



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
& UNIVERSITIES

WEEKLY UPDATE

A WEEKLY COMMUNICATION FROM THE CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

January 29, 2007

SoCTL *The Scholarship of CTL*

The Challenges of Information Technology (IT) in Education

Technology and higher education share a common trait—each is having a large impact on our society in ways we've not seen previously. The digital force of information technology (IT) has radically changed the way we work, learn and play. Higher education has also changed our society as more and more students are going to and graduating from postsecondary institutions to meet the demands of an information-based economy. As a result, the last 10-20 years have seen many new technologies implemented in higher education for use by students, faculty and staff. Does that mean we have better faculty teaching and better student learning? Some say "Yes," and some say "No."

Yes, IT Helps: Many findings are available that show some advantages of using IT in higher education; however, they tend to be in the areas of support, infrastructure and library services. Kenneth C. Green reports in "[Bring Data: A New Role for Information Technology after the Spellings Commission](#)" that "... virtually *everyone* on or affiliated with a college or university is a user/consumer of IT resources and services (e.g., e-mail, online services, portals, online content, learning management systems)." Distance learning is another IT application where most research findings are generally favorable about its impact on education, and the number of enrolled students keeps increasing. However, [Valentine \(2002\)](#) identified some problems such as "... quality of instruction, hidden costs, misuse of technology, and the attitudes of instructors, students, and administrators." But the market is large for online learning, and this use of IT will most likely continue to accelerate.

No, IT Hinders: Often we hear comments about too much time being spent on technology, the tool, and not enough time on *how* to use the tool to improve student learning. In order to ensure that technology does not hinder faculty teaching and student learning, I suggest we need to do both. To lessen the hindrances, we need to understand how technology affects our society and our culture. We need to understand our learners--the "[net generation](#), the [www.y generation](#), the [neXt generation](#)." But equally important is that we need to educate ourselves, the faculty, about the inter-relatedness of curriculum, technology and pedagogy. Too often, the emphasis is on buying the tool, and then not having enough resources left for staff development and/or new staff, new course design, etc. [Ayers and Grisham \(2003\)](#) argue that teaching and scholarship have been the institutional aspects *least touched* by the new technologies.

As usual, there are rarely simple answers for complex problems. But now is the time to move forward so we can produce better student learning. [Ehrmann \(2002\)](#) highlights strategies for making major improvements in educational outcomes. One strategy is to "... build a coalition that focuses on the outcome to be improved, not (just) the technology." Centers for Teaching and Learning can be the driving force behind forming coalitions to push for IT investments that *will* improve educational outcomes and result in more student learning.

- Yvonne L. Shafer

Register Now!

REALIZING STUDENT POTENTIAL/TEACH 2007

[CONFERENCE PROGRAM](#)

Early Bird Registration Closes February 4!

Register now to be eligible for Early Bird drawings.

Teaching Tip of the Week

Giving Written Directions

Each of us has a unique way that we like to give and receive directions. Multiply that by the number of students in your class and you begin to understand why following directions for assignments is not always an easy task. For those of you who teach online, you realize you don't get many visual or vocal clues when offering directions.

As instructors, we have a very clear view of what we expect of students in written or verbal directions. Tip: as you design or teach your course for the first few times, have your students critique the written directions you provide for assignments, threaded discussions, and tests. You can offer a few points if you like, but I find that if you ask, they are very willing to offer feedback. After a couple of reviews, the directions become much clearer to the students.

- Zala Fashant

CTL Report

Counselor Discipline Workshop

On October 12 and 13, system counselors met at Cragun's Resort in Brainerd for a CTL-sponsored [Discipline Workshop](#) entitled [Power Tools for Future Development](#). The workshop focused on the role of counselors in student retention, strategic planning issues and concerns, sharing resources and tools across the system, and raising awareness about counseling services with various stakeholders.

Workshop planners Michele Jersak, Century College; MaryAnn Larios and Elaine Beaudreau-Patton, Anoka-Ramsey Community College; and Kari Much, Minnesota State University, Mankato report that workshop participants were able to address many important and timely topics such as creating a unified discipline mission, sharing best practices on goals and objectives, and reviewing campus crisis procedures.

Interested in applying for funds for your own discipline or program workshop? Visit the [Discipline Workshop](#) section of the CTL website for a description of the grant program, an application for funds, planner's management guidelines, and for information on upcoming workshops.

-Martin Springborg

Committed to Improving Student Learning

Dates to Remember

MAR 1-3: REALIZING STUDENT POTENTIAL / ITEACH 2007 CONFERENCE

Minneapolis Community & Technical College/
Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis Campus

It All Adds up to One Great Conference!

- [Full Program](#) up on Web site
- Thursday Keynote: [Mark Taylor](#)
- Friday Keynote: [Betsy Barefoot](#)
- [100 presentations on Friday](#)
- [15+ Saturday workshops](#)
- Over 150 presenters
- [Travel Planner](#)

[Register Now!](#)

March Discipline Workshops

MAR 16-17: ENGLISH COMPOSITION: CROSSING LINES, FORGING CONNECTIONS & EXTENDING OPPORTUNITIES
Century College. [Discipline Workshop Information](#)

MAR 25-26: CHINA SYMPOSIUM 2007
St. Cloud State University. [Discipline Workshop Information](#)

CTL Resources for Faculty

GREAT NEW SCHOLARLY JOURNAL ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING

There is plenty of information out there, and plenty of writing about teaching and learning, but sometimes it can be hard to find the really good stuff. That's one of the reasons that CTL created the ITeach Professional Development Center (www.ctl.mnscu.edu/iteach). ITeach is a virtual guide to teaching and learning. Here is one new resource in the ITeach Center that is worthy of note.

Recently, the Center for Excellence in Teaching at Georgia Southern University launched an international vehicle for articles, essays, and discussions about the scholarship of teaching and learning. The [International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning](#) is an excellent analysis and critique of all things related to teaching an learning, with a particular emphasis on improving teaching and student learning outcomes, and transforming academic cultures and communities.

The inaugural issue of the journal has nine research articles and a number of essays, book reviews, and other features. Article topics range from a piece about how PowerPoint handouts affect student learning, to a research exploring faculty members' responses to academic dishonesty. Winston Gittens of Southwest Minnesota State University wrote an essay: [Shifting Discourse in College Teaching](#). This journal and others can be found in the [CTL ITeach Center](#).

-Thomas Wortman



Featured Event

Realizing Student Potential/ITeach 2007 Conference Keynote Speakers

Now's the time to start planning for this conference. You won't want to miss the keynote speakers we have coming this year!

Mark Taylor speaks on Thursday, March 1, at 6:30 pm on the topic "Generation NeXt Comes to College—Hardwired." With over 25 years of experience in higher education, management and the helping professions, his interactive keynote address will assist faculty who are or will be using instructional technology to better understand Generation NeXt students. It will focus specifically on how these students use technology, what their expectations are, and how faculty can use technologies for more effective and engaging student learning.

Betsy Barefoot speaks on Friday, March 2, at 8:30 am on the topic, "Engaging Today's First-Year Students: Challenges and Opportunities in the Classroom." Barefoot conducts seminars on the first-year college experience across the United States and in other countries, assisting colleges and universities in implementing and evaluating first-year programs. She will offer a broad view of the first year to include a focus on the students themselves, as well as common instructional policies and practices that impact the quality of student learning.

Don't miss your opportunity to listen to their keynote address and attend a session with each speaker that they will be presenting during the conference!

- Yvonne L. Shafer

Be an Early Bird
drawing
winner by
Registering for
[RSP/ITeach 2007](#)
Before February 4!