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ABSTRACT

The abstracts in this volume describe innovative approaches to teaching and learning in the community college. Topics covered include: (1) the use of message mapping for speaking and writing instruction; (2) group projects and portfolios as evaluation tools; (3) helping students become strategic learners; (4) using writing assignments to ensure that students read class materials; (5) using indicators of excellence in institutional outcomes assessment; (6) utilizing technology for professional development and daily communication tasks; (7) a project to help teachers share ideas; (8) the functions of a community college Ombudsman Service; (9) college orientation for new students; (10) providing feedback to students with a word processor; (11) strategies for improving lecture format classes; (12) assigning relevant writing topics based on current events; (13) the validity of prerequisite courses for student success; (14) difficulties of using a controlled vocabulary in electronic research; (15) team teaching; (16) competencies classes; (17) improving teaching effectiveness through self-observation; (18) having students create posters of main ideas of readings; (19) an institute for intercultural understanding to promote diversity; (20) tutoring services at an innovative learning center; (21) the value of interdisciplinary studies; (22) using electronic mail as an evaluation tool; (23) teacher-student collaboration in writing instruction; (24) teaching research skills through interviews of English as a Second Language students; (25) using community-based writing assignments in introductory composition; (26) feedback sessions to discuss exam results with students; (27) strategies for establishing wellness programs; (28) integrating study skills into the college curriculum; (29) grading collaborative activities; (30) the role of grammar in developmental writing classes; and (31) a staff retreat for improving communication skills. (BCY)

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VOLUME XVII, NUMBER 1

INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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Message Mapping: An Instructional Tool for Speaking and Writing

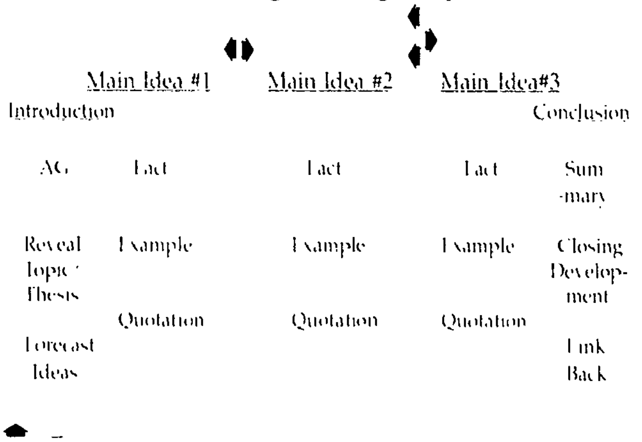
"Ahhh...I see what you're saying."

The message map is an instructional tool that helps students adopt a receiver-centered perspective by producing a visual "map" of the message they are trying to deliver—whether oral or written. Maps help students establish a holistic image of the message with a better understanding of its logical structure, encompassing and surpassing many of the functions traditionally attributed to speech or essay outlining. Students have used the maps to facilitate the writing of research papers, news articles, and essay exams; and to structure informative and persuasive speeches in classrooms and business settings. Message mapping is an essential tool for the communication teacher's "tool kit."

Basics

The message map is intended to represent a visual image of the message a person intends to communicate, whether through speaking or writing. If a speaker or writer constructs a message map with the following basic elements and the receivers can reproduce a similar map while listening or reading, communication has been successful. Though the message map can be made increasingly complex as the sophistication of the message grows, at its most basic level, message maps grow from the following model:

On-Target Message Map



There are three major elements of any message map: the introduction, main ideas, and conclusion. For the introduction, the communicator is prompted to include three key elements: (1) attention "getters," usually a visual image relevant to the topic, (2) revelation and development of the topic/argument with definitions or background statements as needed, and (3) a main idea forecast. The conclusion section contains very similar elements: (1) summary of main ideas, (2) closing development of topic/argument, and (3) a visually oriented link back to the introduction attention "getter." The main idea blocks (as many as necessary) are worded in grammatically parallel terms to make the structure clear and tightly focused; elements of a credible message—facts, quotes, and examples—are to be included under each main idea. With this structure, students completing long research efforts weave numerous facts, quotes, and examples into the fabric of each main idea. Arrows drawn between the blocks remind the student of the need for summary/forecast transitions as the message progresses.

A completed map includes the basic elements pictured here with a bulleted statement to cue the student as to the information to be included in a given segment. For example, if a student was writing an essay on Martin Luther King, she might have a bullet under a main idea focusing on his writings which reads: "Q-Letters from Birmingham Jail." This bullet would show the student where in the message they are including a quotation.

In practice, the student would begin the construction of a message by focusing on the main ideas and supporting material. The introduction and conclusion are generated last. This development sequence helps to bypass the writers block or speech anxiety that often plagues inexperienced communicators. As the student develops the main ideas with supporting elements such as dramatic examples, startling facts, or compelling quotations, he or she begins to think of these elements as logically interrelated building blocks that can be shaped to meet the needs of the audience. Significantly, some of the research that generates these

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building blocks is conducted before the map is constructed, but glaring gaps on logic or support, as visually displayed on the map, prompt the student to do further research. Additionally, the map stimulates critical evaluation processes as students are encouraged to consider each element of the map as independent thought capsules that can be moved or modified as the message takes form. Put simply, whether writing or speaking, students are less "tied to the text." This occurs because the space available for ideas on any map is extremely limited, and this helps students avoid focusing on the complexities of grammar or paragraph construction during the planning stages of their message. Rather than getting committed to a paragraph, students learn to brainstorm with bullet phrases that serve as visual referents on the map.

As a second major step, the student constructs the introduction and conclusion blocks. Typically, students have already found useful attention- grabbing pieces of information during their research that work well in both the introduction and conclusion. Revealing the topic and presenting a thesis/purpose for the message becomes much easier with the main idea structure clearly displayed. Further, the forecast of the message structure or argument is simplified by mapping, particularly if one insists on grammatically parallel main idea titles. The conclusion is equally as straightforward, with its summary of main ideas, closing development of topic or argument, and link back to the introduction attention getter.

To complete this basic message map, all that remains are the arrows, drawn to remind the speaker or writer to develop transition statements. These arrows are drawn from the bottom of each main idea column to the top of the map and are capped with branching arrows to indicate main ideas to be summarized and forecasted by that transition. For example, in a message about the availability, scheduling, and interviewing problems of a job placement service, if a student saw a transition arrow after the second main idea that had two heads pointing to the prior main ideas and one to the next, the transition constructed might sound like this:

> Clearly, we can see students having problems with the placement service's availability and scheduling, but an even more critical problem arises as students begin to interview.

Once the map is constructed, the speaker or writer is ready for the communication event. From the message map, the extemporaneous speaker can deliver memorable speeches, the essay exam writer can compose effective answers, and the student author can construct cogent papers.

Benefits

The message map, when viewed as a holistic message model, facilitates the development of particularly well-organized messages, freeing the instructor to focus on other important communication issues such as prose or delivery. Moreover, since the map draws the student's thoughts toward the receiver (remembering that the map is actually a graphic representation of what is happening in a receiver's mind as he processes the message), the depth and appropriateness of the supporting material tends to improve. Students recognize their own logic flaws as the core logic of their message is taking shape on a single sheet of paper with nothing but the essence of each idea or each bit of supporting data serving as the building blocks.

A particularly salient instructional benefit is that message mapping helps students overcome the communication anxiety that leads to stage fright for speakers and writers block for writers. When students have a sense of confidence in the substance and organization of their message, the anxiety that draws their attention to superficial things, such as gestures or specific word choices, tends to diminish.

Conclusion

The message map is a flexible tool; however, limits do exist. For subjects such as creative writing or oral interpretation, mapping may not be appropriate—it may be too structured. Nonetheless, in our experience, we have seen creative writers and dynamic speakers effectively organize superior messages using this technique. Overall, maps have been useful tools, facilitating instruction, targeting significant skill issues, and increasing learning.

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Suanne D. Roueche, Editor

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Showing What They Know

Ever had the nagging suspicion that two weeks after the exam your students do not know what they have learned? I had always used a traditional lecture/discussion format in my marketing principles course and evaluated with objective/essay exams. My justification was that marketing principles, like many other courses, has terminology and methodology that must be mastered. But I think I always knew there was some problem with my "if I have taught it, they have learned it" mentality.

At a recent conference on competency-based assessment, no one else seemed to like the lecture/exam format either. Local employers who served as program advisors continually complained of recent graduates who could not write a report, make a presentation, or work cooperatively. Students complained they were reduced to memorizing definitions rather than learning skills for the "real world." I needed to find a way to assess that would allow students to experience problem solving in a group, give them practice reporting their ideas to others, and provide them with an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of marketing principles to potential employers.

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I decided to reform my syllabus to eliminate traditional testing and replace it with a series of group and individual reports. Students would compile final reports into a portfolio; in the meantime they would practice working in groups, learn to write reports, and have a tangible product to show potential employers. Since I had used portfolio assessment successfully for several years in business writing, I was confident I could make this method work for marketing principles.

The Projects

To introduce basic concepts and develop group cohesion, groups worked on in-class case analyses during the first weeks. Students developed solutions to the marketing problems presented in the short, end-of-chapter vignettes. After a lecture on how reports are compiled and used in the marketing world, students made brief, oral reports on case findings.

In order to get to know the students better, I assigned an autobiographical memo, focusing on goals and achievements, as the first portfolio project. We talked about reader focus, document purpose, appropriate style, and memo form. After I reviewed the drafts, students rewrote the memos until they were satisfied with the final product. When the piece was ready, it went into the portfolio.

Next, the groups began a collaborative library research project. This project required groups to research potential target markets for a fund-raising organization, to select the most advantageous one, and to substantiate their decision in a three-page position paper. The reference librarian conducted mandatory workshops on secondary research methodology for marketers. For the month-long project, groups met one class period per week.

In class, students organized and delegated the tasks of the project within their groups; outside of class, students researched and wrote their papers. I helped interpret research materials, directed further research, and lectured on the mechanics of persuasive writing. I functioned as editor by reading student drafts and making comments on additional information that was needed, organization of information, effective substantiation of arguments, and overall form. When groups were satisfied with the final product, they filed a copy of their paper into their own portfolio.

The third project was site location study for a retailer, and it was also a group undertaking. This was the most comprehensive project of the term and required four components: an executive summary, a competitive analysis, a traffic pattern analysis, and a sales forecast based on population composition and density. Students used out-of-class time for field work; I used in-class time for activity coordination, explanation of methods of data collection, and draft reviews. Students submitted interim progress reports. Conducting conferences with individuals and groups was an integral part of this project, and class time was used for this purpose. Research groups presented oral reports on their recommended locations; the other groups evaluated their findings and methods through discussion after the presentations. The students and I worked

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together to fine tune the reports before placing them in the portfolios. The goal was to produce reports that were professional in both content and form.

Finally, I requested several individual projects be completed and included in the portfolio: a memo to the vice president of marketing critiquing a competitor's marketing strategy, a memo to a potential client developing a pricing strategy for a service organization, a sales letter to a defined target market promoting a magazine subscription, and a letter to a customer recommending a media schedule.

As we covered the corresponding text chapters, I used these projects as demonstration devices. For example, we discussed pricing methods in class before they worked at home developing a strategy to put in the memo. I provided samples of the memos and letters they were to be writing. Again, students submitted drafts for me to edit. I pointed out how to increase readability, use marketing terminology effectively, and write concisely. When each student believed that a final form was achieved, the work went into the portfolio.

Students submitted portfolios for grading during the last week of the term. I requested drafts be included to assist in evaluation. I envisioned the student's portfolio to be the showpiece of the course.

Reactions

I found it difficult to "let go" of exams, but I was very impressed with the significant body of quality work students had produced in their portfolios. I was able to look at their work as a whole and see how effectively they had integrated course content, writing skills, decision-making skills, and group skills.

These projects truly demonstrated what the student had learned about the subject. As I was able to evaluate growth in knowledge over time, the grading process was fairer because it was a more accurate measure of actual performance in the course.

In spite of the extra work of editing and holding conferences, the portfolios had many advantages from a teacher's perspective. By giving students more control (via groups and opportunities to rewrite), they were more committed to the projects, assessed their own work, and performed more effectively. All students became active learners. I had more chances to provide meaningful feedback. Students read and acted on the feedback because they wanted to improve their work and earn a higher grade. My classroom was an enjoyable place to be, as there was the sense of community within the groups that develops when individuals work toward a common goal. I became a partner in my students' learning.

This is not to say that problems did not exist; these were challenging tasks for community college students. Many underprepared students were unable to meet project criteria. Some were unwilling or unable to commit the amount of time the work required. As the portfolios were not due until the end of the term, many students procrastinated and experienced a time crunch at the end of the term. Sometimes they revealed inadequate preparation by a lack of cooperation in group work; often, they directed their frustration at me.

Although there were some student complaints, ranging from "the whole thing was too much work" to personality conflicts within groups, students seemed satisfied overall with the outcomes of the course. Most were justifiably proud of their accomplishments, as demonstrated by their portfolios. One student used her portfolio during a transfer interview and received credit for the course in transfer. A number of students submitted portfolios at job and internship interviews.

But the most common reaction was the sense of control and ownership the students found in the course through this grading mechanism. They determined when the product was ready for "the marketplace," and they experienced the amount of work that is often necessary to achieve a project goal.

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As a result of this experience, I have refined the process. Now, I provide sample portfolios and specific evaluation criteria in written form, invite former students to discuss the course with current students, and review portfolios in individual conferences at mid-term. Group leaders must now provide weekly progress reports.

This method of evaluation is the best way I have found to achieve my original goals for students: have an active group experience, improve business writing skills, and demonstrate knowledge of marketing principles.

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Suanne D. Roueche, Editor

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Innate Ability Versus Acquired Ability: A Student Dilemma

"What good is trying, I'm not good at math!" "It wouldn't matter if I put in more time studying English literature, I just can't understand Shakespeare!" "Why go to the writing lab, I'll never learn how to be a good writer!" Students with these beliefs about their abilities are less likely to make the time and expend the effort necessary to learn the material or skills being presented in their classes. They are less likely to use effective learning strategies and are more likely to give up and abandon learning tasks they find difficult. If you do not think that your efforts will make a difference, why try?

Many college students view their abilities, or lack of abilities, as innate and fixed characteristics. While many of our abilities and talents are innate, many are not. Many, and perhaps most, of our abilities develop over time and are heavily influenced by learning and practice. We are not born knowing how to ride a bicycle, but most of us were able to learn and develop this skill to a greater or lesser degree. To do this we had to believe that we could learn to ride a bicycle, we had to put in the effort necessary for us to learn how to do it, and we had to practice so that we could develop the skill to a level necessary for the type of riding we wanted to do. Notice that the first step was believing we could learn how to ride. What if we did not think we could learn this skill? What if we thought it was innate—you are either born with the skill to ride a bicycle or you are not! In this case, the person would not try to learn how to ride because they already "knew" they could not do it.

