

Connections

TLC News

UWB's Teaching and Learning Center

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Student feedback when you can use it— at mid-quarter

For the past several years, a small group of trained UWB and Cascadia faculty and staff have offered mid-quarter student feedback (otherwise known as Small Group Instructional Diagnostics or SGIDs), with very positive responses from the faculty and students whose classes have been visited. SGIDs provide faculty with feedback from students on how their courses are going. Faculty can seek general feedback or can ask about specific issues (e.g., how well students are seeing the connection between the classroom and course readings or how well they understand the goals of or expectations for course assignments). The feedback can then be used to make changes in the course or to clarify for students the goals and methods of the course.

SGIDs make for richer relationships between students and instructors because of the opportunity they create to talk to students about their learning and about instructors' learning goals for them. Students who are asked to assess their experience in a course greatly appreciate being asked, understanding the request as evidence of faculty commitment to student learning. They take very seriously their responsibility to provide concrete, constructive feedback on what they value about the course and what changes they recommend. The discussion among students is thought-provoking for them because they often hear for the first time different perspectives on teaching practices and learning styles.

For faculty, the opportunity to surface issues in an entirely confidential and safe format is very valuable. Faculty have been pleased by how often what they hear from students is very positive—and how constructive suggestions for change are.

The student feedback is summarized for the faculty member, who meets with the consultant a day or two after the consultant's meeting with students. Together they brainstorm responses to the student feedback.

If you'd like someone to visit your class to conduct an SGID this quarter, please contact Becky Rosenberg.

Course Planning & Support Consultations

One of the goals of the TLC is to give faculty easy access to campus and University-wide teaching resources. As you are planning your courses, developing assignments, constructing syllabi, or any other piece of the process, we'd like to help you connect with the range of resources and support staff available at UWB.

At the TLC, we have a small library of materials on teaching and learning, and an archive of UWB syllabi and assignments. We can arrange team meetings to bring faculty together with the staff members who can be most helpful as you design the course and think about integrating critical thinking, information literacy, reading, writing, quantitative reasoning and technology into your courses.

Contact Becky Rosenberg for help with planning and resources.

Inside:

Events of interest locally & nationally	2
Preparing for Lower Division Students	2
Assigning Student Presentations	3
Our Mission and Advisory Board	4
Diversity Enhancement Project	4
Service Learning	4



Some Upcoming Local & National Events of Interest (Additional Conferences & Workshops are listed at <http://www.uwb.edu/tlc/teaching/wshops.html>)



Center for Instructional Development and Research (CIDR) Event on Cooperative Learning: Professor Emeritus Dean McManus will read from and discuss his new book "Leaving the Lectern: Cooperative Learning and the Critical First Days of Students Working in Groups," Oct 12, 3:30-5 PM, Walker Ames Room in Kane Hall.

Diversity Retreat: Campus Equity and Engagement, Oct 17 - 18 at Dumas Bay, Federal Way, WA. (offered by Washington Center) What practices encourage educational equity for all? How can we become more systematic and more effective in our efforts to create supportive learning environments that lead to academic success? This retreat is designed to help campus teams strengthen and sustain their campus equity initiatives.
More at http://www.evergreen.edu/washcenter/events/documents/Announcement_and_Registration.pdf

Service-Learning Course Construction workshop, Oct 21, 8:30 am – 2:30 pm at Seattle Univ. (offered by Washington Campus Compact, in partnership with Seattle University's Center for Service and Center for the Excellence in Teaching and Learning).
More at <http://www.wacampuscompact.org/events.html>

Assessment: IUPUI 2005 Assessment Institute, Oct 23-25 in Indianapolis
Learn and practice assessment methods and techniques. In addition to workshops, participants will experience in-depth learning opportunities from scholars and practitioners with successful assessment initiatives, including Thomas Angelo, Truly Banta, Peter Ewell, and George Kuh.
More at <http://www.planning.iupui.edu/conferences/national/National/2005/2005novinstitute.html>

