

October 1999

# ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

From the Office of the Associate Dean

## A MODEST PROPOSAL TO STUDENTS

by William Irwin, King's College, PA

The right classroom environment is essential to optimal learning, and creating that environment is the responsibility of both teachers and students. Among the most basic problems in co-creating such an environment with current generation of college students, the so-called Generation X, is a basic lack of civility in the classroom, in office hours, and with regard to papers and exams.

At least since the time of Socrates, philosophers have debated whether knowing the good necessarily leads to doing the good. In our case, does telling students what is expected of them in terms of civil behavior solve the program? I suggest that it does, at least in part. Many of today's students do not mean to lack civility. They simply are not aware that some behavior is offensive or inappropriate.

In response to my frustration with a basic lack of civility among students, I have drafted "A Modest Proposal for Students." In my experience, delivering the message, with the right amount of humor, does affect student behavior. And even those students who continue to lack civility are now at least responsible and accountable they cannot claim they did not realize there was anything wrong with their actions.

### A MODEST PROPOSAL FOR STUDENTS

#### IN THE CLASSROOM

1. *Enthusiasm is contagious.* Profs respond and teach better to an alert, attentive, and interested class in just the way a band puts on a better show for an enthusiastic crowd.
2. *Be involved in class.* Participate in class discussions and ask questions. If you have nothing to say, then show that you are interested and engaged by making eye contact with the professor. You would find it pretty boring if the prof never made eye contact with the class. In the same way, the prof will find *you* pretty boring, and assume you are not interested, if you never look up.
3. *The "too cool for school" posture is unacceptable and offensive.* Never slouch, chat, glare at the clock, or yawn. You would not appreciate such posture if you were speaking at the front of the class, would you?
4. *When a fellow student speaks, it is not an opportunity to "tune out," take a break, or start a conversation.* Respecting your classmates includes listening to their questions and comments.
5. *Never close your books or rustle your papers to signal the end of class.* This is like looking at your watch when someone is talking to you pretty rude. In fact, you might consider not even wearing a watch

to class. Time flies when you're focused on something important.

## OFFICE HOURS, ETC.

1. *Make use of office hours*, and don't hesitate to make an appointment if those times are not convenient for you.
2. *Don't wait until it's "too late" to seek help*. If you're having trouble, let the prof know, and show you are concerned.
3. *Come to office hours with definite questions, concerns, or problems in mind*. Don't wait until you arrive to think about what you need help with.
4. *Never ask, "Did I miss anything important in class the other day?" Of course you did!*
5. Unless the prof makes a point of giving the class his or her number, *do not call him or her at home*.

## PAPERS AND EXAMS

1. *Hand in papers on time*, and ask for extensions only under the most extraordinary circumstances for example, your own impending death!
2. *Do not ask if your paper is graded the day after you handed it in*. You had a reasonable amount of time to write it; now give the prof a reasonable amount of time to grade it.
3. Contrary to popular opinion, *grading is not easy*, and profs do not take sadistic pleasure in it. It is the worst part of the job, and profs strive to be as fair as possible.

*Editor's note: The original "Modest Proposal" contains significantly more items these illustrate the approach. The author has given his permission for you to use any of these items in a "Modest Proposal" you may create for students. We encourage you to use these examples to stimulate your own thinking as to the basic tenets important to the kind of classroom environment you aspire to create. Reprinted by permission. The Teaching Professor, Magna Publications, 800-433-0499.*

## PROFESSIONAL TRAVEL GRANTS

The Teaching Advancement Board announces the availability of grants for workshops or professional travel designed to advance teaching methods and learning success. Travel grants are available to individual members of the faculty; workshops grants typically support programs organized by departments or colleges. Full information about these grant opportunities may be viewed and downloaded from the Provost's Website: <http://www.provost.uiuc.edu> (click on Teaching Advancement Board, then on "Teaching Advancement Travel and Workshop Grant Application Guidelines"). The application deadlines for AY 1999-2000 are:

November 30, 1999

February 1, 2000

March 28, 2000

May 31, 2000

Questions about this program of the TAB may be addressed to John Braden or Cel Daniel in the Office

of the Provost, 333-8159.

## ATTENTION NACTA MEMBERS

The annual dues notices for NACTA have been sent to current members. Be sure to note that dues for University of Illinois members are only \$30., since the College maintains an institutional membership. If you're not a member of NACTA, contact Wayne Banwart in 104 Mumford for information regarding the organization.

## AN EARLY WARNING FOR FALL 2000

While you are teaching your courses this fall, keep in mind that the Fall 2000 schedule includes the new week-long Thanksgiving break for students. That means one less Monday and Tuesday in next fall's schedule!

## WHEN HOPE AND FEAR COLLIDE

Arthur Levine and Jeanette S. Cureton offer an interesting insight into today's college student in their book, *When Hope and Fear Collide*. Chapter titles include "Generation Without a Name," "Academics: Search for an Insurance Policy," and "The Future: Doing Well or Doing Good" among others. The book is packed with data about today's students as well as a discussion of what the data mean to the campus scene. The book, from Josey-Bass Publishers, is available in bookstores. Or if you want to borrow a copy for a brief period, stop by 101 Mumford.

