



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
& UNIVERSITIES

MONTHLY UPDATE

A MONTHLY COMMUNICATION FROM THE CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

October 1, 2007

SoCTL *The Scholarship of Teaching & Learning at CTL*

Teaching for Student Persistence

It's difficult to talk about student persistence without also discussing retention, remediation and access, as they definitely relate to each other. There are also many conditions that affect persistence, such as expectation, advice, support, involvement, and learning (Tinto, 2002). However, this article will zero in on the one factor that directly requires faculty and that can be altered by faculty—teaching for student persistence.

First we must understand the significance of persistence. The National Center for Education Statistics estimates that approximately 65 percent of students who begin in a four-year college or university with the goal of earning a bachelor's degree will earn that degree. Only 27 percent or so of those who begin in a two-year institution with same goal will do so (NCES, 2002). Thus teaching for persistence could have big payoff in improving these percentages. Following are a few techniques:

Cooperative Learning: The University of Minnesota's Cooperative Learning Center, where Professors David Johnson, Roger Johnson, Karl Smith and others, developed a productive theory of interdependent student learning (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991), teaches this approach to faculty around the country. The general idea of this method is to break students into groups at the beginning of each semester and to grade members of each group, in part based on whether all of them came to class with completed homework. Almost two decades of research finds that students are more likely to keep up to date with their work when they feel responsible for their classmates' grades. (Ashburn, 2007).

Distance Learning, Evening/Weekend Courses, or Off-Campus Learning Centers: Faculty can work to develop online courses, flexible course schedules, or course locations that remove time and travel barriers for students. This, of course, requires teamwork with administration, information technology staff, community personnel, and others. There are grants available that might help a collaboration team pursue moving toward these goals.

Chicken Soup for the Sophomore Soul: The millennial-generation students are used to receiving a lot of individual attention, says John N. Gardner, executive director of the Policy Center on the First Year of College. "Given who's coming to college now, we have to do more of these compensatory, intrusive kinds of interventions." Handwritten (or emailed) notes and personal phone calls to students are examples of individual attention that students and their parents might expect from today's faculty. Another example is an informal reception with faculty members and upper-division students from various academic departments, to give sophomores a taste of many possible majors. (Lipka, 2006). Special attention to sophomores can provide them with enough confidence to go on their own as juniors and not drop out.

(Continued on Page 2)

Teaching Tip of the Month

What Role do I Play?

As an elementary teacher, I remember the looks on the student's faces when I told them that we were going to put on a play. The energy lit up the room while hands rose instantly to both volunteer and ask questions. Talk about student engagement and motivation! If only it were that easy in a college course...

Well, why couldn't it be? Role playing is active learning that works for all ages. Now, some of you are thinking that it takes too much time to develop and watch the product. What would you have to eliminate in the way you currently teach the course? And then, there are the shy students who don't like getting up in front of others.

The great thing about role playing is that it is a motivator for so many. You don't need to get elaborate by making sets, sewing costumes, and selling tickets. You simply introduce the idea to your students and have them create the scenarios about real-world situations that apply to your course. They can research and develop ethical issues which can be played out in front of the class for a discussion. They can all participate in the planning. Role sizes can be determined through group interaction so a student's comfort level can be taken into consideration. Some instructors will want to set specific scenarios for their students to represent the differing viewpoints within a topic or dilemma. Once developed, you can use them again.

Role playing can work for online or hybrid courses. Each threaded interaction could be thought of as e-mail messages between characters. Other students not in the role play could observe and comment.

A way to increase your students' persistence is to help them motivate themselves from within. All you have to do is say.... "We're going to put on a play!"

-Zala Fashant

SoCTL *continued*

Teaching for Student Persistence

Social Networks: Old and new media are on almost continuous collision paths today in business, politics, religion, journalism and, of course, education. With the networked culture making these major demands upon education, it's exciting to ". . . imagine what would happen if academic departments operated more like YouTube or Wikipedia Let's call this new form of academic unit a 'YouNiversity.'" (Jenkins, 2007). There isn't a lot of research, study and practice in the area of academic social networks, blogs, wikis and other media power; but it's starting. Across discipline and program areas—not just in computer science--faculty are starting to use this new, evolving Web in their classrooms.

There are no easy answers to creating stronger student persistence, and it is not something that can be addressed in isolation. Persistence—that is, students' own efforts to succeed and complete their college goals—is just one perspective on successful college outcomes. It is an area, however, where we as faculty can make a difference. Let's persist in doing so!

-Yvonne Shafer

Ashburn, Elyse (2007). *An \$88-Million Experiment to Improve Community Colleges*, backed largely by the Lumina Foundation. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 20, 2007.

Jenkins, Henry (2007). *From YouTube to YouNiversity*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 16, 2007.

Lipka, Sara (2006). *After the Freshman Bubble Pops: More colleges try to help their sophomores thrive*. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 8, 2006.

