



# Spectrum

Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois 60115

## January 2004 Teaching Effectiveness Institute



Cheryl Hiltibran

The Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center will host its tenth Teaching Effectiveness Institute on January 8, 2004. This daylong institute will focus on a workshop titled "Motivating the Unmotivated Learner," presented by Cheryl Hiltibran of Learning Strategies Corporation. Ms. Hiltibran, with degrees in Training and Development and Business Education, has 25 years experience in teaching, management, and training and has consulted with both University and Community College systems in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Utah. Her clients in the government and business communities include the US Forest Service, US Air Force, Secret Service, and the 3M Company.

The one-day workshop will introduce faculty to a positive learning experience and provide them with ways to make their classroom experiences more effective and enjoyable for themselves and the learners. The latest findings from the areas of brain research will be applied in the workshop. Participants will learn methods to accelerate learning and teaching methods, with the focus being on motivating the unmotivated learner.

Faculty and teaching staff interested in registering for the institute or would like more information, please check the faculty development website for registration flyer or call 815-753-0595 or email [facdev@niu.edu](mailto:facdev@niu.edu). Advance registration is required. This institute is sponsored in part by the Pepsi Incentive Funding from Pepsi Cola General Bottlers, Inc.

## Message from the Director

Welcome to the fall 2003 semester. Our Center has completed five successful years since the reorganization of the Faculty Development Office in 1998. We could not have accomplished this without the participation and support of faculty, staff, and administrators at NIU, and the hard work of our Center staff.

As part of the five-year wrap up, our staff conducted numerous focus groups during last year to identify faculty needs, and the Center also prepared a comprehensive assessment report reviewing all our programs and services. The focus groups and the assessment effort have been very helpful in identifying additional needs and improving our programs and services to meet your needs. We value your feedback and we will continue to do our best within the budget challenges currently faced by all of us at NIU.

As some of you may know, effective July 1, 2003, the services provided by the Office of Teaching Assistant Training and Development (TATD) were transferred from the Graduate School to our Center due to the challenges presented by the budget reductions within the university. We are grateful to the staff of TATD for their contributions to the training and development of graduate teaching assistants during these past four years. We value the important role graduate teaching assistants play at NIU and we will do our best to continue the services the Office of TATD had established for teaching assistants. We also seek your support as we absorb these additional responsibilities in these difficult budget times and work towards establishing the necessary programs, resources, and services for them.

We wish you a productive academic year, and sincerely hope you will continue to benefit from our programs and services.

– Murali Krishnamurthi

## Fall 2003

### Inside this issue

January 2004 Teaching Effectiveness Institute 1

Message from the Director 1

Service Learning: A Collaborative Learning Approach 2

Service Learning (Continued) 3

What Happened to Blackboard? 3

Use of Visual Multimedia Material to Enhance Instruction 4

Grant Recipients 4

## Do you know?

Faculty Development has a number of videos on teaching and related topics that you can check out for teaching purposes.

Check "General Resources" section of the Faculty Development website at <http://www.niu.edu/facdev> for a list of the videos and other instructional resources available for faculty from the Center.

Why is service learning or community-based learning as it is frequently called, a collaborative approach to learning? Because to make it a successful learning experience for students, service learning must involve the combined efforts of the instructor, community sponsor and the student working together.

## What is Service-Learning?

It is integration of course content with hands-on activities outside of the classroom through service (students working in the community) to apply what they've learned in the classroom. It is a wonderful tool for reinforcing learning. If it is conducted appropriately, service-learning can: help students gain a deeper understanding of course objectives, meet community needs and/or build upon community assets, and develop sustainable college-community partnerships.

## What are the Benefits of Service-Learning?

- Students learn better when they have the opportunity to actively apply their learning and reflect on the application.
- Introduces students to civic engagement that is supposed to a part of the higher education.
- Gets important work done in the community that might not get done otherwise.
- Enhances relations between the university and the community.
- Increases the relevancy of education to students 'living in a real world.'
- Empowers students as learners, teachers, achievers and leaders.
- Teaches positive values, leadership, citizenship and personal responsibility.
- Teaches job skills and prepares students for careers after college.
- Invites students to become members of their own community (Sibley, 2003).



## The Importance of Reflection

A key component of a successful service learning course (and one that is vital to its success) is that the service activities in which the students participate should illustrate, affirm, extend, and challenge the content and skills they learn in the classroom. The way to ensure this is through student reflection. It is the process of examining and interpreting experiences to gain new understanding. It can be done in the form of a journal, final paper, class presentation and more. There should be a scheduled time during class for students to reflect upon and discuss what they are learning in the community (Barber, Hedin, Station, extracted from Furco (1998)). Students, faculty and their communities are all responsible for the success of a service learning experience. How can you, as their instructor, ensure success? The following guidelines serve to clarify the requirements.