Self-Efficacy for Learning

Self-efficacy refers to students' beliefs about whether or not they are capable of succeeding at particular academic tasks and learning. Students with high self-efficacy, or a strong belief in their capability to reach learning and performance goals, evidence greater effort and persistence on academic tasks, particularly when the tasks are difficult. Students with low self-efficacy evidence lower persistence and may even avoid the learning situation or learning task. For example, a nursing student with high self-efficacy toward developing a plan for patient care would regard a "difficult and crotchety" patient as a challenge to be mastered. Since the nursing student believes that he can master this task, he would be likely to strategically assess different care options and try the one he felt was best. If this did not work, he might feel some disappointment, but he would not give up. The student would rethink his analysis and come up with a different approach. How might this scenario differ for a student with low self-efficacy toward developing a plan for patient care? This student might not even want to try to develop a plan because he is convinced that he cannot do it. A student with low self-efficacy often does not even attempt to complete many academic tasks or assignments. If he did try to complete the task, it is also far less likely that he would persist after one or two failed attempts. Now this student has another experience that tells him what he already "knew"—"I cannot do this type of task; I'm just not good at it!"

Many students with low self-efficacy believe that their abilities are fixed. This belief has powerful negative effects. It can also become a self-fulfilling prophecy: students who believe they cannot perform a task do not try very hard, fail or get low grades and have another reason to believe they are not good at this type of learning or performance. The next time a similar learning situation or performance task occurs, these students will be even less likely to believe that they can do it.

Characteristics of a Strategic Learner

To be successful learners in a college setting, students need to become strategic learners. Strategic learners are able to take significant responsibility for their own learning. Strategic learners can set realistic, yet challenging learning goals. They can use knowledge about themselves as learners, the tasks they must perform, their repertoire of learning strategies and skills, their prior content knowledge, and their knowledge of the context in which they will be expected to use new learning, now and in the future, to help them select effective ways to study and learn new information and skills. Strategic learners can also use executive control processes to create a learning plan, select methods to implement it, use the plan, monitor their progress, and, if necessary, modify their goal or the approach that they are using. However, these different types of knowledge, strategies, and skills are not sufficient. Strategic learners must want to learn. Effective learning requires the integration of skill and will components. Motivation and positive affect for learning derive from and interact with many factors. These factors include goal setting, analysis, and utilization; efficacy expectations; interest; and valuing.

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Students' beliefs play an important role in their becoming strategic learners. Strategic learners take more responsibility for their own learning, which requires that students believe they can take more responsibility for their own learning. Again, to improve one's learning-to-learn strategies, students must believe that they can become more strategic learners. If students believe that how one learns is wired in at birth, or a function of fixed intelligence, then they will not be likely to work on learning skills. Only if they believe these are at least partially developed abilities will they make the effort to learn and use them.

Suggestions for Helping Students Develop More Accurate Beliefs About Acquired Abilities

- Discuss with students their assumptions about the skills and abilities needed to succeed in your class. Putting their ideas into words (and awareness) and listening to the thoughts and discussions of class members can be productive experiences.
- Provide opportunities for experiences that will challenge students' beliefs. Nothing succeeds like success and seeing the results of one's own efforts.
- Invite students to share experiences about how they accomplished a task, such as studying for a test or working a difficult homework problem. Highlight the role of effort and the use of strategic learning strategies in the examples provided by the students.
- Provide feedback that stresses effort or developed ability. For example, if a student improves on a test, say something like, "Great! The effort you put into studying really paid off." Avoid general statements that could be interpreted as referring to fixed ability or intelligence, such as, "Great! You are good at this type of problem" (rather than you have been working hard and it shows in your improvement or performance).
- Help students develop effective and efficient study and learning strategies so that they have the tools they need to help build their confidence and create positive learning experiences.

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Writing "Reading Applications"

It has been a long-standing dilemma. How can I convince technical college students to read their psychology text? How can I help them understand that the textbook is a valuable resource which can help them gain a foundation in basic psychological principles? What activity would show them that what they learn from their text can be applied to their lives?

For the past several years I have been using an activity which seems to be effective in helping students see the usefulness of their texts. It also requires that they actually read assignments—at least parts of them. They must write a "Reading Application" for each reading assignment. This is a sentence completion activity which includes the following sentence stems:

- The one most helpful specific idea I can personally use from this chapter is...
- The way I plan to use this idea or put it into effect is...
- When I use this idea, I will benefit by...
- In order to use this idea effectively, I will need to share my plans with...
- One "muddy point" I found in the chapter is...

[This assignment is required, but it is not graded. There are no right or wrong answers. Providing students with handouts containing the sentence stems results in more uniformity in the appearance of the papers and makes the task of reading the papers easier.]

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Students often struggle to make personal applications to the first one or two reading assignments because the initial material is primarily introductory in nature—presenting psychology as a science, describing some of the historically significant events in its development, and spelling out the various methods of objectively observing behavior. Among the common themes to emerge from applications of the introductory readings are the need to be more objective about the behavior of others and to recognize and appreciate individual differences. The benefits cited include being less opinionated and better informed, and getting to know people better.

As the course content becomes focused on topics such as learning, emotion, motivation, and perception, students are more involved in making the reading material work for them. Typical applications include the following sentence completions:

- The one most helpful specific idea I can personally use from this chapter is the use of a token economy to bring about changes in behavior.
- The way I plan to use this idea or put it into effect is to develop a behavior modification plan to get my three-year-old daughter to go to bed without a fuss.
- When I use this idea, I will benefit by having quiet time in the evening so I can get my studying done.
- In order to use this idea effectively, I will need to share my plan with my husband so that we can be consistent in how we deal with our daughter.

Child-rearing is a frequent topic among older, nontraditional students. Parents in the class are often excited to share the value of behavior modification in getting their children to engage in various expected behaviors. Bedmaking, completion of homework assignments, and tantrum reduction are all positive behaviors which my students' children are engaging in as a result of their parents employing goal-setting and reinforcement techniques.

Once the reading application is written, students are often eager to share the results of carrying it out. It is rewarding for a student to tell of extinguishing an undesirable behavior in his or her child by putting a learning technique to use and a thrill to observe the student's obvious self-satisfaction. And, the other students are much more convinced of the value of the readings because testimony to that value is being provided by "one of them."

Perhaps most gratifying are the applications written on the readings related to emotional stress and abnormal behavior. Often, a student comes to recognize an unhealthy or inappropriate personal behavior and identifies steps to remedy it. Many students, after reading the material on abnormal behavior, gain a greater tolerance of people. They seem to understand that there is more to "fixing" emotional disturbance and behavior disorders than an individual's desire to change. Students, after writing a reading application,

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can see the importance of changing their own behavior or helping someone else seek out counseling or other assistance.

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Paying attention to the frequency of themes and topics used by students in this sentence completion activity has increased my understanding of what textual material is most useful, and consequently, most interesting to them. It has provided me with some guidance as I revise the course syllabus and determine what to emphasize in the course.

In addition to being an effective teaching tool, I have found that these reading applications provide me with another means of getting to know my students. As they write, I come to understand some things about them that I might not learn otherwise. The assignment allows me to write a brief comment or suggestion to reinforce the student's understanding or further clarify a concept. It serves as a quick way to increase my interaction with the student and fosters some in-depth, face-to-face discussions. Sometimes a student will become so involved in a particular circumstance or situation that she will use it for several of the reading applications. In so doing, a deep understanding of how psychological principles can be applied to one's life is often achieved.

This activity is only one way to help students see the value of reading the text; it is simple to implement and does not require a large amount of student or instructor time. It also is useful in informing the instructor of student needs and interests, and it can be employed effectively in course revision and updating.

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A Pleasant Approach to Outcomes Assessment: Indicators of Excellence

Central Florida Community College has undertaken a new and comprehensive approach to accountability through a process of involving every college employee with a detailed series of indicators that seek to measure every area of the institution. The mission statement of the college provides a broad general umbrella from which 12 strategic goals are produced. These 12 general objectives provide the foundation for 48 specific and quantifiable Indicators of Excellence. These 48 barometers relate to the summary goal: "the improvement of teaching and learning and improvement of services to support the instructional mission of the college."

The Indicators of Excellence are quantifiable barometers that establish realistic goals for each area of the college. They are measurable, quantifiable, objective statements about college characteristics that are the results of an ongoing planning and evaluation process; they are attempts to assess the quality of every institutional component and area of the college operation: e.g., instructional areas, student services, fiscal operations, the physical facility, and community relations.

This list of indicators is distributed to all college employees annually. At least annually, and often more frequently, analytical data provide an accurate picture of where the college stands with regard to these indicators. Therefore, this list also documents where the college stands in achieving each goal and progress toward each over the last several years. The success of this endeavor builds slowly and increases in direct proportion to the number of employees involved in development and assessment of each barometer.

All employees—custodians and career service people to the president and trustees—are involved on a regular basis in attending to these indicators. Staff meetings periodically examine the indicators and progress made in each area. When data indicate that a goal has been reached or exceeded, college personnel responsible for that area elevate and modify the desired outcomes, establish new goals, and/or discard existing ones.

All goals require review and approval by an institutionwide committee responsible for the Indicators of Excellence. This committee monitors and reviews the indicators on a regular basis. Additions, deletions, and modifications to the indicators occur after examination and approval by this committee. Planning, management, evaluation, and budgeting are closely tied to the indicators and do not take place without regard to these barometers.

These major objectives, or indicators, have come from many sources. The State Board of Community Colleges has established some measures of accountability for Florida's 28 community colleges; these measures are included as indicators. Federal requirements, state regulations, and grant application guidelines have provided numerous others. Still others have come from contemporary literature about community colleges—*Building Communities*, bulletins from the American Council of Education, and contemporary journals. Guidelines from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and specialized accrediting agencies, as well as suggestions from the administration, faculty, and staff also have become indicators.

***

CFCC's Indicators of Excellence

- **The Transfer Mission**

  CFCC graduates attending the state university system will have cumulative grade point averages (GPAs) equal to or exceeding the GPAs earned by other community college graduates in the state university system.

- **The Career Preparation Mission**

  Ninety percent of all occupational and technical programs will have an annual graduate placement rate of at least 70 percent.

- **The Basic Skills and Developmental Mission**

  A minimum of 80 percent of postsecondary occupational and technical students enrolled in basic skills programs will successfully complete their developmental program.

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- **The Community Education and Community Service Mission**

  A minimum of 90 percent of the responses of surveyed area businesses, industries, etc., will indicate satisfaction with the business and industry programs available at CFCC.

- **The Access Mission**

  The proportions of degree/certificate-seeking African-Americans, Hispanics, and other minorities will equal the proportions of degree/certificate-seeking whites who graduate.

  The proportions of minorities, including women, employed by the college should equal the proportions of minorities in CFCC's service district.

- **Grades**

  The average number of withdrawals and incompletes for all credit courses at CFCC will not exceed 25 percent of the total enrollment in all credit courses for a given term.

  During a given academic year, the mean grade point average (GPA) of enrolled students in each degree/certificate program will not fall below a 2.0 GPA or better.

- **Achieving Student Satisfaction**

  A minimum of 90 percent of the graduates surveyed will indicate satisfaction with curricular activities, inc ding overall instruction, delivery, and content of courses, programs, and services.

  Ninety percent of students surveyed will indicate knowledge and awareness of the programs and activities available at CFCC.

- **The Faculty**

  Full-time faculty will teach a minimum of 55 percent of the FTE (full-time equivalent) generated by college credit courses.

  Faculty entry salaries shall be in the top 25 percent of the community college entry salaries in Florida.

- **Institutional Support**

  The college foundation shall provide at least 150 scholarships for 150 students each year.

  The annual ratio of security-related incidents to the total number of students will not increase.

  The number of arts/cultural events sponsored by the college/college foundation will remain constant or increase annually.

***

When employees develop, refine, and assess indicators, they develop a sense of ownership in the goals, in their particular area of responsibility, and in the college. The indicators have become a way of life at the college, and many employees have taken considerable pride in institutional accomplishments and become unofficial, but competent college public relations spokespersons.

Working with the indicators is a journey along a road of progress and development within the college. Frequently, the college may approach the destination; but the station usually is located just over the next hill or just beyond the little valley. The realization that this journey is both constant and ongoing causes a sense of community and shared ownership within the college.

William J. Campion, *President*

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Suanne D. Roueche, Editor

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The Joys of Being a Club Advisor

In April 1993, morale at our college was terrible. The semester teaching load had been increased from five to six classes, and raises were a distant memory. I had recently applied for two national grants and had been rejected. My mood was grim; my attitude toward my career depressed.

Then one day an administrator came to my office to ask if I would take on a new responsibility—serving as advisor of Phi Theta Kappa, an international honor society for two-year colleges. She was brave, and she was also lucky that I did not verbalize my first thought: "You must be kidding!" I knew next to nothing about the group, but I did know that I did not want to do any more work without compensation. Yet I really liked this person, and my instincts pushed me to say yes. I guess I thought a new experience might be good for me and for my work, and I could always back out.

Now, one year later, I look back at my ignorance and am amazed. I had no idea how much extra work I was taking on. Phi Theta Kappa is an intensely active international group. The enthusiasm of advisors is infectious. Before I knew it, I was squeezing in teaching and grading around my Phi Theta Kappa activities.

A lifelong wallflower, I suddenly found myself in a leadership role. I have led membership drives and hosted inductions each semester; networked across campus to search for funding and to seek out service opportunities for members; set up shop in my office to sell T-shirts, sweatshirts, M&M's, and first aid kits; and completed extraordinary amounts of paperwork. Because of the demands on my time, my anxiety level often has skyrocketed. Even my dreams at night have been taken over by planning activities. And this summer I will make the hour-long drive to campus twice a month just for Phi Theta Kappa activities, even though I will not be teaching.

Perhaps I sound like a person obsessed. I am! I have found a wonderful new outlet for my talents. Despite the extra work, there is no question that I would do it all over again.

I have found new energy that affects everything I do. I have made a wonderful new friend in my co-advisor. I have become involved with my school in a new way; I feel a real sense of spirit and commitment that was lacking before. I have gotten to know more students and to know them in a more personal way through meetings, fundraisers, get-togethers, and out-of-town trips. One of my students, who was also a PTK member, said after taking her final exam that she would have cried if she thought she would not see me again. Such an experience is not unusual; I have met advisors from all over the United States who say: "Kappans are your friends for life" and "Being a PTK advisor is the best thing I've ever done."

I also have gained some technical skills. I learned how to "mail merge" mass mailings, for example, as well as how to get things done on campus, from reserving a room to scrounging for available funds.

There also have been some unanticipated professional rewards. I entered an international competition to lead a seminar at PTK's 1994 summertime Honors Institute in Ypsilanti, Michigan—and I was one of the winners! Because of that honor, my school paid my way to the international convention in Anaheim, California. And those experiences led to a personal regional award.

Taking on additional responsibilities as a club advisor can help an instructor grow. That is what has happened to me, and I look forward to leading my organization and its members to greater heights next year.

Evelyn Beck, *Instructor, English*

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Reconsidering Reading Quizzes

The reading quiz offers advantages to teachers struggling to get their students to class on time and prepared to discuss the assigned reading. Starting the class period with students composing well-developed paragraphs in response to a quiz question gives them writing practice relevant to course objectives, focuses their attention on the text they will be discussing during the hour, and encourages preparation for class.

The course syllabus advises the students to expect a reading quiz on most reading assignments. While these writing assignments could be given as homework, the advantage of having the students think through this material immediately before class begins would be lost, and the students would miss the practice of writing under some pressure.