CIDR Event: Using Research on Learning and Motivation to Inform Teaching, Nov 3, 3:30-5 PM, Walker Ames Room in Kane Hall. Dr. Marilla Svinicki of University of Texas Austin.
More at <http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/QuarterlyForums.html>

Parker Palmer: The Journey Toward a Hidden Wholeness: A Morning of Reflection and Renewal with Parker J. Palmer, Nov 11, 8 to 11:30 AM at Seattle Univ. (offered by Washington State Courage to Teach).
More at <http://www.wactt.org/>

Demanding Excellence: Liberal Education in an Era of Global Competition, Anti-Intellectualism and Disinvestment, Jan 25-28 in Washington, D.C. (Association of American Colleges and Universities Annual Meeting).
More at <http://www.aacu-edu.org/meetings/annualmeeting/>

Preparing for Lower Division Students

As the campus develops its plan for the lower division, the TLC is preparing to support the innovations that will require. One area, of course, is simply working with younger students and students just making the move from high school to college, a population many of us haven't worked with recently. A great deal of work has been done over the past decade on enhancing the "First Year Experience," bringing faculty, advisors and academic support staff together to provide a hospitable and engaging learning environment. We will be able to bring to campus some of the folks who have researched, implemented and assessed these programs to help us identify best practices for our first steps.

Another key element that has been much discussed in the planning meetings is assessment of the effectiveness of our program. Here, too, there are local and national experts who can consult with us on designing an approach to assessing student learning in the lower division that will enable us to improve on the program as we go forward and will also enable us to link lower division to upper division assessment.

Among the teaching approaches under discussion for the lower division are learning communities, use of portfolios (possibly in digital form), integration of service learning and undergraduate research. As the lower division takes shape, watch for TLC events that support this major undertaking.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DESIGNING PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENTS

The following ideas emerged in work with students, faculty and staff, as a group in Academic Services focused on providing students with better support for classroom presentations and facilitations. We're happy to work with faculty on assignments and on classroom workshops that support this work. We can also provide you with a handout for students on campus presentation resources. Contact Becky Rosenberg.

1. Address for students why you ask them to make presentations and facilitate classroom activities/discussions.

In our conversations, faculty provided a number of rationales for assigning presentations and facilitations:

- Speaking to learn—As we articulate ideas and provide opportunities for feedback, we come to richer understandings.
- Multiple intelligences--Traditionally we have privileged written language as a mode of communication, but given less attention to the value of oral language and to the other modes of communication that presentations utilize (e.g., visual, tactile).
- Student-centered instruction--Presentations and facilitations give students responsibility for the teaching and learning that goes on in the class—and we know that taking responsibility for learning enriches learning.
- Collaborative learning—While some presentations or facilitations are assigned to individual students, many are group assignments. The collaboration that goes into these assignments enriches the learning experience of the group participants and the audience.
- Increased engagement--Variety keeps students engaged with material.

Share your own aims with students, to help them better understand what they can be learning and what you will be expecting.

2. Help students understand what you value in their presentations and facilitations.

In our conversations, most faculty indicated that they hope to see variety, risk-taking and creativity in student presentations. They recognize that this is often a new and sometimes intimidating mode of learning for students and, therefore, weight concept and preparation more than polish of delivery, which may be a little frayed due to nervousness and inexperience. Students, on the other hand, frequently clutch to the familiar (e.g., PowerPoint slideshows) because they have some competence with it and it feels safe.

3. Define the activity clearly.

As we've defined them in our training and our materials, presentations and facilitations are different activities. Using a presentational mode generally involves a one-way mode—presenter to audience—with little interaction. Facilitation means the hub of activity is at the point of interaction between facilitator and audience or, if things are going really well, the hub is among audience members. While both modes can engage an audience, students need to know what you have in mind. Whatever language you use, make clear to students what you expect.

4. Break down the process of developing the presentation/facilitation.

As with any other assignment, help students think about some of the steps. For example:

- First, they will need to establish a clear (and if working in a group, consensual) goal—e.g., facilitating discussion of a selected question raised by a reading.
- Next, they will need to think about what mode(s) of presentation will be most effective—e.g., should they create a skit, assign a small group activity, provide graphics, etc.?