## Faculty Guidelines for Facilitating Successful Service-Learning

- Create a syllabus that articulates the relationship between service and academic objectives and outlines how students will engage in the service activities. Keep in mind that they have a full load of course work in addition to your course.
- Select and contact community partner(s) to initiate the service-learning relationship.
- On the first day of class, inform students of the service-learning course component and their required commitment. Emphasize the importance of finding placements early to allow for flexibility in meeting hour requirements.
- After students are given a thorough orientation to the service learning process, they should complete a contract or commitment form indicating their understanding and agreement to participate in service-learning.
- Become familiar with the service site(s) and monitor student participation throughout the semester. You as the instructor must keep in contact with both the student and the placement sites, acting as a liaison and offering support.
- It is imperative that you include reflection activities throughout the experience, both individually, and through communication with other students. Have a vehicle and format in place for students to report on their experiences throughout the semester (Colorado State University's Office for SLVP Faculty Manual, 2003).

## Student Requirements for a Meaningful Service-Learning Course

Students must also take responsibility for their learning. In order to get the most out the experience, students should:

- Find (or choose from a list) placement and arrange hours with a service site by the deadline established in class.
- Complete a contract that the student, agency sponsor, and course instructor sign.
- Be prompt, willing, and respectful at their service site, and respect the confidentiality of the people they serve.
- Be willing to learn about cultures and lifestyles that differ from their own.
- Fulfill all duties agreed upon in their commitment form/contract and with their site supervisors.
- Speak with site supervisors if they are uncomfortable with or uncertain about their responsibilities.
- Participate in class discussion regarding the service-learning experience.
- Participate in the course evaluation process.

## Additional Student Activities to Ensure Success

Additional activities to build into a service-learning course for creating an optimum learning experience could include:

- Students journal weekly their reflections and observations about the service learning experience
- Students design the contract including mandatory components e.g., agenda, hours, and sponsor/student expectations.
- Have students prepare an accompanying final display poster that includes photos, project description, outcomes, etc.

- Students take pictures of their activities. (These can be used in a display poster, and to prove that they participated).
- Hold mandatory service learning orientation and progress report meetings.
- Have students write a reflective essay that synthesizes theory and practice, and is a reflection of their experience.

The community organization that a student works with in a service-learning endeavor is also responsible for making it a worthwhile and successful experience. If the community experience is in a sophisticated environment and the student's work there is taken seriously, it should promote in the students a sense of responsibility and the validity of the effort. Additionally community partners should be expected to:

- Orient students to their mission and goals
- Provide work that is meaningful and valuable to students
- Provide training, supervision, resources, and feedback
- Ensure a safe work environment and reasonable hours

Service learning might provide a better learning experience, but it does not make the teacher's work easier. Setting up, conducting and evaluating an initial service-learning project requires an investment of time and energy. Despite these drawbacks, university faculty, students and their surrounding community will reap the benefits: hands-on learning for the students, getting work done in the community that there might not be funds for otherwise, and building a rapport between the university and the surrounding community. The combination of service to the community, a well-planned course design, structured learning opportunities and thoughtful, provocative reflection are the formula for its success.

## Resources

G. Sibley, *Service Learning Coordinator, Western State College of Colorado, Gunnison, CO*

Furco (1998). *Service-learning: A Balanced Approach to Experiential Education Expanding Boundaries*

Corporation for National Service, Contributed by Jo Ann Campbell, Community Outreach and Partnerships in Service-learning, Indiana University

Colorado State University's Office for Service-learning and Volunteer Programs (SLVP)

The FDIDC periodically hosts service-learning workshops, the last in the summer of 2002. If you would like a copy of the materials distributed at that workshop, please contact Christa Dallmann at (815) 753-2516. You can also find more information in the service-learning section of the website at <http://www3.niu.edu/facdev/teaching/teachlinks.htm>

## What Happened to Blackboard?

Faculty who have used NIU's Blackboard Course Management System were in for many surprises as they began to update their summer and fall courses. In early June, the campus upgraded Blackboard from version 5.5 to version 6.0. While the fundamentals are similar in both versions, 6.0 offers some promising enhancements.

One of the more useful improvements is the addition of an Assignments option in each Content Area. Faculty can type instructions, provide examples, assign point value and attach files to the assignment. Students access, complete and submit the assignment electronically. Blackboard automatically places a link to the submitted work in the grade book. The faculty member can then click on the grade book item, view the student's assignment and assign a grade. That grade is automatically recorded and reported to the student. The special assignment option sorts student submissions by individual assignment and provides the option for faculty to copy or move all files in one operation--a great advantage over the old version where files needed to be copied or deleted individually from the instructor's digital dropbox.