Reading quizzes in my classes are all open-book, so questions involve some analysis and are unanswerable for the student who has not read the text. Students use their books because I require them to incorporate at least one direct quotation into their responses, which is a technique they will be required to master when composing their essays. They gain practice early with searching the text for evidence and bringing that evidence to bear on some problem. If I have assigned a short story with the intention of ultimately requiring an essay on character analysis, then my quiz question might be: "Select one of the major characters in Alice Walker's 'Everyday Use' and discuss in a well-developed paragraph that character's most notable trait." If preparing for an essay analyzing setting in a story, the assignment might be: "Discuss in a well-developed paragraph the two or three adjectives that best describe the physical setting of James Joyce's 'Araby.'" When time is up, I always begin discussion with the quiz question; sometimes I begin the class by reading one or two of the responses aloud and asking the class to react.

Students do surprisingly well when responding to a question on a story they have not yet discussed. These paragraph responses are mini-themes and are excellent preparation for the essays the students will write later. If students can gather and present evidence from their reading to develop responses to these quiz questions, then they will be prepared to compose other essays (or responses to essay examination questions). The best way for students to learn to write is by writing, regardless of discipline. Requiring students to write almost every class period affords them critical practice they must have to master analytical writing. These quizzes are excellent opportunities for instructors of all disciplines to practice writing across the curriculum.

My students look forward to showing me they have read the text with some care. They gain writing practice appropriate to the requirements of their essay assignments; and I am able to identifiy obstacles to writing about literature before the first essay is assigned, focus the students' attention on the text under discussion, and encourage timely class attendance in a positive manner.

Philip N. Cooksey, *Dean, Humanities Division*

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Suanne D. Roueche, Editor

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Using Media to Deliver the Message

Distance learning instruction is routinely delivered via Internet, cable TV, multi-media, CD-ROM, fiber optics, loaned audio cassettes, and ITFS, to name but a few methods. Speculation about future delivery mechanisms sounds like science fiction. We are witnessing a revolution in teaching and learning.

Yet when we look beyond the curriculum, when we examine the ways in which we communicate with our staff and students on a daily basis, we often are decidedly low-tech. We are still comfortable with writing a memo, printing and mailing a class schedule, sticking a post-it note on a flier, or calling a meeting. We readily associate innovation and technology with instruction but manage our own administrative affairs in a more conventional fashion.

If we have the technology to make instruction more exciting and meaningful, should we not use the same technology to make our professional development activities and daily communication tasks easier and more enjoyable? Many colleges do, and we offer some examples here.

Communicating with Adjunct or Part-Time Faculty

There are more than 200,000 adjuncts nationwide. Almost two-thirds of all community college classes are taught by adjuncts, representing 30% of all credit instruction and nearly 100% of non-credit classes. In California, we often call them "freeway fliers," educators who teach part-time at one or more community colleges, often logging 100+ miles a day to teach classes at several locations for different employers.

Often (and unfortunately) they are hired at the last minute; given a syllabus and a cursory orientation to the college, division, or department; and told not to worry. Professionals such as lawyers, accountants, and managers, brought on board to teach because of their discipline expertise, can only shake their heads when given such poor preparation for their first teaching assignment. When this situation occurs, college statements about educational excellence, caring attitudes, and valuing staff contributions are hollow and self-serving.

Nor should we become smug just because we have developed a thick adjunct faculty manual. It will probably be reviewed in haste by the harried adjunct, who gets no better sense of his new job or employer. Burying the adjunct in a mound of policies and procedures will not cause learning to take place in either teacher or student.

One innovative attempt to reach and orient this often underserved but vital contributor to our educational efforts is a recent video package from St. Petersburg Junior College, entitled "Excellence in Adjunct Instruction." The program offers three video components on teaching in a community college, preparing for successful teaching and learning, and responding to diversity. Augmenting the videos are printed guides for both the prospective adjunct and the institution.

The videos touch all the important points without making them location-specific, thus allowing individual colleges to fine-tune their orientation activities around the St. Petersburg tapes. Issues such as ADA legislation, ethics, sexual harassment, standards of professional conduct, college support services, and ethnic and cultural diversity are handled in a professional manner. The real-life situations and scenarios allow the viewer to relate immediately to the issue at hand, and the printed adjunct guide augments the visual presentation in an effective way.

Many college orientation programs for adjuncts decentralize the process, making it a departmental challenge (or problem). Incorporating this video package into the local orientation process ensures that each adjunct will undergo a uniform experience, and the burden of repeating materials each time a new adjunct is hired is greatly reduced.

Developing Faculty and Staff

In a recent keynote address before the annual conference of the Association of California Community College Administrators, President Steve Mittelstet used examples of videos produced at Richland College (Texas) to illustrate their approach and commitment to staff development. The excerpts were informative and humorous, and they gave the impression that the college was a caring and fun place to be.

In one videotaped sequence, administrators partici-

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pated in a demonstration of how campus e-mail worked. Slowly but surely, they mastered the nuances of logging in, sending messages, and replying to others. By the end of the sequence, they agreed that this was an efficient and effective way to communicate. But as the camera panned back in the final shot, while the administrators were agreeing that it was a good exchange of electronic information, they were revealed to be in the same room—all the computers were located on one table.

This use of television as an orientation tool did more than address policies, procedures, or how to "do it." It gave the viewer a sense of the culture of the organization, how employees felt about working there, and how they did not take themselves too seriously.

Reaching Out to Students and Staff

When Maricopa Community College District implemented interactive television for distance learning, a coordinating committee was created to schedule use of the system among the colleges. To reduce travel time, the committee meets electronically on the very network it manages. The Maricopa Electronic Forum is a computer-based, asynchronous bulletin board open to students and staff. Recently, students throughout the district electronically debated the pros and cons of an upcoming bond election. Phi Theta Kappa chapters at the various campus locations communicate on-line. Currently there are 80,000 accounts throughout the district, all linked to Internet.

At Palomar College, technology is used to communicate with students on the PASS (Palomar Automated Self Service) system. At various locations throughout the district, students can swipe a Personal Identification Card through a card reader to gain information about the college, student activities and services, the current semester schedule, their prior academic history, and information on eligibility for grants and financial aid. Interactive laser disk technology, combined with mainframe access, has eased the burden of front-line student services personnel who formerly performed these tasks.

Palomar's Educational Television Department also produces documentaries and "infomercials" for academic departments and services offered to the community. These electronic brochures serve as broadcast "commercials" for our academic programs and are used with traveling VCR's in outreach efforts in malls, shopping centers, and community locations. Local municipal governments and school districts also have availed themselves of the college's TV production capabilities.

Summary

We have become a nation of television watchers. Declining newspaper circulation rates prove it. If TV is the way in which we absorb information, then using video as an instructional delivery mechanism, as a communication tool for our professional and staff development activities, and as a tool for administrative transactions and student information access, makes good sense.

George R. Boggs, *Superintendent/President, Palomar College*

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A Gift for Teachers

As teachers, we work behind closed doors. Our teaching successes—and our failures—are our secrets, even if we do not want them to be. When something happens in the classroom that seems to work—a teaching strategy, or a solution to a problem that actually *does* solve the problem—there are few ways to celebrate. And when one of our colleagues strikes gold in the classroom, we have no way to benefit. Their doors are closed also.

The Developmental Studies Committee at Jefferson Community College decided to open those doors. Stealing an idea and a name, we decided to create an occasion for teachers to share ideas that work in their classrooms and to invite their colleagues to celebrate, listen, and exchange ideas.. We called our celebration GIFT—Great Ideas For Teaching.

We sent invitations to all faculty members, asking that they submit short proposals outlining successful teaching strategies. We explained that they would be presenting their strategies in five 10-minute sessions; colleagues would move from session to session, sampling a smorgasbord of teaching ideas. We sent the invitations and waited and waited. The deadline passed, and we had only a handful of responses. So we extended the deadline, sent new invitations, and engaged in some arm-twisting. Finally, we had enough proposals.

Despite the underwhelming initial response, GIFT was a success. About 30 faculty attended, and 10 of their colleagues presented. The presenters represented a broad cross-section of the faculty. Titles included: Writing: A Moveable Feast; Using Improvisation in the Classroom; Relation Techniques; Using Film and Video Clips to Illustrate Important Concepts; and Visualization Strategies for Helping Students Solve Math Word Problems.

Each presenter was assigned a numbered station with table and chairs. Handouts were stacked on the tables, and overhead projectors and other audio-visual equipment were set up at the stations. A moderator explained that faculty members could select any station for a 10-minute presentation. At the end of the 10 minutes, a bell would sound; the guests were to move to another station, and the presentations would be repeated. After 90 minutes, the final bell sounded, but many of the participants remained to discuss the presentations among themselves and with the presenters.

Given only 10 minutes, presenters found they had to trim their ideas to the essentials. One presenter said he thought he had done a better job with 10 minutes than he would have with 60. "You really cut to the essentials," he said. "And, frankly, most people in the audience don't walk away with much more than that anyway. I just tried to get them interested. If they *are* interested, they can ask for more information or read more on the subject."

After the first GIFT, 91 percent of the respondents gave the highest possible grade to "degree of usefulness of information," 96 percent gave the highest possible grade to "level of sufficiency of information," "knowledgeability of the presentation" and "overall quality of the presentation." Asked if they would recommend the program, 96 percent said yes. Asked if they could apply the information, respondents added such comments as, "All the ideas were wonderful" and "definitely."

The GIFT program was repeated a year later. Twenty-five faculty attended, and nine of their colleagues presented. Topics included: Grin and Pair it—Success with Paired Classes; The Use of Games in History; Dream Analysis in Psychology 110; and With Taste and Style—Researching International Foodways. More than 90 percent of the attendees who evaluated the presentations gave them a grade of A or B. The GIFT program gave creative teachers a chance to show off and share; it also helped faculty shop for ideas that may help them become more creative in their own classrooms.

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Authors' Postscript

GIFT was an idea taken from the Annual Convention of the Speech Communication Association, which hosts "Great Ideas for Teaching Speech"; Raymond "Bud" Zeuschner from California Poly State University who created the format; and Kerry Reynolds from Lake Tahoe College who created the acronym.

Michael Ginsberg, *Developmental Studies Committee*
Patricia Case, *Developmental Studies Committee*

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A Neutral Third Party: The College Ombudsman Service

The Ombudsman Service was established four years ago at El Centro College because a growing number of students were having difficulties resolving issues and concerns. For example, verbal confrontational approaches often were unsuccessful, and issues finally had to be resolved through formal means. Students needed an approach that was non-threatening and outside formal resolution channels.

Purpose

The Ombudsman Service provides an expeditious, informal, confidential level of problem solving and conflict resolution for students, faculty, and staff. It is based on the assumption that most members of the college community, if given the tools and the opportunity, will prefer to settle differences peacefully, through civilized dialogue and facilitated negotiation. Our practical experiences and informal research have convinced us that when conflict resolution occurs **before** disputants are forced into formal disciplinary hearings or grievance proceedings, the potential for productive, continuing relationships is greatly increased.

Reactions to the Service

Students, faculty, and staff have used the Ombudsman Service extensively. Students come with problems that range from frustrating bureaucratic hassles to perceived or real classroom inequities. They also seek mediation for student/student conflicts. Some students are self-referred; others are referred by faculty and staff.

Division deans, faculty, and staff bring problems and concerns about student behavior, intra- and inter-division faculty relationships, perceived or real inequities, and supervisor-supervisee misunderstandings. They also seek mediation for serious conflicts or differences.

There has been a decrease in the number of formal grievances filed by students and a respectable number of threatened student and employee grievances have been resolved informally.

Conditions for Success

Formal evaluation responses and informal feedback reveal certain conditions that seem to contribute to the success of the Ombudsman Service:

- The Ombudsman must be a credible, well-respected expert in facilitation/mediation. She/he must be thoroughly familiar with college policies/procedures (including sexual harassment, personnel evaluation, and student disciplinary/grievance policies and procedures).
- The college president and other campus leaders must demonstrate a belief in and support of informal, no-fault problem solving as both an expectation and guiding principle of the organizational culture.
- The Ombudsman must be able to respond quickly to "crisis" situations.
- The neutrality and objectivity of the Ombudsman must be protected by a neutral reporting line (in our case, to the college president) and not viewed as belonging to a particular division or area.
- The Ombudsman Office must be located in a neutral area where all clients have easy access. The office must be large enough for four or five people to engage in discussions or meetings.

The Ombudsman Service is being expanded to include a diverse panel of five conflict resolution specialists who will be available to clients who express a preference for gender, physical ability, age, or race representation. The panel members are full-time counseling faculty or student development administrators. What started as a reasoned experiment has met a need and is working.

Wright L. Lassiter, Jr., *President*
Bettie Tully, *Counselor/Ombudsman*

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College Orientation for New Students

Central Florida Community College serves approximately 6,000 students in a tri-county area. As with most two-year institutions, CFCC serves a diverse student population. These students range from the displaced homemaker who has earned a GED, to the honors student who wishes to save money before transferring to the university, to the factory worker who has been laid off, to the student who has recently located to the Central Florida area and English is not his/her first language. To effectively serve this broad constituency, CFCC Counseling Department has developed an orientation program which recently has been recognized as the 1993 Florida Association of Community Colleges Student Development Commission Exemplary Practice.

College Orientation is a one-credit-hour course required of all degree-seeking students at CFCC. Regardless if students are transfer, or first-time college students, if they are planning to attend full- or part-time, all need to be familiar with the college's policies and procedures.

CFCC counselors attempt to ensure that prospective and new students understand the admissions procedures. Everyone requesting information is given a "Getting Started" handout which outlines the initial steps degree-seeking students must follow before attending orientation. Once these steps have been completed, the Records/Admissions office invites students to the academic advisement/registration portion of orientation, at which time they will register for their classes. "Getting Started" sessions, one hour in length, involve representatives from admissions, financial aid, and testing; from special programs such as Student Support Services, Displaced Homemakers, and the Educational Opportunity Center; and from any academic disciplines that wish to publicize particular programs. At the end of the session, applications are accepted, financial aid packets are distributed, and placement test appointments are made.

Seven Advisement/Registration (A/R) sessions are scheduled each term and accommodate approximately 75 to 150 students. The sessions are offered during the day, evening, and on weekends. At the beginning of each A/R session, an institutional research questionnaire is distributed to identify demographics of the entering class. Differences and similarities between degrees are explained, and majors are discussed. The CFCC catalog is explored. Counselors review deadlines, withdrawal procedures, grade point average computations, core classes, course descriptions, course schedules, and full-time/part-time hours. A video on using the phone registration (OSCAR) is included.

Students are divided into smaller groups according to their majors and meet in separate areas. One counselor is assigned the Associate in Science/health-related occupations, and another is assigned the Associate in Science/non-health occupations. Students pursuing an Associate in Arts meet with two counselors. During the smaller sessions, degree programs and academic requirements are explained in detail. University parallel program students are divided into specific upper-division majors (architecture, agriculture, business, education, nursing/P.T./O.T., pre-med/pre-vet/chemistry/physics/biology/pharmacy, pre-law, etc.); preprofessional requirements and the transfer process are explained. Transcripts are evaluated, and graduation checks are conducted to determine the courses still needed for graduation.

At the end of the first day of orientation, all students register for their classes. Each group's time is staggered to decrease the amount of waiting time. The first day's activities take approximately five hours.