## FALL 1999 ENROLLMENT

Enrollment data are now being completed for Fall 1999. The College of ACES welcomed 602 new freshmen and 108 new transfer students this year. Total undergraduate enrollment is 2,244, which is the largest enrollment since 1984.

## COGNITIVE ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

M. Susie Whittington, Associate Professor of Agricultural and Extension Education at Penn State, was the keynote speaker for the ACES Fall Teaching Symposium. Dr. Whittington's presentation began with a discussion of the dimensions of critical thinking and cognitive behavior. She presented data from her research at three universities that showed the distribution of teacher intent by level of cognition and the

actual teacher behavior by cognitive level.

A basic premise is that there is not one "right" answer, but that instructors should evaluate what they do and what they think they do, and match their expectations of students with how the students were taught. Put simply, if students are not taught at higher levels of cognition, they should not be expected to be able to magically "put it all together" at the end of the course. Complex thinking processes that involve synthesis and evaluation must be taught.

Symposium participants evaluated sample test items and then reviewed some of their own course materials. Hopefully, instructors in ACES are more attuned to the cognitive level they intend, the level at which they teach, and the level of expectations they actually have for their students. Several follow-up discussion sessions are planned for the coming months, for those who participated in the symposium and for others who want to learn more about teacher behavior.

## EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Wayne Banwart, coordinating instructor for ACES 100, shared some interesting stats on Fall 1997 and Fall 1998 freshmen. Of the 26 students who received a grade of D or F in ACES 100, 17 are no longer enrolled at UIUC. Does that mean that ACES 100 is a tough, flunk-out course? Probably not. More likely, students receive poor grades in ACES 100 because they do not attend class and do not turn in assignments, terrible habits for their first semester in college! While we want to treat students like adults, it may be important to keep an eye on the freshmen who seem to exhibit immature behavior. Perhaps a little mentoring early on can help get them headed down the better path.

## TEACHING COLLEGE

The third ACES *Teaching College* course is underway, with 20 participants from six departments. This year's course was made available to more graduate students who are TAs and/or are headed toward a career in college teaching. The course participants will also be a part of the Peer Observation for Teaching Assessment program, which is funded in part by the Office of the Provost. Graduate students in the course will also participate in a series of seminars during Spring 2000. The seminars will focus on governance, allowing the students to learn more about how the university, college and department operate, and the involvement of faculty in the governance process.

Participants include:

**ACE:** O. Faustin Epouhe; Donna Fisher; Viveka Kudaligama; LeeAnn Moss; Annie Kinwa- Muzinga; Wanhong Yang

**AG ENG:** Brian He; Prasanta Kalita; Xinlei Wang; Ping Yang; LingYing Zhao

**CR SCI:** Brian Diers; Stephen Farrand; Dean Riechers; Torbert Rocheford; Kathy Yeater

**HCD:** Napoleon Juanillo; Trent Maurer

**NRES:** Andrea Taylor

## **COURSES ON THE WEB**

An important first step to offering courses via the world wide web is to place course information on a web site. Currently, the College of ACES has about one-fourth of the courses with a web site, varying from a short syllabus to interactive chat space and streaming video. John Schmitz, ITCS, and Walt Hurley, Animal Sciences and ACOP fellow, are giving leadership to helping faculty learn how to enhance learning through use of web technology. The goal is for every course in ACES to incorporate some degree of web technology. Eventually, more of courses will be delivered to new audiences asynchronously.

## **SELECTED FOR LEADERSHIP PROGRAM**

Four ACES faculty are a part of Class 9 of the ESCOP/ACOP Leadership Development Program in 1999-2000. Walt Hurley (Animal Sciences), Clare Hasler (Food Science and Human Nutrition), Michael Gray (Crop Sciences), and Tim Garrow (Food Science and Human Nutrition) began the year-long program in September, attending a six-day leadership development workshop in Indianapolis. Through out the academic year, they will participate in various activities and complete a project that enables them to learn more about how the university operates and about their own skills. The program culminates next June with a seminar in Washington, D.C. on the working of various governmental agencies. The program is sponsored jointly by the Experiment Station and Academic Programs Sections of the Board on Agriculture, National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. Previously, 26 faculty in ACES have completed the program. Their participation is funded by the College. Kirby Barrick serves on the Program Advisory Committee.

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## **MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

**Student Awards Banquet**

**April 30, 2000**

**Illini Union -- Rooms A, B and C**

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

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## **ILLINOIS AND PURDUE TO HOST CONFERENCE**

The Illinois and Purdue chapters of MANRRS have been awarded a grant to plan and conduct the 2001 national MANRRS conference in Washington, D.C. The three-day conference in April 2001 will include professional development activities and student competitive events. Jesse Thompson is coordinating the planning activities in cooperation with Purdue and USDA.

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The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery.  
Mark Van Doren

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