NCES, 2002. *Descriptive Summary of 1995-96 Beginning Postsecondary Students: Six Years Later*. US Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Johnson, D.W., Johnson, R.T., and Smith, K. (1991) *Active Learning: Cooperation in the College Classroom*, Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company

Tinto, V. (2002). *Enhancing Student Persistence: Connecting the Dots*. Syracuse University, presentation at Optimizing the Nation's Investment: Persistence and Success in Postsecondary Education, sponsored by the Wisconsin Center for the Advancement of Postsecondary Education, The University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, October 23-25, 2002.

Call For Proposals!

The First-Year Student in the 21st Century

Realizing Student Potential • ITEACH Conference

February 28 & 29, March 1!

CTL News

CTL Launches Web Workshops!

Through Web conferencing applications CTL staff members will be presenting two Web workshops this fall for faculty. Links to [registration](#) can be found on the CTL home page. Once registered through CTL, an e-mail will be sent to participant the day before the workshop providing the login information.

Rubrics: Measuring Student Success

October 12, 2007 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Presenter/Facilitator: Zala Fashant

This workshop is designed for faculty who are new to the concepts of competencies to define student achievement and using rubrics to measure assessment. Rubrics helps to clarify what an instructor is looking for in an assignment, as well as helping to increase consistency in grading subjective work while providing effective feedback.

CTL Web Workshop: Wikis, Blogs and Podcasts—Motivating Students Online

November 2, 2007 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Presenter/Facilitator: Yvonne L. Shafer

This workshop is designed for faculty who want to explore using cool Web tools to motivate students to connect, collaborate and converse online. It takes a quick look at how the new interactive Web is weaving many far-reaching changes in the world of work and how these changes are also impacting education and our students.

CTL Welcomes Over 800 New Faculty to the System!

On October 4-5, CTL Campus Leaders will be meeting to discuss faculty development plans for the year. One of the take-aways from this workshop will be the Welcome Packets and gifts that the Center for Teaching and Learning provides each year. Full-time and part-time faculty will be receiving a welcome letter and set of system resources in a welcome packet as well as the gift of a book on teaching and learning. Leaders will deliver these packets to new faculty after October 8. Faculty who haven't had the opportunity to meet their CTL Campus Leader will get to do so as they explain the system and local faculty development activities for this year. To our new colleagues, CTL welcomes you to the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities!

- Zala Fashant

CTL Resources for Faculty

Retention and Persistence

In this month's SoCTL, Yvonne Shafer discusses student persistence and retention. This, as you've probably gathered, is a very broad topic, and one about which there are myriad resources to find out more—or to get some practical advice.

For starters, a previous SoCTL article focuses on the role that learning communities can play in keeping students in college. The piece concludes that students throughout our system will likely benefit from being involved with learning communities, and cites some current research on the topic. [The article](#), by Lynda Milne and Martin Springborg, is available on the Web in CTL's ITeach Center.

There is a link between excellent teaching, student learning, and student persistence in college. [One fine article](#), from Michigan State University, discusses how "inclusive classrooms are classrooms in which instructors and students work together to create and sustain an environment in which everyone feels safe, supported, and encouraged to express her or his views and concerns." Certainly, if students feel safe, encouraged, and supported in their classes, they'll be less likely to leave school.

You probably know that students' lives outside of the classroom—along with their classroom experiences—affect their decisions to stay in college. The College Board authored [a report](#) that identified nine of the factors that influence student persistence from the first to the second year of college. The role that these factors play in retention is then explored.

Students who engage with their campus and their community are more likely to do well in college and to stay and earn a degree. One excellent resource in Minnesota for connecting students in meaningful ways to their communities is [Minnesota Campus Compact](#). This organization uses the strengths of our institutions in partnership with communities and community organizations to increase student engagement, student learning, and students' hands-on application of their classroom work. There is also a wonderful new tutorial on CTL's Web site that explores the question of how service learning fits into a college classroom. [The tutorial](#), written by Gretchen Dorn from Hennepin Technical College this past summer, discusses the benefits and the how-to's of incorporating service learning into your classroom.

Research supports the widely accepted proposition that students need to do more than just listen to learn. The Foundation Coalition, an NSF-funded organization, maintains [a terrific Web site](#) offering tips and hints for active and cooperative learning. Among the resources on their Web pages are answers to these questions.

- How much time does it take to adopt Active/Cooperative learning?
- How can I get started?
- Who are some people who can help?

The site also offers tips and hints, and lists the five essential components that must be present for small-group learning to be truly cooperative.

The RSP/ITeach conference (scheduled for February 28-29 and March 1, 2008) has a history of addressing persistence, retention, and related issues (along with many, many other topics in teaching and learning). The conference is an excellent opportunity to attend workshops, presentations, or other discussions about student retention, and is an outstanding opportunity to present your own program. The RSP/ITeach [call for proposals](#) is available now.