As part of their class schedules, students register for the second seven-hour portion of orientation. Again, students have a choice of weekday or weekend times. During this session, students are introduced, via a 15-minute presentation, to key campus people and resources such as Minority Affairs, Student Activities, Student Support Services, Community of Scholars/Phi Theta Kappa, Career Placement/Co-operative Education, Security, and EOC. In addition, students are given tours of the CFCC campus and the Learning Resource Center and Skills Lab. At the end of the day, students take a multiple-choice test on academic degree requirements and CFCC policies/procedures, and are given an assignment to complete within the first two weeks of classes. They are asked to read *Student Success Secrets* by Eric Jensen and write a 500-

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word paper on study skills, or research the career of their choice and write a 500-word essay. A grade of "S" (satisfactory) or "U" (unsatisfactory) is awarded to each student, depending upon attendance, the results of the multiple-choice test, and the completed assignment. The Counseling Department conducts Group Academic Advisement Sessions to review academic requirements during subsequent semesters.

Students report that they are more familiar with CFCC policies and resources after taking the college orientation course. They know how to select appropriate classes, use phone registration, withdraw from a class, apply for graduation, and who to see if they have problems. Exit surveys indicate that more than 90 percent of CFCC students are now familiar with campus offices and resources.

Peter Barbatis, *Director, Counseling*

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* * *

Snap Profiles

Composition students have come to expect the predictable: a number of assigned essays, a series of group projects, and an instructor who follows the syllabus. Try whetting your students' appetites for observation, concentration, and personal profile writing with this surprise tactic.

The first time I experimented with this strategy, I chose the department secretary to make an annouced visit to the classroom. She wore three or four memorable accessories that I provided: a flamboyant hat, unusual glasses, a leather jacket, etc. She carried a late registration card, along with a cartoon-style Snoopy folder, a textbook, and a foreign language dictionary. She appeared suddenly, 20 minutes into the class session, and asked for another instructor. She was insistent but did not stay more than two minutes.

After the surprise visitor's exit, the class members were divided in their reaction. Some laughed at her eccentric appearance; others were perturbed and wondered if she was unbalanced. Before any further conversation, I asked the students to list six characteristics they observed while the mystery guest was in the classroom. Then we compared notes and tallied responses on the board.

The students who participated in this exercise amazed themselves and me by recalling extensive details about a visitor they observed for only a few moments. They recalled her height range, hair color, timbre of voice, and accent, and even speculated on age and college major. If these details are examples of what students can glean from a two-minute encounter with a stranger, think of what can be achieved when writing a personal profile of a friend or family member! Their next assignment was obvious: to write a vivid personal profile of someone they had known for many years. Another surprise awaited writers here; it is not easy to describe someone whose features are familiar.

Laurie Alkidas, *Instructor, Composition*

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Suanne D. Roueche, Editor
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Computerized Feedback as a Resource in the Educational Process

One of my pet gripes during my college days was about professors who would return term papers and essay tests with only a grade and little or no comment. Even when the grade was good, I did not know what they liked about the paper and what criteria they had used to evaluate my work. When the grade was not as good as I had hoped, I had no idea what to focus on to improve my skills and score. I thought that while teachers had many papers to grade, they had a responsibility to provide feedback to students in order to nurture real learning.

Later in my graduate and postgraduate training, I was fortunate to work with several professors who wrote insightful comments on essay tests and term papers. One of my favorite wrote copious comments in a beautifully crafted printing style. Through that medium he engaged in a dialogue with his students, critiquing grammar and style, and providing inspiration and deeper insight.

When I began my teaching career, I decided that I wanted to emulate this professor's approach to teaching, but I soon discovered that my handwriting was not up to his penmanship abilities. In college, my cursive efforts had deteriorated to the point that I was encouraged by teachers to bring a typewriter the day of tests and type my essays. I attempted to solve the problem by printing, but that effort was also hindered by a distinct lack of legibility.

Fall semester 1993 I devised a new approach—providing feedback to students on their papers and tests by using a word processor. I could enter my comments on the hard drive and then provide the students with a printout critique of their work. I tested the idea in one section of Western Civilization and got such positive feedback that I implemented the procedure in my other classes and have continued to use it.

I have found the approach to have many advantages. I can type faster than I can write legibly, so the process saves time. The feedback to students is presented in a neat and professional manner. I can enter comments on the word processor and then edit them, making sure that my critique is clear, concise, and supportive. With a permanent record of the critique and the grade, I have a copy of my comments from which to respond to students' questions. Finally, the students can gain a clear understanding of what I am looking for in a paper or on a test and why they have received their grades.

At the conclusion of last semester, I asked students to share some written comments about the approach. One student's observation is illustrative of the general tone of all of the remarks. "I found it to be truly helpful. I wish all teachers would provide this type of feedback. It helped me understand why points were taken off, thus helping me learn more. It also helped me in understanding what you were looking for in my answers, thus helping me study for the next test. I appreciate the work you put into this process. I knew you did not simply scan the tests but spent a great deal of time and thought on each one. When a person has spent a great deal of time preparing for a test, it is appreciated that the instructor also did so in the grading process. Thanks!"

There is one word of caution: be careful about being too critical and not providing some positive encouragement. Perhaps this semester I was guilty of losing sight of this maxim, which is evidenced by this student's remarks: "I really appreciated the fact that you actually took the time to read and thoroughly analyze the papers. It was rather difficult understanding exactly what you wanted us to do; with the feedback I could learn what I could do to improve on the paper. The only thing I found hindering about it was the fact that I felt like I was always wrong, and I couldn't do anything right. It was very discouraging to me. It also, though, helped me reanalyze my idea of good work. I am more critical of myself now and expect better things from myself." With a few more positive comments on her paper, the same instructional goal could have been achieved.

John C. Loucks, *Chair, Humanities Division*

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Course Evaluations: Why Wait to See How You Did?

We tend to think of the course evaluation as a survey administered at the end of the term. Many institutions require this activity as a way to solicit input on instructor performance and monitor course content. This article describes a strategy for avoiding or diminishing the disappointment we may experience upon reading an end-of-term evaluation that includes students' negative feelings and concerns.

Involving the Learners

How many times have we as participants in a class wanted to give immediate feedback to the instructor on how to make the content more understandable or the delivery better? The feeling is common; however, many students/participants will not speak up or write a note. Androgynous training suggests that learners should have a say in how the course or session is structured and how it is being administered. Rather than wait for learners to tell us at the end of the course what they liked or did not like about our instructional methods, we should seek interim feedback.

Interim evaluations serve two main purposes:

- They allow instructors the opportunity to modify delivery style or materials while a significant portion of the course remains to be taught.
- They send a message to students that their input is valued and that they have a say in the learning process.

Evaluation Format

Interim evaluations should tell us whether the course material is meaningful and useful to the learner and should identify the activities that most effectively promote learning. They may ask more open-ended questions than end-of-term instruments.

For example, these questions may be appropriate:

- How are you feeling about this course in terms of its value to you now and in the future? Is there anything else that could be done to increase the value for you?
- Explain your feelings about the depth of the subjects being presented.
- What is the best/most disappointing aspect of this course so far?
- How can it be improved?
- How might delivery of materials be improved?
- Is the instructor providing clear examples to reinforce the material? Comment.
- Comment on the clarity of handouts and supplemental reading.

When to Get Input

The most common time for an interim evaluation to occur is halfway through a course, but an important consideration is the point at which the learners will have a good feel for the course content and objectives. Administering the evaluation too early or too late will defeat the purpose.

Giving Feedback

Students should be given the results of the evaluation right away. They should be told what can and cannot be changed, and why. These explanations will help them feel that the experience was worthwhile. In addition, feedback can change the tone and feeling of the courses.

Outcomes

Finally, interim evaluations help the instructor improve or refine a course at a critical time. The evaluation may take some extra time to construct and to conduct, but the potential to improve the learning experience makes the effort worthwhile.

Terry R. Lowe, *Instructor, Management*

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Suanne D. Roueche, Editor

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Four Strategies for the Lecture Format Class

Over the past 22 years, I have developed many strategies for teaching mathematics in a lecture format. I have found four of them to be particularly effective, with consistent results. They are best suited to the typical classroom with up to 40 students, but could be adapted to larger classes, other formats, and most disciplines.

***

Arrive in the classroom early. Some classes are more "friendly" than others. The time of day, the percentage of disgruntled students (perhaps repeaters), and the significance of the course to student degree plans (requirement or elective) can make creating a rapport with some classes especially difficult. This prompted me to arrive early to the classroom. I would simply be present, near my "command post." The students who sit in front inevitably would strike up a conversation (one reason they sit in front). The most recalcitrant students (in the back) would see this and come to perceive me as a caring individual, perhaps with interests outside of my specialty. After several such sessions, these students often would participate in the discussion and talk about their interests and motivations.

This strategy has never failed. It is easy. By arriving in the classroom at least 10 minutes before the class is scheduled to begin says that you value the class and that you are eager to get started.

Put review problems or questions on the board before class begins. Some basic skills and themes are more important than others. I put four or five review problems on the board at least five minutes before class is scheduled to begin. A problem may go back to the beginning of the course or may review points in the homework which I know are problematic for students.

Students work on the problems as soon as they arrive and as I call the roll. When I do this on a regular basis, more and more students arrive early. This reduces tardiness, which I find disruptive, but which I would rather combat with a carrot than a stick.

My motivation is to keep old skills current, both for the next course, the comprehensive final, and, of course, to maximize retention of the material. The result is that students remember material covered early in the course when it appears on the final examination. Also, the student learns to value all of the course material equally and to realize that the course is not just a game in which you and the student try to move through the most current material as painlessly as possible.

Make every test cumulative. This is related to the second point, but does not depend upon it. I do not require my students to review the text and notes for old material, but I do require that they review all previous tests. I use questions from the old tests, but change the numbers so students cannot simply memorize answers and copy them onto the new test. Without this policy there is no incentive for a student to review a test after it is taken, or to attempt to master unlearned material prior to reviewing for the final. Anything the student did not understand on the first test is irretrievable at the end of the semester. This policy promotes better performance on a cumulative final exam, as well as information retention for the next course.

Give a half-hour test every two weeks. I do not give a one-hour exam at the end of each chapter. A chapter test seems to compartmentalize the material. Students are tempted to avoid studying until they see the end of the chapter coming—perhaps four weeks into the course. Naturally, some teachers use daily or weekly quizzes to counter this particular result, and they may be effective in this regard.

However, testing every two weeks encourages students to keep up with assignments. They know the test is inevitable and regular. The tests are one-half hour in length and are given at the end of a class period. Students do not like to take tests at the end of the period because they want to cram, then come to class and take the test before they forget the material. I tell them that I do not give the test at the beginning of class because inevitably someone wants more time, and I do not have the heart to take the test away. Thus, I lecture on new material first, and let the clock do the dirty work. (I accommodate students with learning disabilities or acute cases of math anxiety with untimed tests at other times.) I counsel students to study regularly and know the material when they arrive in class. If they do, they will make good marks on each test—my experience bears this out.

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A policy of testing every two weeks produces six or seven grades by the end of the semester (no make-up tests are allowed). Because tests and the final exam are cumulative, I allow the final exam to replace two test grades.

***

These strategies promote regular study, encourage mastery of material, reduce overall anxiety about grades on individual tests, and produce better results on a cumulative final examination.

Philip Mahler, *Professor, Mathematics and Computer Science*

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General Education Science: A STAR Approach

The educational opportunities and experiences offered and enjoyed by science and engineering students in the U.S. are among the best in the world. However, educating the non-major college student about science and the scientific process is a pressing problem.

My concern about this problem has led me to examine my own general education physical science class. Students typically come to this class with one or more problems that inhibit the learning process. Many students have an indifferent, if not negative, attitude toward science in general; they lack critical thinking skills and appropriate study skills. In the past, I have used a typical lecture format where several concepts and facts were presented each day in outline form. My expectation was that the students would comprehend the material and understand what science was really about. This expectation was naive. Many students did well in learning individual concepts, but I always felt that most left the class without an appreciation for science or the scientific process.

Several years ago I heard of Project STAR—a program designed to assist the teaching of astronomy at the secondary level. The acronym STAR caught my eye—Science Teaching from its Astronomical Roots. This notion appealed to the amateur astronomer in me. Why not expand the concept even further to a whole course? From past conversations with students and end-of-semester questionnaires, I knew that the astronomy section was the favorite of most students in the physical science class. By applying the STAR concept to other areas, I hoped the popularity of astronomy would spark interest in the entire course.

The basics of this program are very simple. Each section of the class begins with a short discussion of an astronomical concept or observation. The interest (both mine and the students') produced by this concept or observation is used to introduce students to the basic science principles that help them understand the astronomy concept. For example, the idea of different colored stars can lead to the discussion of spectra in general. The discussion of spectra leads naturally to atomic structure. The modern quantum theory is a simple extension of these concepts. All of these discussions can come from one idea that appeals naturally to the students.

The resulting overlap of the basic science principles allows me to clarify the nature of the scientific process. It also allows me to work with the students who have skill problems. For example, critical thinking skills are enhanced by using the overlapping principles to prepare for the next section. That is, I always try to ask the question, "How else can we use this information?" Students' interest in the trigger idea helps to overcome their indifferent attitude. Once I gain their interest, I can address study skills in a positive way.

There are some problems with this approach. Extra time is required to find appropriate readings in the text or supplemental books. Once students become involved, it is difficult (or impossible) to follow an inflexible plan for covering each section. Also, the amount of material that can be covered in one semester is limited. Student feedback has indicated that *quantity* of material covered has been sacrificed for *quality* of understanding—a trade I will make any semester.

In the future, I would like to see a physical science class use other basic fields of study, such as geology, as the trigger subjects in this approach. Certain sections of other basic science courses, such as biology or introductory chemistry, might profit from this approach as well. While it does not solve the national problem of scientific literacy, this method does promote a better understanding of science for students.

Kevin Pennington, *Chair, Natural Sciences*

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Suanne D. Roueche, Editor

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Writing Relevance: The Role of the Assignment

Several years ago when I decided to change careers and become a college writing teacher, I was faced with the task of designing assignments. I remembered as an undergraduate thinking that many of the topics instructors thought were important only touched the lives of the students tangentially and temporarily, if at all. These academic assignments attempted to get students to write so-called academic prose for poorly conceived audiences on subjects about which students had opinions but little information or interest.

Resolving to avoid these assignments at all costs, I began searching for improvements. I discovered that when academic instructors sought subjects from outside the humanities—for instance, in the general news media—these subjects tended to reflect the values or interest of the instructors. Additionally, these assignments avoided or were critical of topics that might well have been of greater interest to students. Last, when instructors did choose assignments on subjects outside of the humanities, the assignments frequently were phrased so abstractly that I had to wonder how well the instructors understood the topics. One especially poor assignment compelled students to write on the subject of leadership, using a ten-year-old, poorly written, and extremely superficial *Newsweek* article. The vaguely worded prompt required students to defend their opinions on an abstract level that appeared to be an impossible challenge for everyone—the instructor and students, especially the younger students.

My background in business, technology, and government convinced me that these writing assignments not only lacked immediate relevance for the students but, more importantly, did not prepare them for anything but the rather narrow and temporary experience of writing for academicians. Therefore, I set about to create assignments that would engage students as well as (1) prepare them for the writing of academic argument, which was, after all, the immediate task at hand; (2) prepare them for the types of writing situations that they would face for the rest of their lives; and (3) give them a sense of the relationship between audience, purpose, and self, the facts which combine to create proper tone and voice—all lacking in their writing.