If working in a group, students need to identify what contribution each member will make to the preparation and the presentation/facilitation.

Make sure students know what resources are available to them on campus, including rehearsal space and the ability to videotape their practice.

5. If you are assigning group work, guide the students through some of their challenges.

Groups should identify what each member brings—e.g., an area of expertise or talent.

AT THE SAME TIME, all group members should find ways to learn from each other—i.e., the expert should teach.

Finding time to meet is challenging, particularly on commuter campuses, so groups should have some classroom time and easy access to each other online (e.g., by providing class email lists or creating discussion space on Blackboard or whatever tool the class uses).

Some effort should be made to assess the contribution of individuals to the group—e.g., by having members assess their own and others' contribution to the group project.

6. Share with students what you'll be looking for in assessing their presentation/facilitation.

This is largely accomplished by addressing the issues raised above, but it's also important that you consciously align your assessment with what you've told students about the assignment.



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Mission Statement:

The Teaching and Learning Center fosters a culture of critical reflection on teaching, which engages all members of the UWB community in pursuit of our commitment to excellence, innovation and collaboration in teaching and learning.

The success of the TLC will be measured by its contribution to transformative teaching and learning at UWB over the short- and long-term.

Advisory Board: Mary Abrums, David Goldstein, Cinnamon Hillyard, Pete Nye, Suzan Parker, David Shapiro, Jane Van Galen, and Alan Wood

Diversity Enhancement Project

UWB has received a President's Diversity Appraisal Implementation Fund grant to enhance diversity on campus through a 3-pronged project. First, we will be undertaking research on the institutional climate, collecting data through focus groups with students, faculty and staff. Second, we have selected six 2005-06 faculty fellows who are developing new courses, or revising existing courses, to more fully integrate diversity and to foster community engagement opportunities. Lastly, we will be hosting a public forum in the Spring where project participants will share their curricular and pedagogical research and the research findings on campus climate.

As we go forward with focus groups, we will be asking faculty for a few minutes of classroom time to invite student participants. Our goal is to get broad participation in these important conversations about what our students are experiencing on campus.

Faculty fellows and their projects are: Patricia Kelley, Business, "Appreciating Diversity in BBUS 300"; Jane Van Galen, Education, "Getting to Class: Teachers and Social Stratification"; Kari Lerum, IAS, "Grounding 'Feminist Theories & Practices' in Snohomish/King County"; and Mary Abrums, Heidi Petry and Jerelyn Resnick, Nursing, "Nursing Curriculum Diversity Reform Project."

The grant was awarded to Bruce Burgett (IAS), Susan Franzosa (Education), Diane Gillespie (IAS), Tana Hasart (Student Affairs), and Becky Rosenberg (Academic Services). Steering Committee members are Bruce Burgett, David Bush (Student Affairs), Amrit Zahir and Ellen Timothy (Education), Bill Seaburg (IAS) and Becky Rosenberg. Any of them will be happy to provide more information.

Service Learning Opportunities

A great deal has happened in the past year to make UWB a more visible, active and responsive part of the community through its service learning efforts.

- The Academic Strategic Action Initiatives (5for5) report identified experiential learning as one of its five priorities and the Lower-Division Planning Task Force identified service learning as one of the three "signature qualities" of our lower-division program's identity.
- Potential community partners are approaching us with ideas for how we can work together.
- We've joined the Washington State Campus Compact and will be consulting with their staff on how best to move our program forward.
- We have received a dozen student scholarships from the Americorps Students in Service grant, which can be awarded to students performing service as part of their coursework or on their own.
- We are getting a clearer idea of where service learning is being integrated into the curriculum—and are working jointly with Cascadia Community College to develop a database that will allow us to document activity and opportunities.

If you are:

- teaching classes that currently have or would lend themselves to service projects,
- have relationships with potential community projects,
- have students interested in service or engaged in service who may be eligible for scholarships,
- want to know more and/or help advance this work on campus,

please contact the TLC to get involved.