Another feature allows for more flexibility in delivering exams and surveys. Tests are now deployed through the Content Areas. Faculty can opt to have questions delivered individually or all at once, open the exam in a new browser window, prohibit backtracking, and several other delivery choices. Grades from exams delivered through Blackboard are still recorded automatically in the grade book but this spreadsheet has several new features that make it more useable. The best new function of the grade book is that scores from an external spreadsheet can now be uploaded into the Blackboard grade book. Faculty who wish to do more advanced weighting are advised to export the Blackboard grades to Excel.

But change does not come without learning. Since menus have changed and access to features has shifted, users may have to take some time to explore the new features to transition to the new version. Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center (FDIDC) staff have created a series of handouts that outline the various features of the new system. Handouts are available online and include FAQs as well as short tutorials. These guides link from the *Faculty Help* button on the Blackboard login page at <http://webcourses.niu.edu>. Please check out the materials regularly as we have plans to add and improve our selection throughout the semester. FDIDC offers workshops on Blackboard and other teaching-related topics.



Multimedia has been used as an instructional tool for quite some time at every level of education. Who cannot recall the use of sound recordings (voice and music), filmstrips, 16mm documentary films, and more recently VCR and DVD to enhance education? These media can allow instructors to enhance demonstrating practical applications of abstract concepts beyond verbal description and/or reading.

As an instructor for a general education course in Community Health, I have used video footage to demonstrate a specific method of transmitting germs by playing a segment from the Hollywood motion picture 'Outbreak'. In presenting the Public Health Model for Unintentional Injuries, news footage of recorded vehicular accidents has been used to more concretely exhibit consequences of failing to interrupt the transmission of damaging energy to a host (driver, passenger). The use of popular media can sometime elicit a greater emotional response and possible improvement in recall from students than a more objective, choreographed, and controlled demonstration.

While the primary reason for using such materials should be based on sound pedagogy, factors that restrict or impede the ease of use can be the overriding determinant in the decision-making process. Barriers can include failed efforts to obtain needed videos at crucial times in the semester, thus disrupting lesson plans, the need to ensure that one or more videos is safely transported to class, cueing up the appropriate video sequence(s), orchestrating multiple technologies (computer, VRC, projection unit), experiencing technical difficulties with equipment, and lacking knowledge of 'Fair Use' regulations so as to not to infringe on copyright.

A partial solution might be to digitally capture the needed video for later use. With the appropriate knowledge of software and access to the required hardware, video capture and encoding can be a relatively easy procedure. Faculty who have received training at Faculty Development's Digital Multimedia Studio are now incorporating video in both classroom and webpage settings. They include faculty in Engineering, FCNS, Biology, Education, and Anthropology.

The process of saving a digitized video file will vary depending on a number of parameters. Because files rarely are small enough to be stored on floppy diskettes, a list of alternatives include Zip disks (100 or 250 mb), CD (700 mb), or DVD  $\pm$  recordable diskettes (4.7 gb). The last option, DVDs, allow one to organize and order sizable video clips in a menu format, containing both titles and the lengths of each segment. What this means for the instructor is the ability to capture needed video for a future class, easily transport a diskette (CD or DVD) instead of bulkier videos, interface with fewer pieces of electronic equipment, and more easily making a video clip selection.

Despite addressing most barriers, faculty should be aware of other impediments that now become salient: Will the instructor's classroom have the appropriate facilities to handle this technology? Is the equipment in working order? If video is to be streamed from a website, will students be able to view it without a broadband connection? Is use of the multimedia material protected by principles of 'Fair Use' in either classroom or online setting? For more information on video capture, encoding, and saving, please contact Multimedia Coordinator, Dan Cabrera (753-0613).

## Grant Recipients for July – December 2003

The following were awarded Supportive Professional Staff development grants:

Diana Kraft (University Health Service),  
Jason Richardson (Information Technology Services), and  
Lucy Robinson (Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Sciences).

The following were awarded faculty development grants:

Melanie Baumgartner (School of Theatre and Dance)  
Michael Duffy IV (University Libraries),  
Eric Johnson (School of Music),  
Pamela Nelson (Literacy Education),  
Angela Powers (Communication), and  
Carl von Ende (Biological Sciences).



Michael Day (English) received the David Raymond Grant for the Use of Technology in Teaching sponsored by Mr. David Raymond (former trustee), Provost's Office, and the NIU Foundation. Congratulations to all the recipients!