

March 2001

# ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

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## "Guiding" Students to Learning

From *The Teaching Professor*, October, 2000.

The interest in learning and more learner-centered teaching means faculty must move closer to facilitative teaching roles. Most faculty understand the importance of these roles when the focus is on students and learning, but from all accounts, instruction remains pretty teacher-centered. Why is that? Could the difficulty be something as simple as us not knowing functionally how to execute these alternative roles? Consider these Seven Principles of Facilitative Instruction.

### **Principle One: Teachers Do Fewer Learning Tasks**

The guide and the trekkers do the same things: they rappel, make fires, clean camp, and enjoy the views. Teachers and students are both in class, but typically teachers are doing a disproportionate number of learning tasks. Who provides the summary of content at the end of the period? Reviews at the beginning? Asks questions about the material? Offers the examples? Solves the problems? Makes the graphs? If the teacher is always doing these tasks, when and how do the students learn to do them for themselves?

### **Principle Two: Teachers Do Less Telling**

We have this terrible propensity to tell students everything. We tell students when and how to study, to do the reading and what parts of it are important, and to come to class and what dreadful things will happen if they don't. We tell them how to write their papers and how many homework problems to do. Part of the telling is our job, but we're doing more than we need to do. Don't stop telling, but do it less and let students discover more for themselves. You do indeed need to focus, guide, and otherwise direct that discovery process.

### **Principle Three: Teachers Do More Design Work**

When students are doing the work and the focus is on learning, then the learning experiences, the assignments, and classroom activities become the vehicles through which the learning occurs. Learning activities need to offer the right amount of challenge; they can't be too hard or too easy. They motivate student participation and involvement -- no small task given students' propensity toward passivity. Students must do the legitimate, bona fide work of the discipline -- at their level, of course. These are not fake, artificial, and otherwise contrived activities, or activity for the sake of activity.

### **Principle Four: Faculty Do More Modeling**

They take the role of master learner, and demonstrate how experienced guides prepare for new parts of the trail or how they respond to unexpected difficulties. The best way to do this is by doing some

legitimate learning. We need to regularly experience the learning process if we expect to fully appreciate and understand our students' first encounters with content now so familiar we cannot remember *not* knowing it.

### **Principle Five: Get Students Working With Each Other**

Despite the current popularity of group work, there are still many faculty who underestimate the value of students working together. Research continues to accumulate; students can and do learn from and with each other. The skills developed in constructive group encounters will be used in professional contexts. Like us, there are large numbers of students unconvinced that group collaboration has value. Part of that is our fault. We haven't always used well-designed group tasks and structures; we haven't always been mindful of relevant group process issues. Most groups are going to do more and do it better than most individuals working alone.

### **Principle Six: Faculty Work to Create Climates for Learning**

The environment in which learning takes place strongly influences motivations and attitudes toward learning. It's about creating a climate, a place that positively impacts students' desires to learn and their willingness to begin assuming more of the responsibility for learning. All our rules, regulations, stipulations, and requirements try to force learning. Far better that we focus our attention on the conditions conducive to learning and work to create classrooms where those conditions "force" students' compliance but in a very different and much more constructive manner.

### **Principle Seven: Faculty Focus Less on Grading and Do More With Feedback**

Note the principle does not say faculty do less grading -- it proposes that they focus on it less. In learner-centered environments, faculty use evaluation events in ways that maximize their learning potential. We still use assignments and exams to generate grades and certify mastery of material, but we also use them developmentally so that students get more out of the experience than just a grade.

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## **Active Learning**

The campus Faculty Retreat on Active Learning, held in February, was well-attended by faculty in ACES. Charles Bonwell was the keynote presenter. Here is a brief summary of part of the presentation to faculty and graduate students.

### **Why active learning strategies?**

Some of the major characteristics associated with active learning strategies include:

1. Students are involved in more than passive listening
  2. Students are engaged in activities (e.g., reading, discussing, writing)
  3. There is less emphasis placed on information transmission and greater emphasis placed on developing student skills
  4. There is greater emphasis placed on the exploration of attitudes and values
  5. Student motivation is increased (especially for adult learners)
  6. Students can receive immediate feedback from their instructor.
  7. Students are involved in higher order thinking (analysis, synthesis, evaluation)
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## **PowerPoint**

PowerPoint has become a popular medium for instruction. Some believe that PowerPoint is overused and abused; others believe that the problem is with the presenter, not the software! In any event, here are some pointers for PowerPoint.

1. Use PowerPoint interactively.
2. Have student teams prepare presentations.
3. Open a blank slide and type in the main points as they emerge from a classroom discussion.
4. In a lecture outline (with slides printed out in advance) leave some points blank, so that during class students must figure out what's missing.
5. Number the points so that students can quickly focus their questions.
6. Remember the "Joy of Six": maximum of six points per slide and six words per point.
7. Use text sparingly.
8. Use contrasting but complementary colors.
9. Use the Floor Test: Can you read a print-out on the floor from a standing position?
10. Minimize or avoid animated text, sounds, and fancy transitions.
11. Keep unity of design from slide to slide; use a master slide.
12. Avoid switching between programs (such as calling up a Web page)
13. Enable students to take notes on three handouts of three slides per page.
14. Three slides per minute is 150 slides in 50 minutes: way too many slides.
15. Black out the screen (use "B" on keyboard) after the point has been made.
16. Avoid laser pointers.