- Thomas Wortman

CTL Report

Creating Academic Communities: Promoting Student Connections

Minnesota Association for Developmental Education Discipline Workshop
September 27 - September 28, 2007

This conference considered the issues of college readiness, the freshman experience, retention, student persistence, and the impact of developmental programs and courses on our students. In particular, the conference theme focused on how to best acclimate new generations of students to the academic environment.

Russ Hodges, Texas State University, San Marcos, facilitated a pre-conference workshop entitled "Turning a Study Skills Course into a Learning Framework Course." More than 40 system developmental educators attended the workshop. Hodges also gave the keynote address, and presented conference participants with some fairly startling statistics. For example, in the fall of 2000, 28% of entering freshmen enrolled in one or more developmental course at all postsecondary institutions. (That number was closer to 40% at community colleges.) Of all entering freshmen, 22% needed remedial math courses, 14 needed remedial writing, and 11% needed remedial reading courses.

In terms of implications for the developmental field, there has been an increase in the percentage of students in need of remedial courses in college and this trend is expected to continue. In addition, an increase in population density as well as an increasing number of immigrants will mean more incoming freshmen and more cases where overcoming a language barrier will play a significant role in ability to succeed. Hodges speculated that we will need more developmental educators, and more of these positions full-time, in order to meet these challenges.

Faculty planners of this conference were Laurel Watt, Inver Hills Community College; Mary Thurow, Minneapolis Community and Technical College; and Barbara Rath, Minnesota State University Moorhead.

- Martin Springborg

Spring 2008 Discipline Workshop Grants

Announcement: September 14
Deadline: October 30

Dates to Remember!

CALL FOR PROPOSALS!

The First-Year Student in the 21st Century: Realizing Student Potential • ITeach 2008

Deadline: November 16

CTL DISCIPLINE AND PROGRAM WORKSHOPS

Symposium on Recent Advances in Information Assurance and Network Security '07

November 16, 2007 • St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, MN

Contact: Susantha Herath, St. Cloud State University

Interdisciplinary

In-Depth Understanding of China: Mini-Workshops Part 2 of 4: Education in China: Current Issues, Challenges and Goals for the Future

November 16, 2007 • St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, MN

Contact: Kathy Johnson, St. Cloud State University

Spring 2008 Discipline Workshop Grants

Applications: Now Being Taken

Deadline: October 30

CTL WEB WORKSHOPS

Rubrics: Measuring Student Success

Take the guess-work out of assessment and convey effective feedback!

October 12, 2007 10:00-11:00 a.m.

www.ctl.mnscu.edu

Wikis, Blogs, and Podcasts

Discuss the use of these popular e-learning tools!

November 2, 2007 10:00-11:00 a.m.

www.ctl.mnscu.edu

COLLEGE FACULTY COURSES FOR CREDENTIALING

Teaching/Instructional Methods

September 14 – 15 & October 26 – 27 • Lake Superior College, Duluth, MN

Student Outcomes Assessment/Evaluation

September 21 – 22 & October 12 – 13 • Dakota County Technical College, Rosemount, MN

Course Construction

October 5 – 6 & November 2 – 3 • Alexandria Technical College, Alexandria, MN

Philosophy of Community & Technical College Education

Starting October, 2007 • [Offered Online](#)

NEW FORMAT! The Weekly Update has become the Monthly Update!

Next edition: November 5

Featured Events

Emerging Technologies: Bioinformatics and Entertainment Computing

Discipline Workshop

Location: Auditorium, Metropolitan State University, St. Paul Campus, St. Paul,

October 12, 2007, 7:30 am - 4:30 pm

Speakers:

Eric D. Wieben, Ph.D.

Director, Mayo Genomics Research Center

Professor of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology

Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, Rochester, MN

Prof. Paul Tymann

College of Computing and Information Sciences

Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, NY

Dr. Robin Burke

Associate Professor

School of Computer Science, Telecommunications, and Information Systems

DePaul University, Chicago, IL

Chris Melissinos, Chief Gaming Officer

SUN Microsystems, Inc., Santa Clara, CA

Faculty Planners:

Jigang Liu, Metropolitan State University;

Timothy Wrenn, Anoka-Ramsey Community College; Warren Sheaffer, St. Paul College

This workshop will provide faculty an interactive forum which brings together researchers, practitioners, and educators working on different aspects of Bioinformatics and Entertainment Computing.

The goals of this workshop are to let faculty know where the current research is, how Bioinformatics and Entertainment Computing are practiced in the real world, and which universities and colleges are offering courses and programs in these two hottest emerging fields so that they can take what they need back to their home institutions to enhance their curricula or develop new curricula in these two areas.

For more information, contact: Jigang Liu, 651.793.1472, jigang.liu@metrostate.edu.

This workshop is made possible with funds for Discipline/Program Workshops from the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Center for Teaching and Learning with generous funding from the Office of the Chancellor. Interested in applying for funds for your own discipline or program workshop? Visit the Discipline Workshop section of the CTL Web site for a description of the grant program, an application for funds, planner's management guidelines, and for information on upcoming workshops.

-Yvonne L. Shafer