What evolved was a series of situational and sequential writing assignments designed to take advantage of both current research about the value of writing as a process—including heavy emphasis on drafting, collaboration, peer review, and revision—and classical rhetoric with its emphasis on the forms of presentation. I began with realistic and somewhat controversial situations, mainly based on editorials or letters-to-the-editor from one of the local newspapers. Next, I created stories from them, often beginning with a piece of text, but adding several voices (or characters) to give the various sides of the issue. In order to keep the situations from becoming too ponderous and to provoke some humorous responses, I gave comic names to some of the characters—Peggy Mole and Delbert Moron, for instance—and had them fit comically stereotyped models such as disinterested bureaucrats or self-absorbed public officials. Finally, I presented a problem that personally affected the writers and asked them to frame a response.

One situation, for instance, was derived from a letter-to-the-editor complaining about high school students leaving school for "open lunch" to "drive around, race their cars, and smoke dope." The real letter was highly inflammatory; I copied it very closely, going on, however, to create a scenario that was the result of an outcry from the community for a closed-campus lunch hour. The result—and the reason for the writing assignment—was that the board of education was to consider the issue, and it was the writer's task to take one of three possible positions and convey it to the board. The other characters quoted in this assignment were the members of the board, all of whom were highly stereotyped and had agendas—one member, for instance, was the owner of a fast food restaurant. Such an assignment engaged the students and compelled them to be successful in convincing the board to vote their way.

Another assignment concerned a heavy metal group, called Human Sacrifice, slated to appear in the students' hometown, the mythical city of Euphoria, Kansas. At the eleventh hour, the lyrics of one of their songs created a controversy among the townspeople, several of whom were calling for the concert to be canceled.

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The lyrics, which I invented, had some suggestive imagery but essentially were nonsense. The voices (characters) that appeared in this assignment included a local minister, the newspaper, an ACLU attorney, the self-proclaimed head of a concerned parents group, and the band's lead singer, Maxxi Probe. The assignment was to write to the recreation commission, which was meeting to discuss whether to cancel the band's permit to play. The issues the students generated included freedom of speech, censorship in general, youth-bashing, and hero-worship of entertainers and athletes.

Another assignment concerned the proposed opening of a battery manufactuirng company adjacent to the writer's home in Euphoria. The characters in the assignment included the city's economic development director, the city commission, the plant owner, and various state and federal bureaucrats. Although students were allowed to take any position they wanted, as threatened property owners they were compelled to become their own advocates, and their success once again depended on adopting appropriate strategies and voices to achieve whatever specific goals they designed. I pointed out that inflammatory rhetoric, personal attacks, and highly abstract evocations would not be helpful. The most successful essays addressed the technical, the political, and the economic issues engendered by the assignment and explored workable compromises and solutions.

Some assignments are suited to beginning writers and others to the more advanced, but all follow essentially the same format that is adaptable to almost any discipline. For example, pointed hypotheticals would be especially applicable to writing in technical and business fields, or to writing-across-the-curriculum programs. Whatever the field, students are able to engage in writing situations on a personal level while adopting the objective stance necessary for both real-world credibility and academic writing. They arrive at this point because they have experienced writing with a definite purpose for a well-defined audience, and they have developed confidence in their ability to adopt a measured, mature voice.

Jeff Loeb, *Instructor, Writing*

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International Business Communications Project

Changes taking place in business and industry have created a need for changes in educational processes and curricula. In designing a new course in Professional Communications, we took a strong look at the concept of a team-centered workforce. In addition to standard business letter, memorandum, and report writing skills, students needed oral communications skills—speaking and listening in meetings, presentations, and daily communication—as well as problem-solving and team-building skills.

Students also needed to see the world as a global economy, to communicate and work with individuals of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The area around Piedmont Technical College is populated with such diverse industries as Sara Lee Knit Products, Monsato, Fuji, Pirelli, Kemet, Velux, Capsugel, Greenwood Mills, Pro Med, Kaiser Aluminum, Grede Foundry, Torrington, and Walbar Metals, to name a few. These companies are heavily involved in the global economy and have a need for associates who can address and meet the challenges it poses.

We worked hard to incorporate all industry needs in this course by including a team project requiring a mock business transaction. During the semester-long project, the teams select their countries, divide the work, and research the values, cultural beliets, business practices, and other matters which would aid in doing business with another culture. The final product is a research-based written and oral presentation.

At first, some of the students are reluctant to try team projects, but most of the grades in such projects are higher than the student's individual grades. (An unspoken commitment is that a team grade will never lower an individual student's grade). The students gain skills in listening, speaking, team-building, problem solving, documentation, collaborative learning, research, cultural diversity, creating visual aids, proofreading, report writing, and presenting in groups.

Sara Cushing Smith, *Instructor, English*

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Validating the Effectiveness of a Prerequisite

It was heart-wrenching to see more than 50% of our Anatomy and Physiology (A&P) students dropping out or failing. They spent hours studying, reviewing, and being tutored, but nothing helped. Students would flock into this course, filling every seat. Often our A&P classes were closed before the start of the semester. But by mid-term, many students were not able to keep up and dropped out. The students simply were not prepared.

Although A&P had been considered a beginning biology course, with no prerequisite, the course required rapid acquisition of basic biology and chemistry knowledge before proceeding with body systems. Instructors, in their desire to retain their students, spent excessive time on these beginning concepts, making the course even more difficult as the semester went on. Everyone was frustrated—students, teachers, counselors, and advisers. A&P proved to be a major stumbling block for many of our students going into health-related professions, particularly nursing.

But that has changed. It was decided that A&P should no longer be considered a beginning course; a prerequisite was needed. We created a course to prepare students from different backgrounds and at all stages of learning to enter A&P, ready to assimilate knowledge at the systems level. We called the new course Human Biology, to distinguish it from General Biology, and provided an assessment exam for students who wished to challenge this new prerequisite. Freed from the need to provide a lengthy review of basic biology and chemistry at the beginning of the course, A&P instructors can now devote more time to higher-level material.

Once the prerequisite was in place, teachers immediately noticed that students were no longer lost in A&P. Success rates were higher, and fewer students were dropping out. However, despite the apparent success, students began to complain and challenge the need for the prerequisite. We heard such comments as: "I had biology in high school"; "I completed my biology at another college"; "I had another beginning course you offered"; "This takes me too long to get through my program"; "I'm a good student, why do I need this course?"; "Other places don't have this prerequisite"; "You never used to have this prerequisite."

We realized that it was time to address formally the question of whether the prerequisite was truly serving students and helping them succeed in A&P. To evaluate the effectiveness of the prerequisite, we decided to compare attrition rates in our A&P classes before and after the prerequisite was established. In our study we defined attrition as students withdrawing or receiving grades of D or F. We compared attrition rates among beginning biology courses.

For the past four years, all A&P students have taken the prerequisite. In order to determine if taking this prerequisite truly made a difference, we obtained the grades for all A&P students for this past year and compared them to the grades for all A&P students the year before the prerequisite was established. We also obtained the grades for all beginning biology classes for the past year.

Our results show that students now taking A&P or any of our beginning biology courses have a 65%-69% chance of earning a grade of C or better. When we compared our current A&P grade rosters to those before the prerequisite was in place, we obtained astonishing results. Only 46% earned a grade of C or better before the prerequisite was in place. These results indicate a 50% increase in success and a 42% decrease in attrition for the post-prerequisite group (see Table 1). A subset consisting of classes taught by the same three teachers for both sample years was investigated in an effort to control for teacher variability. Within this large subset (over 50% of all classes), the percentages of success and attrition were comparable to the larger group.

We asked: "Are there more students passing since we established the prerequisite?" Using a chi-square test for two independent samples in a 2x2 contingency table, we found that the difference in overall success and attrition rates was statistically significant at the .001 level of probability.

We also looked at grade distribution for the pre- and post-prerequisite groups and found a 44% reduction in withdrawals and D's, a 66% decrease in F's, a 56%

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increase in B's, and a whopping 80% increase in A's!

As a result of our study, we believe that taking the Human Biology prerequisite positively affects the success rate of students taking A&P. Students have greater success, their learning environment is enhanced, and retention in their program of study is more ensured.

Now when students complain about having to take the prerequisite, teachers feel justified in assuring them that it is important; several quote the findings of our study. It is convincing to say, "We know you have a 50% greater chance of success if you take Human Biology before A&P, and we really want you to succeed."

In addition, the administration is more willing to allocate time, money, and resources to curriculum development and improvement of the prerequisite course. We believe our study can serve as a model for other college departments wishing to validate the effectiveness of any prerequisite.

L. Yvonne Maluf, *Instructional Faculty, Department of Natural Sciences*
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Table 1. Comparision of 16 pre- and 19 post-prerequisite A&P classes in relation to success (A, B, C grade) and attrition (D, F, withdrawal).

Year	#Students	#Success	#Attrition	%Success	%Attrition
Pre	385	177	208	46	54
Post	438	301	137	69	31

Suanne D. Roueche, Editor
April 21, 1995, Vol. XVII, No. 13

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Research in the Electronic Library

One of the most difficult concepts for students to grasp as they conduct library research is "controlled vocabulary." As do more and more libraries, our library has an on-line public access catalog (PAC) for books and an on-line general periodical index (GPI); both require rigidly controlled language as well as accurate spelling. For example, there may be hundreds of articles in the GPI about Generation X, but they are found only under the subject *Post-Baby Boom Generation*. Articles about television violence are located under the subject *Violence in Television*. There are no articles under the subject *Crack Babies*. Instead the library user must search one of the following subject headings: *Children of Drug Addicts*, *Drug Abuse in Pregnancy*, *Crack (Drug)—Influence*.

What makes this situation even worse is the fact that the GPI has virtually no cross references. It is a commercially produced index over which we have no control. The PAC, on the other hand, is produced by our staff and the staff of our county library. Since our librarians are able to respond to the vagaries of natural language by adding cross references, the catalog is user-friendly.

To use the GPI it is important to teach students to think "synonymously." If a student is writing about pigs, a search in the GPI may indicate there are no books or articles on the subject. Perhaps material is listed under *Hogs* or *Swine*. It is even more difficult when the topic is not concrete. Unfortunately, the *Library of Congress Subject Heading Thesaurus* does not reflect natural language either. For example, a student looking for articles about teenagers moving out of their homes and living on their own may have trouble finding information. There are no articles under the subject *Leaving Home* or *Moving Out*. *Independence* produces articles about political issues. *Independent Living* covers the topic of people with disabilities living on their own. In the end, no satisfactory subject heading is located, and the student leaves the library frustrated by the inability to locate material.

For beginning students, it may be helpful to encourage the selection of topics which lend themselves to searching with controlled vocabulary. Generally, the educational objectives associated with library research concern teaching students to locate materials which support a thesis topic. Allowing students to select topics that make research a frustrating and unrewarding experience not only defeats the original objectives but also teaches students that the library is an unfriendly place. On the other hand, carefully selected topics which lend themselves to subject searches with controlled vocabulary are likely to produce a wealth of materials and also give students confidence in their research abilities.

Keyword searching, another component of the one-word databases, is an invaluable but very sophisticated tool which should be used only as a last resort. As the library acquires electronic databases, more and more library users will rely on keyword searches to locate material. Although all electronic databases use rigidly controlled vocabulary to assign subject headings for each item indexed, most users do not have the patience to search subject thesauri for exact terms. Often they lack ready access to thesauri. Thus, searching by keyword is rapidly becoming the norm.

In the PAC and the GPI, the keyword function severely limits the amount of information a library user receives. First, the keyword function of our database does not have full-text capability. Therefore, a user searching by keyword will be able to develop and print a bibliography of pertinent articles, but must return to the regular periodical index to search each article by title to determine whether the article is available as full text in the database. Second, a keyword search is likely to produce a lot of excess material. In English, the same word often has multiple meanings the computer cannot distinguish. A keyword search for *Saturn* will bring up both the planet and the automobile without distinguishing between the two. A keyword search for *REM* found, among other topics, articles about a rock group, psychological discussions of rapid eye movement, and a number of reviews of the work of modern architect Rem Koolhaus. *Panthers* produced a bibliography of 104 articles ranging in subjects from political movements like the Black and Gray Panthers to the panther as an endangered species, a football team called the Carolina Panthers, and a Navy fighter plane. Using *AIDS* as a keyword not only overwhelmed the searchers with several hundred articles about the disease, but also included a list of every article where the word "aids" appeared in the title in any context. Keyword searching is like shooting into a crowded room. You will probably strike your target, but

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you also will bring down several innocent bystanders.

Yet keyword works when controlled vocabulary fails. The previously mentioned search through the keyword function for *Crack Babies* not only provided a good bibliography of material where the term appeared in the title of the articles, it also taught the searcher that the appropriate subject headings used in the GPI were *Drug Abuse in Pregnancy* or *Crack (Drug)—Influence*. Our language changes more rapidly than any computer's subject thesaurus. By using keyword searching, a library user can transform natural language into the controlled vocabulary needed to comprehensively search a database for information.

In the CD-ROM databases that are gradually replacing the paper indexes in most libraries, keyword searching must be combined with a knowledge of Boolean logic. In our natural language, using the connector *AND* creates a larger group. John *AND* Betty are more people than John is by himself. *OR* is used for exclusion. "I will buy the coat *OR* the jacket" implies that both items will not be purchased. In Boolean logic, however, *AND* limits rather than expands a group while *OR* expands the group—Opera *AND* Ballet will produce only the information where both concepts are present while using *OR* (Opera *OR* Ballet) expands the set of information and creates a group where either concept is present. Using the Boolean *NOT* further limits a search. Opera *OR* Ballet *NOT* Symphony will produce a list of articles about opera or ballet, eliminating all the articles where symphony is a keyword. As the number of sophisticated databases increases, teaching Boolean logic may have to become part of any course that requires research.

As the college fulfills its commitment to the electronic library, students, staff, and faculty will be learning together. It will be an exciting time, but critical thinking skills and computer literacy will be essential to avoid the pitfalls inherent in using these new tools. Taking the time to understand the nature of database searching and to master the necessary search skills will ease everyone's transition from paper to electronic sources.

Andrea Caron Kempf, *Librarian*

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Team Teaching for Success

Since fall 1993, we have experimented with students enrolling in one section of an intermediate-level reading course and in an introductory government course simultaneously, the content and text of the government course becoming the content and text for teaching reading. This collaboration was the result of desperation—students who were poor readers were failing the government course at extremely high rates. They not only had trouble reading the text, but their test-taking skills were poor, and their writing skills were nonexistent. However, the individual attention these students needed to develop their skills was often impossible to provide in large government classes.

Thus, the collaboration was born—the reading teacher often attending the government class, taking notes and using them to create examples in reading class and the government teacher often attending the reading classes to offer tips on how to study or to lead current events discussions. What has been the result? We have found that students who remain committed to both classes succeed in both. In the reading class, students learn and develop reading strategies by using the content of the government text and a teacher-produced handbook. Students learn strategies for previewing text, marking text, test-taking, recall, note-taking, and other components of active reading.

We have observed that as students implement these strategies, their increased confidence in their academic ability carries into other courses. However, to date, we have not collected data to document this general observation; therefore, during fall 1995, we will use release time to team teach these two courses in the true sense of the word. Our goals will be to conduct the research needed to examine the validity of this collaboration, to increase communication/coordination and interdisciplinary training between the faculty members, to determine the validity of this academic approach to instruction, and to explore the feasibility of expanding this approach to other content areas.

