



Minnesota  
STATE COLLEGES  
& UNIVERSITIES

# WEEKLY UPDATE

A WEEKLY COMMUNICATION FROM THE CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

February 5, 2007

## SoCTL *The Scholarship of Teaching & Learning at CTL*

### Success in the First Year = Success in College

CTL is committed to improving student learning. The annual Realizing Student Potential/Teach Conference scheduled for March 1-3 will focus on first-year students. The theme, "The First-Year Student in the 21st Century," will explore the many issues associated with first-year students and provide useful information and ideas for faculty working with first-year students. Here is some initial insight into teaching the first-year student.

First-year students can be a particular challenge in the classroom, yet the rewards that come from teaching them are profound. According to Erickson, Peters, and Strommer (2006), this is precisely the case; they are curious, enthusiastic, and pretty well prepared for an academic life, yet they are also easily discouraged and overwhelmed. Student development experts tell us that first-year students are often struggling with developing competence, managing their emotions, and developing relationships, among other developmental tasks (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). All of this means that a college teacher may have to work harder in order to teach these students most effectively. Luckily, there is plenty of information available to help.

Among the best of the books on the subject is "Teaching First-Year Students" by Erickson, Peters, and Strommer (2006). This book offers extensive background about understanding first-year students, and also provides practical advice for instructors. Among the suggestions from these authors is to try to *teach students how to learn*—this will help them succeed later in their college career. The authors suggest using a first-year class as an opportunity not only to give students basic information, but also to *teach thinking skills*. They recommend allowing your students to *make mistakes*, because learning often involves trial and error. Other keys to success with these students are to clearly define your goals, give adequate support—especially early in the semester, and emphasize problem-solving techniques.

Finally, we know that students who are engaged with faculty and staff members outside of the classroom are more likely to succeed in college (Kuh, et al., 2005). Creating these engaging encounters can be difficult, especially since many first-year students may be fearful of approaching faculty members. According to Carnegie Mellon's [Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence](#), "[I]t can help to come to class early and talk to students. By targeting three or four students in each class session to 'meet' and talk with informally before class begins, you can establish good working relationships with many individual students as well as demonstrate your accessibility." Building rapport with your students can have a positive effect on their entire college career.

The RSP/Teach conference will address these issues and many others, featuring a keynote address by Betsy Barefoot, from the Policy Center on the First Year of College. Other sessions range from one about connecting with students through effective communication, to another about using blogs to engage first-year students. Faculty members from throughout the system will gather to explore the challenges and rewards of teaching today's students. The conference is relevant to faculty members from all of our institutions. Sessions will focus on the best practices in teaching and learning, and the best practices in teaching with technology.

-Thomas Wortman

#### References

Carnegie Mellon University Eberly Center for Excellence in Teaching. (2007). Best practices for Teaching First-year Undergraduates. (Retrieved January 30, 2007, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/documents/bestpractices.htm#Engaging>)

Chickering, A. W., & Reisser, I. (1993). *Education and identity*, (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Erickson, B. L., Peters, C. B., & Strommer, D. W. (2006). *Teaching first-year college students*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., Whitt, E. J., & Associates. (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

### Register Now!

**REALIZING STUDENT POTENTIAL/TEACH 2007  
CONFERENCE PROGRAM**

Registration Closes February 22!

## Teaching Tip of the Week

### Giving Clear Oral Directions

Last week I attended a conference and was reminded of a classic mistake in giving oral directions. The presenter wanted to make the session interactive by having us read a short piece of literature. She told us to begin reading. Within 10 seconds she began to add information that she remembered she wanted to tell us prior to reading. Each of us was faced with the dilemma of reading or stopping to listen.

To model a respectful manner of giving oral directions follow these basic steps. Think of everything you want to tell your audience about what you are asking of them in advance. Determine what you want them to do, what you may want them to consider, how will they use this information in the next steps of the session, and how to show they are finished with the reading. By doing so, you can give clearly defined directions, while getting the successful results you desire through clear communication.

