics and under-prepared students. Fellow faculty observed my classroom teaching and feedback received from these observations helped me grow as a teacher. Those of us who have taught for many years know the benefit from the wise advice of others.

Does growth result from pushing oneself to move into areas that are challenging—cross-disciplinary research communities, designing online activities or dealing with multiple levels of student capabilities? It appears to me that we should challenge ourselves by listening to what others do, redesigning our classroom activities to take advantage of new approaches and risking failure. By doing so, we reinvigorate ourselves and our teaching. In the coming semester, schedule some time to participate in as many of the Center's workshops and brown bags as you can so that we can all learn from each other's successes and challenges. 🍎

Teaching Topic: Dismounting a Dead Horse

"I will not be able to attend today's workshop (sorry—I'm overloaded!!!) but I could really use some assistance in this area."

"When your horse is dead, the proper strategy is to dismount."—Lakota Sioux proverb

1. **Be able to be efficient in all things.** Give less time to each demand. Do each task more quickly with the same or similar results.
2. **Express your values in how you use your time.** Time is a resource: we must learn to invest our time in what we value and to say "no" in correspondence with our deepest priorities.
3. **Don't hoard responsibility, share it.** Find ways to share responsibilities for any task with others and still gain the same results.
4. **For every aspect of your teaching, find a time and place befitting it.** Create the kind of place that gives us the space to do what we need to do. Set boundaries and close off access when necessary.
5. **Be short with many so that you may be long with a few.** Look for ways, such as filtering tools, to permit information to flow but exercise control over what is demanded of you by this information.
6. **Stick to your knitting, refer to other helpers when possible.** Draw upon the experts in your work area: do not be a counselor, do not be the computer support desk, do not take on being a composition teacher. Have a resource list handy and make referrals when necessary.

Other resources on time management for faculty include:

- Boston University's Center for Excellence in Teaching (<http://www.bu.edu/cet/develop/time.html>)
- Managing Teaching Loads and Finding Time for Reflection and Renewal (http://www.psychologicalscience.org/teaching/tips/tips_0102.cfm)

Suggestions adapted from *Making Time, Making Change; Avoiding Overload in College Teaching*, by Douglas Reimondo Robertson, on order for the CTE holdings in the library. 🍎

Vista Focus:**I'm Gonna Have a v8!**

by Susan McKinnon

The time is now upon us! GGC is privileged to be part of the first tier of schools within the University System to upgrade to the newest, latest, and greatest version of Blackboard (WebCT) Vista – version 8. That means we're all gonna have a "v8"!

This newest version of Vista will add "v8-Splash" to your course by providing a more user-friendly interface, providing easier methods of uploading and managing files, and offering a number of time-saving enhancements and improvements to existing tools. Your course will get a "v8-Fusion" with the addition of blogs, journals, grading forms (rubrics), peer review options, association of goals with course materials, and other new features.



We want to ensure that you have a "v8-Smoothie" experience, so an abundance of training opportunities has been set up. As you have already seen and heard

from David, all faculty members will be required to attend at least one training session. We are requesting that you register for the class or classes you wish to attend by going to the registration web site at <http://hercules.ggc.usg.edu/workshops/>. Additional materials are also provided in Jovo at <https://jovo.ggc.usg.edu/portal/page/portal/BbVista/v8/>.



So go ahead and sign up for the session(s) you want to attend if you have not already done so, and together we'll all have a "v8"! 🍷

"I have come to realize that it is not so much what students know as what they can do. Likewise, teaching is not about what

I know but what I enable others to do."

Anonymous

Want More? Additional Resources The Graduate Junction

Here's a new website for researchers which should be of interest to many of you. *The Graduate Junction*, www.graduatejunction.com, brings together Masters, Doctoral and Postdoctoral researchers from disciplines around the world. It aims to provide an easy way to meet and communicate with others who share common research interests in a global multi-disciplinary environment. Through *The Graduate Junction* you can learn about current research being undertaken by other researchers. This new free online resource has been developed by graduate researchers at Durham and Oxford University (UK). Launched in May 2008, early versions of *The Graduate Junction*, with limited publicity, attracted more than 8000 researchers from over 70 countries to register. 🍷

A Teacher Speaks:**Grasha Modified: Developing High Active Learning, Medium Risk Teaching Techniques**

by Dr. Dovile Budryte

It happens, and it is not pleasant. One day, I tried to resuscitate class discussion. I tried different questions. Silence. I tried writing ideas on the white board. No response. The next step was to torment myself: "What do I do now? This was my dream class. It had a perfect size, a perfect time, and a perfect location. It was an upper level elective for majors. The course focused on the topic of my choice. Most of my students liked me as a person, were interested in the subject matter, and even bought (and, presumably, read) the books in the syllabus as "recommended." So what went wrong? I may have committed a major sin in teaching: too much lecture, too much (forced) discussion. I failed to use different teaching methods in my "dream" seminar. I knew that it was time to change something.

When times are rough, I reach out for Anthony F. Grasha's *Teaching with Style* (available for free from http://sunconference.utep.edu/CETaL/resources/tws/Teaching_With_Style.pdf). Grasha (2002) encourages professors to be comfortable with their own style of teaching, but he pushes us to explore alternative teaching methods. One of the most valuable parts of this book is an attempt to describe risks associated with different styles of teaching. Grasha (2002) attempted to create a "guide" to active teaching methods for cautious professors by describing the levels of risk of such methods and by comparing them with more traditional teaching methods. He divided commonly used teaching methods into four categories.