Barbara Gose, *Professor, Political Science*
Pauletta Augustine, *Instructor, Remedial Reading*

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Suanne D. Roueche, Editor

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The Competencies Class: An Old Idea Reconstituted

In the era of outcomes assessment, the competencies class is a method of teaching that deserves consideration. Simply defined, a competencies class requires students to demonstrate acquired abilities and learned skills. The idea works well in such courses as music or speech, but it can be applied to any subject.

I use it successfully in a class entitled Music for Classroom Teachers. This class is required for most elementary education majors (most four-year colleges require it). Seventy percent of my students come to this class with no previous knowledge of music; that is, they do not sing, and they do not read music. In one semester, I must teach them to do both. The students are informed the first day of class that they will be required to pass a competency test in each of the following areas:

- musical show and tell (demonstrate or explain a musical item)
- sing the class roll call (teacher will select the melody and provide a list of names)
- play the tonette (teacher will select a melody from the tonette book)
- sing/teach a song to the class (student chooses a selection from the text)
- teach a musical game (a book of games is available)
- rhythmatize your name and perform it for the class
- perform a musical accompaniment (students are familiarized with autoharp, piano, and tone bells)
- perform, as required, patschen, African meter, and aleatory music.

I demonstrate all of these skills several times before testing student competency. The students are often very reluctant to perform before their classmates; however, they agree that the ability to perform or speak before peers is essential for success. Not only do the students learn to perform musically, but they learn how to function and interact with other people while they are the focus of everyone's attention.

The competencies do not need to be taught or learned at a professional musician's level. For example, the accompaniment can be performed with two chords (pressing two buttons on an autoharp) and a half hour's practice. The music room is available to students who wish to practice before and after class. The tonette is used to teach music notation and to help the students orient their voices to notated pitches.

On the day a competency is tested, each student puts his/her name and date on an evaluation sheet. I collect and shuffle the sheets then call on the students in the shuffled order. Students receive their evaluation sheets and their grades immediately after performing. They appreciate the instant feedback.

Name Date

Proficiency

Poor Excellent

Foot tap

Pitch and intonation

Dynamics

Note values

Eye contact & enthusiasm

Voice projection & quality

Tempo

Phrasing

Accompaniment

Following instructions

Grade

Students enjoy the competencies class because they learn specific, tangible skills; and teachers like the method because it puts a great deal of responsibility for acquiring each competency on the student. The outcomes are obvious and easy to measure.

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Improving Teaching Effectiveness Through Self-Observation

Teachers are accustomed to being observed by their students, by their supervisors, and occasionally by their peers. However, feedback from these observations is limited. Student reactions usually are not documented until the term has nearly ended. Supervisory observation, for the purpose of overall evaluation, is a limited number of classroom visits, constrained by items on an evaluation instrument. Peer visits may provide more immediate information, but visitors usually observe little more than a slice of classroom life.

Others, through their observations, may point out strengths and weaknesses, but it is only when we see for ourselves that we can internalize and act on new insights.

There are many ways that we can observe ourselves as teachers. Some techniques that offer the most immediate and detailed feedback include student questionnaires, audio or video recordings, and observation sheets.

Student Questionnaires

Teacher-generated student questionnaires tap directly into students' reactions. Typical student evaluations are generic and given near the end of the term. Questionnaires distributed throughout the semester allow an instructor to address specific aspects of course content or delivery and to make timely instructional decisions. A simple list of questions relating to the day's lesson can indicate whether review or elaboration is necessary the next day. Responses to a brief list of questions about a new technique can evaluate the activity quickly. Questionnaires can be tied to a particular classroom activity or to the content of a week-long lesson. The advantage of the teacher-generated questionnaire is that it can be tailored to fit the needs of the instructor. Moreover, students can be asked to submit their own questions or comments on notecards. A bulletin board in a CAI class can provide a useful conduit for information.

Taping

Audiotapes and videotapes can be painfully revealing, but many faculty who have used these techniques admit that they provided valuable insight. Perhaps a better use of these methods, other than dissecting teaching performance, is to use them as tools for discovering what is going on in the classroom. A video camera focused on the classroom-at-large or on students involved in group work can provide useful details. While involved in teaching or working with groups, it is impossible for the instructor to observe all students at all times. Taping can provide some insights into the types of questions asked, amount of wait-time between questions and answers, patterns of interaction in the classroom, use of humor, group roles, comings and goings from class, or off-task behavior.

Observation Sheets

An observation sheet is a useful tool for answering questions about teaching tools and classroom behaviors. For example, an observation sheet can be designed to include categories of questions about patterns of questions and answers; a colleague can use these categories to observe, take notes, and identify answers. An observation sheet can allow the instructor to critique items and activities in the use of class time.

Combinations

Observation techniques can be combined. For example, student questionnaires that ask students to comment on a class activity combined with a taping of that activity can provide an opportunity for a more complete evaluation. Or, using a taped session with different observation sheets can provide a variety of information over longer periods of time.

Conclusion

Self-observation is an important tool for improving one's teaching and attitude. This rejuvenation helps us stay interested not only in **what** we teach but in **how** we teach. Moreover, self-observation is a means of tracking one's development as a teacher and a way of sharing that development with colleagues.

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Suanne D. Roueche, Editor

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Visual Poster as Reading Quiz

Testing students' understanding of their reading assignments and their preparedness for class discussion based on these assignments is often accomplished by brief quizzes at the beginning of class. These quizzes may require short-answer responses to questions about the readings, true-false responses, one- or two-page freewrites, or examples of applications.

After several years of quizzing students and dealing with their concerns about material and questions, I decided to try another approach. Embarking on a particularly complex section of readings about rights vs. responsibilities in American society (in preparation for a research writing assignment), I found several students confused by the scholarly language of some of the readings, and others overwhelmed by the complexity of the social issues in the articles. I decided to make this assignment: Take one reading (of the six for today's class), evaluate it carefully, find the main ideas or topic areas of the article, and make a poster explaining your understanding of the major ideas.

The students' looks of boredom and frustration turned to expressions of stunned surprise and excitement. They asked questions.

Question 1:	"You mean this will be our homework assignment?"
My response:	"No, this will be your quiz grade—visually analyze and explain one of the readings in a poster."
Question 2:	"What kind of posters should they be—how should we set them up?"
My response:	"Any way you like—use colored markers, cut and paste, glue beans in a diagram, sew a pattern, make a collage, present a diagram or chart. They can take whatever form you feel comfortable with in assessing one of the articles. But present the facts in a way that is clear and easy to understand. Be prepared to present these briefly to us at the beginning of next class."
Question 3:	"How will you grade them?"
My response:	"Chiefly by the clarity, the points made (and understood), and the amount of effort demonstrated."

I then presented an overview of the assignment of social rights vs. responsibilities, including potential topical applications to issues such as gun control, capital punishment, smokers' rights, affirmative action, and separation of church and state. The remaining 15 minutes in class allowed students to confer with each other, plan a strategy, or clarify directions.

Then they were on their own to create individual posters. Was I ever surprised! An African American student had outlined a chart of legal cases claiming discrimination against blacks in the workplace, covering a period of nearly 100 years. (The case studies had been the focus of one of the readings.) The case name, date of each, and brief outcome were outlined on a 36"x 30" cardboard poster. Dark, somber colors simulated the serious nature of this issue. All listened attentively while she reviewed these cases and added her opinion about the probable future direction of such litigation.

Could she have done so thorough a job if I had asked her merely to memorize these cases? I doubt it. Based on personal interest and relationship to this social concern, she drew more meaning from this reading than from some of the others, but she also deepened the class's understanding of this issue as we noted her passionate devotion to the topic.

Another student had designed a 30"x 24" poster shaped like the United States. She had pasted photos of babies' faces—African American, Asian, Native American, Anglo, and so on—to the poster and printed the words: "Will they grow up equal?" Then she had printed excerpts from three major political speeches emphasizing freedom and placed them in various locations on her "map"—highlighting the word FREE in each passage: THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS, THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, and THE CONSTITUTION (14th Amendment). She explained that hope for greater equality rests with today's children—an interesting perception growing out of one of the readings.

A third poster addressed gun control, the focus of another article. This student copied a variety of local and national newspaper articles written about her side of the issue, reduced them, and arranged them chronologically in a flowchart on a 30"x 30" posterboard. She had highlighted the titles of each with a marker. As we

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viewed the poster, she pointed out the various positions that some of the newspaper editorials and articles had taken on this issue, demonstrating her observation of slanted writing style as well as media awareness of this social concern.

Most of the other posters were creative, insightful renditions of these readings. I posted them on the classroom bulletin board and walls. Not only could the students visually learn from each other's displays, but posting them served as reminders as we moved through discussions of the readings and into the writing stages of the research assignment. Furthermore, students took pride in seeing their creations valued and displayed for other classes' viewings.

My students' enthusiasm sparked my excitement. It was fun to see what they had created and how they had evaluated the readings. A variety of learning styles must be appealed to in every discipline, and I realized that writing is not always the only—or best—way to teach writing assignments. As students presented their posters, they often generated brief mini-discussions of related issues, reinforcing the readings and our understanding of them.

Students seemed to enjoy the change of pace as well—active involvement made them smile and their eyes sparkle. As opposed to heads-on-hands, quiet responses to my previous short reading quizzes, animated faces and front-of-class presentations enhanced the learning-teaching environment. Though I do not plan to use "visual quizzes" for all reading assignments, I will use them from time to time.

Theoretically, such an approach can be applied to any field of study. This technique is particularly helpful in teaching writing, however. Employing critical thinking strategies of this nature encourages students to think for themselves as they mentally process and visually display the reading material, and to think again as they plan class presentations, so that they achieve a reader-oriented focus.

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Encouraging Students to Form Outside-of-Class Study Groups

During the first class of the academic year, I encourage students to form outside-of-class study groups. In my first year of teaching at Piedmont Virginia Community College, without my knowledge, three students who were friends and who had high grades on each test for the first quarter formed a study group.

In the second quarter and on their second test, their grades dropped slightly, and I asked about them. They explained they had not been able to have their usual study group for the last test. On the next test, the study group was meeting again, and their grades returned to former levels. I decided then to encourage all of my students to form study groups.

Since most students do not know each other and have never been in a study group before, I make several suggestions:

- Students can form study groups with students in any of my lecture sections, with students from any other biology lecture section at PVCC or at the nearby University of Virginia, or with students they have met in any of the biology lab sections.
- There should be a minimum of three students in a study group. (I do not tell them stories of the couple that met in the biology study group at PVCC and later married, or of the friendships they will form in the study groups, but they are on my mind.)
- Study groups should meet weekly and have a meal as part of the event. (Some of my study groups started with three members and finished the year with 15.)
- Students should draw straws to see who calls the teacher with questions while the group is still meeting.

One measurable result of this encouragement is an increase in the number of students who are willing to form groups. It is common to have 40-60% of the students involved by the end of the term.

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Suanne D. Roueche, Editor

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Institute for InterCultural Understanding

The student body at Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) reflects the rich cultural diversity and racial mix of the Baltimore metropolitan area. Diversity is a hallmark of community colleges, which reflect the ever-increasing cultural heterogeneity of the communities they serve. Data on the current racial and ethnic distribution of elementary and secondary students indicate that this trend toward a greater influx of minority students into higher education will continue into the next century. Many of these students will struggle academically unless they are embraced by an open, supportive, multicultural campus.

However, institutional initiatives designed to capitalize on this diversity by promoting intercultural awareness and understanding are not keeping pace. Research has demonstrated that merely mixing students of different backgrounds is not sufficient. Collegewide models are needed to provide students with curricular and co-curricular activities and programs to explore multicultural issues. When afforded these opportunities, students have shown gains in academic development as well as increased intercultural understanding.

The Institute for InterCultural Understanding (IIU) at BCCC was established in 1990 as a part of BCCC's TransCentury Plan, designed to prepare students for 21st century challenges. The IIU is committed to promoting knowledge of the world's cultures as well as appreciation and celebration of cultural differences and commonalities. It has reached out to BCCC students, employees, and community members through workshops, colloquia, and forums on such issues as ethnicity, race, gender, and class.

Recently, the IIU led a two-year Kellogg Beacon/American Association of Community Colleges grant entitled "Promoting InterCultural Awareness and Understanding in Maryland Community Colleges." The grant afforded BCCC and six local community colleges the opportunity to pool and enhance their multicultural resources during a period of fiscal retrenchment. This collaborative effort focused on the areas of staff development, multicultural awareness, and curriculum transformation. The Beacon Project culminated in a statewide Beacon Conference last spring entitled "Cultivating Community and Diversity Among Maryland Colleges."

What factors have contributed to the IIU's success in cultivating a community of communities?

Diverse Membership. The membership and leadership of the IIU are culturally diverse. IIU members who volunteer their time also represent a wide variety of positions. Among the 30 members are a security guard, three faculty members in the math department, the assistant to the president, and a nursing major.

Inclusiveness. Activities and programs typically target the entire college community and, particularly groups that are often excluded, such as evening students, support staff, and community groups.

Institutional Support. The IIU is part of the Academic Affairs Division. This position in the college has provided the IIU with visibility, credibility, funding, and academic integrity. Additionally, the leadership of the college has set the tone by supporting proactive, institutional initiatives that seek to promote a greater sense of community.

Faculty Involvement. Adjunct and full-time faculty have been involved in a wide range of activities and programs—including international fashion shows, diversity training seminars, trips to museums and conferences, and more informal functions such as colloquia and social gatherings. A collection of multicultural resources has also been developed.

Professional Development. Professional development has been ongoing and funded. BCCC has made a long-term commitment to training staff and faculty in cultural diversity. IIU-sponsored programs have ranged from diversity training seminars that focus on individual awareness and institutional change to a series of lectures on diversity entitled **B**-Triple-**C**: **B**uilding a **C**aring **C**ollege **C**ommunity.

The work of IIU confirms that colleges can act proactively and institutionally to expand the comfort zone for all students. The following strategies, however, are keys to success:

• Celebrating diversity and cultivating community must be pursued together—aggressively and sensitively. More focused and less risky activities, such as multicultural welcomes and collegewide meetings, can be followed by programs aimed at more sensitive and emotionally charged issues.

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• Institutional commitment is essential. Commitment, or lack of it, is communicated in many different ways. These include the mission statement, budget, strategic planning, staff development, library holdings, and syllabi. For instance, initiatives aimed at promoting intercultural understanding cannot simply be "added and stirred" into the strategic planning process or "ghettoized" within certain areas, such as student affairs or curriculum development.

• Misconceptions of diversity need to be challenged. Diversity and community are not polar opposites. Diversity on college campuses is an asset to be cultivated rather than a deficit to be feared.

• A research agenda needs to be developed to assess campus climate and identify ways in which it can be improved. Any assessment needs to be collegewide and constantly reevaluated. Anecdotal evidence is not sufficient.

• Partnerships within and between institutions need to be explored and cultivated. Local, national, and international collaborations are now possible through distance learning, teleconferences, the Internet, and other applications of technology.

Valuing diversity and cultivating community is a long-term, incremental, uneven, and slow process. Consequently, it is important for initiatives such as the IIU tc approach diversity as a critical component of quality education. Ultimately, the process must move beyond ghettoization and toward institutionalization. This is accomplished through interdepartmental collaborations, administrative funding and support, numerous and inclusive educational programs, and community involvement.