- Zala Fashant

## CTL Report

### CTL Workshop, September 28-29, 2006-- Finding the Pulse: Reading the Student

The Center for Teaching and Learning collaborated with the Minnesota Association for Developmental Education (MNADE) to facilitate this CTL workshop which was held at Ruttger's Sugar Lake Lodge in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, on September 28-29. Faculty who teach ESOL, mathematics, reading and writing were represented with a total of 64 educators attending. Participants came from 18 institutions, which included technical colleges, community colleges and state universities.

The keynote session featured a panel of three administrators from the Minnesota State Colleges & Universities, two of whom were once system faculty. Planners felt that this panel kicked off the conference with great discussions and set an ideal tone for the rest of the agenda.

By working together, these are the types of workshops that Centers of Learning are able to provide, thereby offering wonderful professional growth opportunities to our colleagues.

-Yvonne L. Shafer

**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

[Program](#) [Travel Planner](#) [Register Now!](#)

## 18 Days Left to Register!



## Featured Event

### Realizing Student Potential/ITeach 2007: The First-Year Student in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

This year's RSP/ITeach conference will offer more than 100 sessions from more than 150 presenters. The conference is focused on the first-year student, with tracks on best practices in teaching as well as teaching with technology. The following are just a few examples of the ways in which this focus and these tracks are represented:

#### The First-Year Student

Title [First-Year Teaching Across the Disciplines](#)  
Working in groups with other instructors from the same disciplinary areas, participants will reflect on the ideas presented in the keynote address and apply those and other ideas to their particular teaching responsibilities.

#### Best Practices in Teaching

Title [From Lecture to Team-Based Learning: How to Energize and Improve Student Learning in Your Classes](#)

In this interactive session, a chemistry instructor at Minnesota State University, Mankato explains her move from traditional lecture to Team-Based Learning (TBL). The concept of TBL will be explained and participants will develop some skills in constructing this type of course as they work through part of a class during the workshop. Participants will also explore ways TBL could be used in other disciplines at other colleges and universities.

#### Teaching with Technology

Title [Integrating eFolio Presentations as Coursework Activity](#)

Learn how to achieve the successful implementation of e-Folio based technology as a classroom presentation tool. See the basic steps to follow for initiating the integration of student-prepared electronic classroom presentations, which also allow for access by classmates and faculty for enhanced learning opportunities.

-Martin Springborg

## April Discipline Workshops

APR 2: PROMOTING HEALTHY BEHAVIORS  
Health, Physical Education, and Exercise Science Discipline Workshop  
Inver Hills Community College. [Discipline Workshop Information](#)

APR 21: WHAT NEW SIGN LANGUAGES CAN TEACH US ABOUT ASL  
Location: North Star Academy, St. Paul. [Discipline Workshop Information](#)

APR 27-28: MATHEMATICS: SHARPEN THE FOCUS  
Duluth Entertainment Convention Center. [Discipline Workshop Information](#)

## CTL Resources for Faculty

### Diversity in the Classroom: CTL Resources

With nearly 370,000 students taking classes, there is a lot of diversity in our state system classrooms. The Office of the Chancellor reports that 13.4 percent of our enrollments are "students of color," and there are more than 3,000 international students and nearly 5,500 students with disabilities. Meeting the needs of our diverse student body is important—not only because we are committed to being great teachers—but because it's the right thing to do.

CTL offers resources for faculty members who want to learn about teaching diverse students, or who want to polish their skills. In CTL's ITeach Center on the Web, ([www.ctl.mnscu.edu/iteach](http://www.ctl.mnscu.edu/iteach)) we offer a series of tutorials—short Web-delivered courses addressing important teaching topics.

Three of the tutorials offer resources about diversity in the classroom. "['I Hear You, Do You Hear Me?' Teaching in Racially Diverse Classrooms](#)" is about how new approaches to classroom learning can meet the needs of the changing student population. "[My Story, Your Story: Building Respect for Diversity in the Classroom](#)" focuses on measures to enhance faculty members' and students' level of diversity awareness as a means for meeting the challenges and difficulties of difference in the classroom. "[Active Learning in Diverse Classrooms](#)" presents successful practices for enabling all students to achieve their academic goals.

These resources can help us all become even better teachers by striving to reach *all* of the students in our classrooms.

-Thomas Wortman

Register for  
**RSP/ITeach 2007**  
By February 22!