- **High Active Learning-High Risk:** role playing, simulations, student presentations to the whole class, students interviewing and.
- **High Active Learning-Low Risk:** more traditional approaches: lecture with small group discussions; preparing a case outside of class and discussing ideas in class; in-class writing assignments; student debates, and field trips.
- **Low Active Learning-High Risk:** inviting a guest lecturer of unknown quality; and showing films or videos that the instructor has not previewed.
- **Low Active Learning-Low Risk:** lecturing during the whole class period, presenting a slide show, and reading important passages from a text to class. (Grasha 2002, 8)

I am drawn to the teaching methods associated with the second and fourth categories, and I tend to over-use them. Trying to save my "dream" seminar, I set out to combine one teaching method from the first category with those in the second one. Every week, as described in the syllabus, students had to write a book report, analyze the main argument, identify its weaknesses and discuss alternative viewpoints. I chose one student every week

I may have committed a major sin in teaching: too much lecture, too much (forced) discussion.

to play the role of the author of the assigned readings. The list of readings included Samuel Huntington's controversial *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (2004) in which he questioned the loyalty of immigrants (primarily, Hispanics) to the US. I started out the seminar with a mini lecture and followed with a role play. For thirty minutes or so, a student "metamorphosed" into Samuel Huntington and had to defend his controversial argument.

I was lucky: There were several outgoing, extroverted students in this class. They were the first to volunteer to participate in this experiment. The students who played the author had to answer the questions from the "audience." The "audience" was encouraged to criticize, comment on the validity of the arguments presented by the "author." After the exercise, the class discussed the errors made by the presenter as well as the best questions/responses. Encouraged by my experiences, I designed the imaginary interview exercise in which students were required to write/present a short imaginary conversation or interview with a prominent American politician. The students could choose their own "hero" or use a list of politicians that included James Madison, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Bernard Sanders, Nancy Pelosi, Ronald Reagan and others.

I believe this exercise worked well with non-traditional students. It was much more difficult to get the "traditional" college students excited, although some groups experimented with different media (such as making a video film, dressing up, etc). In an unofficial survey conducted at the end of the Fall 2007 semester, 33% (using the scale 4-1) strongly agreed the "work on the assignment was enjoyable." This number was 49% for 3 out of 4. Only 5% strongly disagreed with the statement. 46% (4) strongly agreed the assignment was challenging; 49% said it was "challenging" (3 out of 4). Only 2.5% thought it was not challenging. The majority (73%) strongly agreed they learned interesting information about a famous politician.

This exercise could be used in introductory as well as advanced classes in different disciplines. However, given mixed results in some of my classes with "traditional age" students, I plan to revise this exercise for my introductory political science classes. I am considering focusing on a specific document (e.g., a speech given by a politician) dealing with an issue of current significance (e.g., energy policy) instead of letting the students to do their own research on a politician of their choice. I plan to assign this document to the whole class to make sure more students are "involved." Increasing the level of involvement was one of the reasons why I decided to experiment with this exercise in the first place.

Works Cited

Grasha, Anthony F. 2002. *Teaching with Style: A practical guide to enhancing learning by understanding teaching and learning styles*. San Bernadino (California): Alliance Publishers.

Huntington, Samuel. 2004. *Who are we? The challenges to America's national identity*. New York: Simon and Schuster. 📖

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Looking Backward, Looking Forward

Looking Backward:

We've been busy at the CTE, as I know all of you have as well! Since the beginning of the semester we have run workshops on topics such as Teaching GGC 1000, Syllabus Preparation, SMART Symposium Tools, Student Accountability, Which Technology Tools to Use, What the Best Faculty Do, and Games in Education. We also led several sessions for New Faculty Orientation and held faculty showcases featuring both Dr. Ellen Rafshoon and Dr. Robert Mason.

We have opened the new FIDL (Faculty Instructional Design Lab) in C-2230. Both David and Susan are housed there and are beginning to create a lab environment where faculty can work one-on-one or in small groups with members of the CTE to develop content for their courses. With this new setup, we will even be able to hold small group training sessions.

Looking Forward:

The CTE looks to have a strong finish to Fall Semester by hosting events on topics such as Teaching as a Balancing Act, Intercultural Communication Panel Discussion, Conducting Research, Reflections on Teaching, Improving Teaching, and a wide array of sessions geared around the upcoming migration to Blackboard Vista v8. And let's not forget the annual "Jingle Bells Brown Bag" for the semester-end bash, with a few other surprises possibly in the mix as well!

Also, look for the grand opening of the FIDL. As equipment is procured, the CTE will host a huge grand opening to show off the new resources available for faculty and staff. Plans also include having a sample teaching station so that faculty can practice using classroom equipment and test out their instructional materials. 📖

We're Expanding!

Yes, the CTE is already expanding! We have opened a satellite office in the A building. Come visit the FIDL, Jr. in A-1044! Susan will be housed there every Wednesday from 8-5. Other hours may be scheduled so check the CTE Jovo site for more information. Make an appointment or drop-in! 📖



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. 📖