Richard Bucher, *Director, Institute for InterCultural Understanding*

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The Learning Center: TLC for Students

During the first semester The Learning Center (TLC) was open, a math instructor asked if we could help one of his beginning algebra students. In a few days, a young man came in to work. The student, Doran, felt uncomfortable with the tutors, but worked diligently on the computers for weeks. After some time we got another call from the instructor; Doran had made an A on his most recent exam. We put a flier on the bulletin board: "Congratulations on Your Exam, Doran—Way to Go!" When Doran came back in TLC, he asked if he could have the flier. I felt that perhaps we had hurt his pride with the announcement, but he said, "I want to show it to my wife. No one has ever cheered me on like that before." Doran is one of many successes at The Learning Center (TLC).

TLC's flexibility has allowed it to become a hub for academic support on campus. Geographically located in the center of the campus in the Learning Resources Center, it is open 12 hours a day during the week and a half-day on Saturday. The TLC serves developmental students primarily, but it is also home to a federal grant program and to all tutoring on campus. It has become the campus center for innovation.

Project REACH provided the vehicle that launched The Learning Center. Project REACH, a federal Job Opportunity and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) program, is a cooperative effort between the Department of Human Services and OSU/OKC, which began in January 1994 to help clients whose education had been interrupted. The majority of students who enter the program are single mothers receiving welfare benefits. It is the goal of the program to present instruction at individual levels with the final objective of integrating these students into college and ultimately into a job independent of supplemental income. There has been a very real need to provide a supportive environment for these students. In the evolutionary process of supporting this group, we discovered that the campus population as a whole would benefit from the policies implemented for Project REACH students.

First, we determined that it was necessary to assess students' educational requirements. Some had not completed their high school diplomas; they were candidates for GED study and progressed at their own pace working on computers, in small groups at TLC, and with tutors. Some had finished high school but had not been in school for many years and were not prepared to go directly into college courses. Further utilizing individualized methods of instruction, we created a category called Brush-Up that allowed these students to identify their weak points and specific areas of preparation they needed before enrolling in regular college classes. At various points in this initial period, students would be advised to take the college assessment test to determine which developmental classes in English, math, and reading would be suitable for them. Finally, there were those who were able to go directly into college-level work, and Project REACH staff worked as liaisons between the students and other faculty. Some students have already taken advantage of a mentoring program which allows them to volunteer part-time during the summer in businesses which correspond to their career goals, helping them get the experience they need to make a successful transition between school and work.

Students who entered the REACH program did not walk into TLC ready to participate in a classroom, budget their time, study, turn in assignments and take tests. Many doubted seriously if they were even capable of being college students, and this doubt had to be addressed along with their potential scholarship. Early on we saw the necessity of creating a support system that would be encouraging and enabling for these returning students. The REACH for Success club was organized the first semester of the project. This was a structure in which they could interact as a group; there were picnics, holiday celebrations that included their families, money-raising projects, and community service activities. By the second semester, the REACH for Success club had the largest membership of any student organization on campus. All at once, these students had a voice. Encouraged by this experience, many members began to participate in other groups on campus. Additionally, by this time, students were making the grades that deserved recognition of their scholastic achievement; last semester, the Project REACH students boasted an average GPA of 3.02 on a 4.0 scale.

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Tutoring in TLC helps not only the Project REACH students, but all students on campus. It provides the kind of one-on-one instruction that most classroom teachers would like to give. Some students have been referred by an instructor for help in a specific problem area, while others seek out help on their own. Learning Center students enjoy the advantages of having all their tutoring in a centralized location. Rather than having to go to a math lab, a chemistry lab, a writing lab, and a reading skills lab, and having to establish a working relationship with several tutors, our students can have one or two tutors for all their needs. Students who would rather work on their own can also be assigned one of many different tutorials on TLC's computers. This "attack on all fronts" approach has brought results. Our studies have shown that 85 percent of the students who come to TLC at least three times during a semester make C's or better in all their coursework.

The tutors are invaluable assets, and the tutoring lab is cost-effective. Some tutors can help students in several subject areas, and often a tutor can help several different students at once if they are all working on the same subject. In addition, if a student is unable to understand the explanation of a concept given by one math tutor, he or she can ask another math tutor for help. Many of our tutors are students who have successfully completed the courses in which they tutor, some are adjunct faculty who tutor between class assignments, and a few are retired professionals who volunteer their time.

The Learning Center is the center for innovation on campus. At present, TLC is piloting developmental individualized paced instruction (IPI) courses designed for the non-traditional student population. Because most of our students have full- or part-time jobs and some of have irregular work schedules, we offer courses in which students can progress at their own rate without attending class. In addition, students who are motivated to move through course work quickly can complete two consecutive IPI courses in a single semester.

At present, there are six IPI courses: two in developmental writing, two in developmental math, and two in developmental reading. When students sign up for an IPI class, they are required to attend an orientation meeting during which they are presented with the course syllabus (which has been prepared by the lead instructor in each field) and a course outline (which details the specific requirements of the IPI class). Students in the IPI classes usually use the same texts as students in classes taught elsewhere on campus; they are required to complete assignments in the text, take exams, complete writing assignments, and complete work on the Center's computers which have been programmed with corresponding software. They are encouraged to use the extensive tutoring. Students and instructors use the Center's files to pass messages, and students can place their homework and/or tests in the files for instructors to grade and return.

In an IPI course, classwork is due at regular intervals throughout the semester, but the time frame is more flexible than that of a traditional class. For example, in a traditional class, students may have three assignments due each week; in an IPI course, they may have nothing due until the third week, but the total number of assignments may be greater. Instructors, for the most part, establish regular meeting times for these courses: once weekly during the daytime hours and once weekly during the evening. These courses are not for every student, but they are designed to meet the needs of special students whose schedules would ordinarily prevent them from attending college.

So what does the future hold for The Learning Center? This year we are piloting multimedia applications in the classroom. We hope to teach both faculty and students how to prepare their lessons and research papers on disks using multimedia presentational software. Copies of these disks will be available for check-out so that not every member has to create a multimedia presentation on the research paper and so that any student's research paper can be checked out by another who is studying the same topic. The possibilities in multimedia education continue to unfold, and several individuals on staff are now developing these programs We are encouraged by current programs, but TLC's tender loving care remains the hallmark of its services to all students.

Staff, *OSU/OKC Learning Center*

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For more information on Project REACH contact: Martha Thompson, Coordinator, Project REACH, OSU/OKC, 900 N. Portland, Oklahoma City, OK 73107.

Suanne D. Roueche, Editor

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Promoting Interdisciplinary Studies

Many institutions of higher learning have created programs in interdisciplinary studies. Since specialization traditionally has been the focus of higher education, engaging in interdisciplinary studies requires a difficult shift of consciousness for administrators, faculty members, and students. Specialization fosters fragmentation of the modern curriculum; interdisciplinary studies foster integration and synthesis. The modern tendency to segment areas of knowledge is increasingly seen as artificial, and it is to the students' benefit that educators make the effort to integrate their studies, building on the inherent connections and overlapping content between disciplines.

Students often complain that required courses do not relate to one another nor to their lives outside the academic arena. In response to these complaints, DeKalb College has created a collegewide committee of faculty from most divisions and disciplines to promote interdisciplinary cooperation in the classroom. This committee has pioneered several innovative techniques and course offerings to enable students to create more links between disciplines. On the lowest level the entire faculty was surveyed and asked to list their areas of expertise and to indicate if they had interest in team teaching an interdisciplinary block course (two courses from different disciplines paired and their content thematically linked).

The survey generated a database of faculty and topical areas of expertise under the title *Cameos in the Classroom*; it was distributed to all faculty, who were encouraged to make use of the volunteers as guest lecturers in their courses. Faculty teaching Shakespeare's *Richard III* in world literature, for example, could find faculty members specializing in the Renaissance to lecture on the historical conditions which led to the Wars of the Roses.

Another list of faculty interested in teaching interdisciplinary block courses was distributed to department heads and electronically published on the college's Freeport system, to which all faculty have access. Faculty were provided with a vast list of potential partners for interdisciplinary team teaching and with ideas for innovative interdisciplinary block courses.

The efforts of the Interdisciplinary Studies Committee have been very successful. To date, the faculty have pioneered several interdisciplinary course offerings in a variety of formats. World civilization courses have been paired with humanities courses, English composition with world civilization, American history with political science, world literature with world civilization, political science with speech, and American history with American literature courses, among others. Faculty are now considering pairing psychology with statistics, and sociology with psychology; the possibilities seem endless.

Faculty also have experimented with several alternative ways of structuring these ten-credit block offerings. Courses have been thematically linked by common assignments, such as term papers, yet taught as separate units. More extensive linkage has been made in the English composition and world civilization block, where composition students were required to write about topics and readings from the world civilization course.

The world civilization/humanities and world civilization/world literature block courses have proven to be particularly successful. In these interdisciplinary offerings, the paired courses were completely integrated, with one syllabus and one set of writing and reading assignments. Topics from each course were matched and team taught as one unit. The two paired courses met sequentially on either MWF or TTH, and both instructors were present for the entire meeting time, providing students with multiple, interdisciplinary perspectives on all topics studied.

Assignments also were made to incorporate interdisciplinary perspectives. For example, in the world civilization/humanities block, students were asked to read some Zen historical and religious texts, design a Zen landscape, and then write an essay explaining this design. The perspectives of art, architecture, religion, historical contexts, and composition were united in one assignment. Students read the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and commented on literary aspects which demonstrated historical realities of antiquity.

Possibilities for linking disciplines are present in the subject matter of most courses, and students benefit immensely from these linkages. These initial interdisci-

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plinary offerings at DeKalb help students to retain information longer, master it more thoroughly, and enjoy the process of journeying through the intellectual heritage of humanity. At recent sessions of the annual Social Science Colloquium, for example, the largest percentage of the research projects honored at recent competitions came from interdisciplinary course offerings; the winner of the World Civilization award was a student in an interdisciplinary block course while a recent student in the world civilization/humanities block course has received a commission to create a sculpture for the United Nations complex.

Student responses to surveys indicated that they found this environment much more stimulating and effective than the traditional, and that they realized for the first time in their student careers that information learned in one course was valuable in and related to other contexts. This program is making it possible to create students who are more truly what the ancients referred to as philosophers, or "lovers of wisdom." By fostering connections between disciplines, students will come to know the true meaning of wisdom and be prepared to live in a world which demands not only breadth of experience, but the integration of that experience into a variety of contexts.

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In order to facilitate the creation of interdisciplinary block courses, readers may find the following suggestions helpful:

- Advertise upcoming course offerings well in advance and in prominent locations. Advertisement should be directed to advisors, faculty members, and the student body. Fliers for the courses should be distributed at orientations and prominently located at registration. If possible, faculty teaching these courses for the first time should also visit classrooms to introduce students to the concept of interdisciplinary work.
- Interdisciplinary courses should be listed under a separate section in the schedule of classes, as well as cross-listed under the heading of the respective disciplines involved. An explanatory note should appear under the separate headings of each course alerting students that they must cross-register for the paired courses.
- The computer system should be modified so that students enrolling in one course are automatically enrolled in the course with which it is paired. This adjustment should also apply to withdrawals.
- Ideally, the paired courses should meet sequentially in the MWF sequence. Instructors found the TTH block courses and the longer meeting time to be more difficult for students and instructors.
- If possible, faculty should be given rewards as incentives to promote the program, e.g., release time or additional compensation. DeKalb faculty are now given release time the first time the course is offered, and compensation each additional time the class is taught (limited to one time per year).
- Faculty should be provided occasions to brainstorm with faculty in other disciplines and become more aware of areas of overlap.
- Interdisciplinary reading lists for courses might be developed and assignments made from these lists. Guest lecturers might be brought in to discuss topics related to this list.
- Students might be asked to attend a lecture or other special event on an interdisciplinary topic and discuss the event with the class. For example, students in a literature class might attend a museum exhibit on a historical era relating to a piece of literature they are studying and bring information back to the class.

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All faculty can discover the joys of interdisciplinary cooperation and enhance both the students' perspectives and their own!

Deborah Vess, *Chair, Committee on Interdisciplinary Studies, and Assistant Professor, History and Philosophy*

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Using E-Mail as an Evaluation Tool

An interdisciplinary studies course lends itself very well to group projects and discussions about diverse topics. When I first began to teach Human Thought and Learning, students would give me feedback about what they learned, about how well I presented the material, and how well they mastered the objective for the day. Until this semester, that feedback usually took the form of "one-minute essays."

Since we have a computer network at our fingertips and access to a world of information from our desktops, I decided to try something different. With the help of our campus MIS director, I set up an electronic bulletin board for my 60 students and assigned them the task of responding to my assessment questions. Early on, I had questions about potential problems:

(1) How can I give access to the largest number of students using the smallest number of new user accounts?
(2) Will students respond to the new system as well as they did to the "in class" version since they must go to the terminals on their own time to respond?
(3) Will students benefit from learning how to use the computer as a communication tool?
(4) Because they have to go through the Internet menu to find my questions, will students begin accessing the Internet more often?
(5) Will students benefit from being able to read one another's responses to the on-line bulletin board?

The answers to these questions are encouraging:

- In order to give access to the greatest number of students while opening the fewest computer accounts, our MIS director decided to create one student account, called INTER_STU, and have all students log onto that account to use the bulletin board. This worked fairly well. The only complaint came from one of our newborn computer fans who wanted to receive e-mail. The campus computer experts are now working on providing access for all of our 2,500 students. [Question 1]
- Not only have my students responded consistently, they now remind me to put something on the bulletin board every day before I leave class. Since this is coming from a group of students known generally as "non-writers," with little computer experience, I consider this a real accomplishment. [Questions 2 and 3]
- Once students see the Internet menu, they can't wait to explore. One of my goals for the next year is to get them to use Internet resources to complete other assignments. [Question 4]
- Students seem to benefit from reading one another's responses to the questions. Several of them mentioned in class discussions that they had never looked at a certain issue from a point of view other than their own; reading their classmates' responses appeared to broaden their experience. Another benefit came in the form of improved writing skills. Knowing that others were going to read their work made the students pay more attention to the quality of what they wrote. Since some of them were "non-writers," I encouraged them to work in pairs. Members of each of the pairs showed remarkable improvement on other written assignments. [Question 5]

Computers *can* be used to enhance instruction, but what I hadn't considered before was using the computer for instructional assessment. My students not only mastered the objectives, but they accomplished some other less obvious learning objectives—e.g., improved communications skills, greater tolerance for different ideas, and a higher level of computer literacy. The experience has been good for *all* of us.

Mary Gene Ryan, *Dean, Arts and Sciences*

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Story Time for College Students

I read aloud to my students. Early each quarter, when I say, "Relax and sit back; it's story time," some students snicker. But after the initial grumblings, these same students quickly revert to the responsive posture of grade-schoolers listening to their teacher read an interesting story aloud.

I have never had a research-documented reason for reading aloud, but I have felt it is important for students to hear the beauty of words and the flow of beautiful structure. I want them to relax and lose themselves in a story. Moreover, I want to cover my bases: even if my students don't *read* well, they will at least *hear* well. Plus, the activity lends some variety to the hour and satisfies my own selfish desire to perform.

Recently, as I wiled away an hour in a car dealership, I turned to an article in *Smithsonian* (February 1995), featuring the work of Jim Trelease. One particular passage caught my eye and confirmed my beliefs about the value of reading aloud to students of any age.