These points add up to one overwhelming point: Focus, by minimizing distractions! Adapted from an article in *Syllabus* by David G. Brown, Wake Forest University, March 2001.

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## ACES Student Awards Banquet

April 29, 2001

Park Inn International

Conference Center

11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

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## Student Ratings-Guidelines For Improvement?

Part 1 Student ratings, which are reported through ICES scores at the University of Illinois, are received half-heartedly each semester by instructors. Many speculate the validity of these scores depending on if they receive positive or negative feedback. How predictive are these student ratings of an instructor's teaching? Over the course of the next few months, this issue will be addressed using William Cashin's and others research on the predictive strength of student ratings.

First of all, let's clarify that student ratings are merely data and that no single source of data, including student ratings, provides sufficient information to make valid judgments about overall teaching effectiveness.

What factors are included in most student rating forms? According to Centra, there are six factors: course organization, clarity, communication skills, teacher-student interaction and rapport, course

difficulty, workload, grading and examinations, and student self-rated learning.

What viewpoints can the student rating issue be looked at in determining its effectiveness? In the coming months, the role of the instructor, student, and outside observants will be examined. Some possible biases in student ratings and variables that can impact ratings will be also addressed. This series will provide some guidelines for you to determine how student ratings can lead to improvement of teaching in your classroom.

By Annie Hernandez, graduate assistant in Academic Programs.

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## ACES Convocation Date

Please mark your calendars

Sunday, May 13, 2001

Undergraduate Convocation -

9:30 a.m. Krannert Great Hall

Graduate Convocation -

10:00 a.m.

Smith Memorial Music Hall

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## Mentoring Students: Faculty Roles in Enhancing Student Development

WHAT: Wednesday, March 21, 10:00 a.m. to noon.

WHERE: Third Floor Levis Faculty Center.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND: Faculty advisors of graduate and undergraduate students, other interested advisors, administrators

OVERVIEW: This seminar, cosponsored by the Office of the Provost, the Graduate College and the Teaching Advancement Board, is designed to provide participants with an overview of mentoring as a strategy for developing undergraduate and graduate students. It examines mentoring from the prospective of (1) assessing student needs, (2) bringing both an awareness and a sensitivity of diversity issues to student advising/mentoring, and (3) playing a role in developing academic, career, and personal skills of students.

The seminar addresses questions like:

Why mentor and what is the philosophical basis for mentoring students?

What are the faculty mentor's roles and responsibilities?

How can you structure your mentoring alliance?

What's involved in mentoring undergraduates within the advisement function?

What are the keys to successfully mentor graduate students?

What factors and issues are germane to mentoring diverse students?

What are common mentoring problems and solutions?

The seminar examines myth and issues behind these questions and provides strategies for developing and implementing effective mentoring responses. Keynote speaker is Dr. Howard G. Adams, consultant and former Executive Director of the National Consortium for Graduate Degrees for Minorities in Engineering and Science, Inc. Adams has spoken at more than 400 colleges and universities as well as providing professional development training for many corporate employees. The session will also include a panel of Illinois faculty who are recognized for their student mentoring. To register, please contact Angie Bingaman at 265-0451 or abingama@uiuc.edu.

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## Teaching Enhancement Grants

Six ACES faculty were awarded teaching enhancement grants for Spring 2001. The recipients and the projects they are working on include:

**David Onstad, NRES** -- improve webCT site for NRES 219; **Michael Hutjens, ANSCI** -- Develop and record voice modules for ANSCI 201; **Mark David, NRES** -- develop and deploy website for NRES 104; **Mary Arends-Kuenning, ACE** -- implementation of case studies for ACE 351; **Shelly Schmidt, FSHN** -- develop instructional, online media for FSHN 101, and **Susan Brewer, FSHN** -- setting up WebCT modules for FSHN 366.

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## Academic All Big Ten

ACES is especially proud of the student athletes who have been named to the Academic All-Big Ten.

ACES students include:

Kyle Kopatz NRES Men's Track and Field

Katie Hennessy ANSCI Women's Track and Field and Women's Cross Country

Jordana Meyer ANSCI Women's Cross Country

Congratulations to these athletes on their excellent performance in the classroom.

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## Fall Teaching Symposium

Mark your calendars now-

For the annual ACES Fall Teaching Symposium. This year's workshop will be held Friday,

August 17, 2001 at 8:30 a.m. at the Levis Faculty Center.

More information to follow.

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## Behaviors to Promote Student Learning

1. Appropriate use of humor

2. Praising student performance
3. Engaging students outside of the classroom
4. Appropriate level of self-disclosure
5. Encouraging students to talk
6. Asking questions about student viewpoints or feelings
7. Following up on topics raised by students even if not directly related to class material.
8. Referring to "our" class and what "we" are doing.

Gorham, J. (January 1988). *Communication Education*, Volume 37, No. 1, pp. 40-53.

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