Trelease quotes a skeptical father: "Excuse me, sir. Now this I just don't understand. You say I should read to my son, but my son is in the fourth grade, and I'm mighty proud to say he's in the top reading group! Now, why should you read to a child who already knows how to read? Why doesn't *he* just read *his* books and *I'll* read *my* books, and we'll both be happy?"

Trelease responds: "You say your son is reading at a fourth-grade level? Wonderful. But tell me: What's his *listening* level?"

Listening level? "You see," Trelease explains, "listening comprehension comes before reading comprehension, and it's usually two to three years ahead. A child reading on a fourth-grade level may be able to listen to books written on a sixth-grade level. It is the child's listening vocabulary that feeds his reading vocabulary." To illustrate, Trelease reprints the opening paragraph from Roald Dahls' *The Enormous Crocodile*. "'In the biggest, brownest, muddiest river in Africa, two crocodiles lay with their heads just above the water. One of the crocodiles was enormous. The other was not so big.' Now let's suppose a child does not know the word 'enormous.' Which is going to be more effective? Hearing the word in the context of a story, or seeing it isolated from meaning on a flash card? And remember, if a child has never *heard* the word 'enormous,' he'll never *say* the word 'enormous.' And if he's never heard it or said it, it's going to be pretty difficult when the time comes to read it."

Here was the affirmation I was seeking! The difference between reading and listening comprehension is two to three years! Yes, with students enrolled in my remedial courses in particular, I have noticed that, no matter whether they're 19 or 39, their sentences just do not come out right, and they're contorted in ways that defy structural analysis. My students simply do not know how good language *sounds*.

The most obvious reason for their trouble is that these students haven't been introduced to good language: it's not just that they haven't read or written; they have not even had the opportunity to listen. How can they mimic structures and vocabulary to which they haven't been exposed? Their reading skills are too weak for them to read competently, but they can certainly *hear* good language: the beautiful structure in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and E. B. White's "Once More to the Lake"; the poetry in the prose of Eudora Welty's "A Worn Path" and Langston Hughes' "Salvation"; the power of analogy in Dr. Richard Selzer's description of abdominal surgery in "The Knife."

I will continue reading aloud to my students, confident that we are not only having a good time but we are learning structures and vocabulary that are not accessible in any other form.

Margaret Payne, *Instructor, English*

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Suanne D. Roueche, Editor

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Collaboration in Composition

When I first taught composition, I behaved like a writing expert who could not appreciate my students' struggles to create a coherent essay. I gave excellent advice about how one wrote an organized paragraph or punctuated a compound sentence, but I was not secure enough to tell my apprentices that I also struggled with these tasks.

Today, I am proud to discuss both my strengths and weaknesses with my students. I even hand out early drafts of my own manuscripts without fear that I will lose the students' respect because, for example, my topic sentence was placed in the wrong position. Far from losing credibility with my students, I find that I gain respect as they gradually recognize my fallibility.

Each semester, my students write diagnostic essays in our first writing class. I read them carefully, not only to assess students' knowledge of mechanics, but to become acquainted with each writer's potential voice. In the second class, I read sections of these essays aloud and praise the quality of the writing. I have yet to read a paper that does not contain something laudable: a great adjective, a sophisticated sentence structure, a unique imagery. Thus, students realize that they have the potential not only to survive the next 15 weeks of hard work, but to blossom as authors. I enjoy watching the smiles that inevitably decorate their faces.

The next few classes begin in an equally positive manner. The class always "free writes" on a subject of their own choosing (sometimes with my suggestions), and I ask students to read aloud their favorite phrase, sentence, or paragraph. Inevitably, the class joins me in praising the efforts of each student. Eventually, I combine constructive criticism with my compliments. For instance, I discuss sentences that might be rethought or ideas that may not be clear to the reader. I ask students to watch how I edit. We usually conclude that suggestions for improvement are most effective when they follow positive comments.

A major part of my composition curriculum includes group editing: peer review is essential for understanding that writing is a collaborative process. Early on, I tell students that I use peer review for my own writing and acknowledge how vulnerable I feel when I ask my colleagues to edit my work. I stress, however, that I am grateful for my editors' comments because they enable me to see my work through the readers' eyes. In the next sessions, I discuss the difference between judicious criticism and insensitive critical attacks; then I ask my students to edit each other's work. Students are usually reticent to critique others' essays. However, the more they read, the better they can identify writing strengths and weaknesses.

Collaborative authorship is as exciting as group editing. I sometimes ask students to choose a writing partner and create one essay together. Usually, this exercise is productive because students are forced to be both objective editors and personally involved authors. Inevitably, each writer acts as the other's editor; consequently, they must practice both writing and editing. Even more important, they are not relying on the teacher as the expert. It is critical that the writing teacher remain uninvolved during the peer-editing process. Students must rely on each other or they will never believe that their peers are substantial editors.

The physical environment of the classroom can promote collaborative writing. My students sit at tables; the intimate atmosphere provided by this arrangement enables writers and editors to communicate easily. I lecture from one of the writing tables or walk around the room. When we do "free writes," I sit at a table and compose with my students. In this way, I emphasize that we all arrive at composition ideas by using similar processes. Joining my students during these exercises also enables me to find time for my own writing. In fact, much of this article was generated during the "free write" sessions in my composition classes.

Writing is rewarding when it elicits effective communication. And, when composition stimulates communication between teachers and students, a dynamic learning environment is created. An effective writing class is one in which the students are teaching as they learn and the instructor is learning as he or she teaches.

Patrick Horan, *Instructor, English*

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The Value of Graduates

Students enrolled in our nursing program have numerous questions. Among the more common questions are these: How will we pass the exam for licensure? Can we find a job in nursing? How do we compare to other schools of nursing? What do employers ask when you go for your first interview as a registered nurse? How long was your orientation? Did you feel prepared for your new job? Do you regret going to school? How has your life changed? How did you prepare for the licensure examination? Did taking the licensure on the computer bother you?

Students need to hear the answers, not only from faculty members, but from graduates. Faculty comments carry some weight, but feedback from recent graduates provides extraordinary encouragement and direction to those struggling to finish their degree.

The students need to connect with graduates to promote the concept of "member of the discipline," as described by the National League of Nursing guidelines for the associate degree nurse. We determined that the most appropriate place to make this connection was the student nursing organization on campus. Southwestern Association of Nursing Students (SWANS) was an active group providing educational opportunities, promoting leadership qualities in its members, and participating in community service.

SWANS decided to schedule a graduate panel forum for early spring. By this time, recent graduates should have been employed for at least six months and have had the opportunities to experience the transitions from student to graduate to registered nurse. Two months prior to the scheduled forum, the association sent invitations to recent graduates and followed up with personal contact by faculty and SWANS members. SWANS provided pizza and drinks for the forum, which was scheduled during a one-hour, Friday lunch break. Four graduates attended.

Initially, the advisor was concerned about how to stimulate discussion, but the students and graduates launched into an hour-long sharing without prompting. What did they share?

- thanks for a dedicated faculty
- situations which reinforced that nursing was the right career
- study techniques promoting success on the licensure exam
- the values of appearance and attendance to successful employment
- the need to commit to lifelong learning
- difficulties during orientation and ways to avoid them
- anxieties associated with the licensure exam and ways to decrease stress
- descriptions of work settings from home health, psychiatric, critical care, and medical-surgical nursing

Was the forum a success? One had only to see the intensity in the eyes of the students to answer that question. Some of the same people who were struggling with student roles last year were returning this year to discuss their current roles as RNs. Their advice reinforced the principles of professionalism that the faculty attempt to address throughout the curriculum. The students ranked that SWANS meeting the best of the year.

M. Jane Swartz, *Instructor, Nursing*

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Suanne D. Roueche, Editor

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Interviewing ESL Students to Learn Research Skills

On the summit of Snoqualmie Pass near Seattle—its very name a snatch of language from an indigenous American tongue—I am buying a French Roast espresso from the Asian American owner of an A-frame convenience market. Earlier this same day, I listened as a Highline Community College instructor described how she used interviews of ESL immigrants by her American communications students. I wondered how I might incorporate the same technique into my writing classes. I thought about it across Snolqualmie Pass; in Cle Elum, where I ate dinner in an Italian diner patronized by blonde-bearded Swedes in flannel shirts; in Yakima, where a Chinese restaurant named Hecha's—marked a long vowel "e" on its billboard, presumably to clarify the menu for Spanish-English bilinguals who might mistakenly drop by for a burrito; in the basin below Benton City, where "no one" lived before the Hanford Nuclear Reservation was built—no one, of course, except the tribes of Native Americans who had lived there for millenia.

The next day I called my college's ESL coordinator who agreed to help set up the interviews which would serve as the starting point for an essay examining some aspect of culture. I thought this would allow me to teach research skills in a lively and important way in my composition class. Specific skills we needed to address in the quarter included primary and secondary research techniques, the recognition of other frameworks and theoretical perspectives (in this case, through cultural inquiry) and practice in higher-level critical literacy. In this way, multiculturalism might actually serve all students by providing:

- a powerful tool for thinking that honors and encourages the free exchange of ideas so crucial to a working democracy;
- actual preparation for the increasingly globalized economy where diversity and not hegemony is the rule;
- lifelong learning techniques, including information retrieval and document analysis.

The first activity for any kind of research is heuristic. Without good questions, I tell my class, I won't know how to find the information nor will I know what to do should I stumble across some. Using Erica Lindemann's *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, Edward de Bono's *Six Thinking Hats*, and Bloom's taxonomy, I made a seven-page list of questions (including questions about questions) for my students to consider. I later found out that this heuristic, while overkill for a 50-minute interview, was valuable even for those students who couldn't or didn't want to plan beyond the old journalistic standby: who/what/when/where/why/how?

The questioning process allowed us to discuss aspects of the situation: e.g., the probability that several of them would find partners who were difficult to understand or who did not wish to answer a specific line of questioning (a woman from the People's Republic of China, for example, wouldn't say anything until she was satisfied her responses would not be published). We discussed the clear need to think on one's feet, as well as the necessity of sticking to the prepared questions while simultaneously being willing to ignore them altogether.

A typical set o. questions, the following heuristic was developed by a student who was interested in discovering if western ideas of feminism existed in Laos.

1. **"Getting to know the person" questions**: What is your name? How old are you? What country are you from? Where in the country? Is that urban or rural? Had you lived there all your life? How long have you lived in America? Do you like it? Why? Why not? What are some of the differences you find interesting between your native country and your new home?

These questions obviously serve as icebreakers. Both participants answer or comment upon the questions in a conversational way.

2. **"Learning about my subject" questions:** What is the role of women? Why? Can they work or do they stay home and take care of the children? If they do work, what types of jobs/careers do they have? What is their income, compared to a man's? Are they respected? In what ways? Are they allowed to get an education? At what age do women usually get married? Start a family? Do you notice any difference between American and Laotian women? Are there women in positions of power, such as in the government? Is there a class system which makes the answers to these questions different depending on status?

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The ESL coordinator told me that we could expect students from the former Soviet block countries, Japan, China, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, and Brazil. Each of my students prepared a line of questioning related to some aspect of cultural difference. The specific topic would then be supported and developed with secondary research. Some of the subjects that evolved into very interesting essays included:

- the marriage ceremony in Tadzhikistan;
- the wife's status in traditional Mexican society;
- micro-managed population control in the People's Republic of China;
- higher education in South Korea;
- unwed mothers in Japan;
- religious education in Mexican schools;
- the dearth of physicians in contemporary Vietnam;
- the similarities between education and technology funding in Georgia and the U.S.;
- causes and effects of immigration from rural Mexico;
- the effects of Mexico City's pollution on tourist revenues;
- the psychological effects of the Chernnobyl disaster.

Obviously, these are subjects which need probing with topic questions. To accomplish this, we use the very simple Subject-Topic-Thesis heuristic, which I explain in the following way: the subject is the largest focused area, the topic is the question that the writer asks about that subject, and the thesis is the working answer to the topic question. A writer has any number of topics to choose from to generate interesting theses for short papers. Below is a scratch sheet of initial thoughts along the lines of this heuristic.

Subject: Dearth of physicians in Vietnam

Topic: How? Thesis: A process analysis of how this situation occurred.

Topic: Why? Thesis: A causal analysis of government policy on health care before and after the fall of Saigon/Ho Chi Minh.

Topic: What? Thesis: A process description of what measures are being taken to address the problem.

Topic: Who? Thesis: A definition and classification analysis of who suffers or who profits from this phenomenon.

These are just a few possibilities—the better the question, the better the answer. After the student decides, I send him/her to the library to begin a survey of literature to determine if there is enough information about the topic.

The paper is quite simple, but it requires some fairly complex skills. I ask students to address a lay audience and to follow a typical *Time* or *Newsweek* report organization, highlighting the following superstructure:

1. Introduction: Allow the primary research to introduce, in an anecdotal way, the subject, the topic, and the thesis.
2. Background, contexts, history, basic facts, definitions of terms, and so on: Using that anecdotal evidence, pull out some of the implications and begin to research them. Also research any statements made by the interviewee.
3. Summarize what you find out about the implications of what your interviewee told you and summarize whether this person's statements seem to be accurate, overly generalized, and so on.
4. Analysis: Using evidence from your research, begin to draw inferences and use your research to confirm, dispute, refute, validate, support, develop, and so on, the terms of your thesis.
5. Conclusion: go back to the primary research. If your introduction began with your interviewee's memories, use the conclusion to bring him/her into the present. Use this return to the anecdotal level as a way to summarize your essay's content or, better yet, to draw inferences about the material: i.e., speculate about the future in terms of your topic or your interviewee.

This schedule assumes that the class members are familiar with techniques for analyzing evidence in writing; with the differences between implications, inferences, and statements of fact; and with the techniques of summary, paraphrase, and analysis.

I recommend incorporating ESL interviews into writing classes with a final, somewhat selfish argument: you'll get interesting papers to read. Most important, though, is that most students truly enjoy the project and deepen their abilities as writers and thinkers.

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Teaching the Big Picture

Research is a concept that strikes fear into the hearts of even the bravest, brightest, and best students at any educational level in any discipline. Visualizing and understanding the big picture of a research project, as well as the intricate details of the process, can be intimidating. Project time constraints, solo-learner frustrations, and the typical end-of-project evaluations heighten students' fears.

Despite awareness of such research anxieties, many instructors continue to teach research using the traditional individual project assignment. An innovative strategy described here demonstrates that a collaborative approach, in which all class members work as part of a team on a comprehensive project, offers several major advantages over the more conventional technique. Although the class described here is a graduate-level, qualitative research course, the pedagogical design and theoretical principles are applicable to any course that includes a research project component (e.g., English composition or statistical methods).

Course Design and Content Processes

This qualitative research class was organized into micro-teams; these teams coordinated their efforts as part of an integrated 16-member macro-team working on a common research problem. Simultaneously, the class studied the literature of qualitative research and delivered presentations about selected topics from the readings—e.g., developing interview protocols, designing qualitative studies, and coding data.

The course instructor assumed a dual role—instructor *and* client. As client, the instructor hired the class as a team of researchers to conduct a large-scale qualitative study examining his organization's office of institutional effectiveness. Information about the goals, organization, and staffing of the office, as well as documents and working papers selected to orient the researchers to the office, were prepared by the instructor and distributed to the class. Using guidelines provided by the instructor, the class interviewed the instructor/client to provide a base for determining the objectives and major evaluation questions to be answered by the evaluation study. Following this interview, the class developed a general design for data collection and analysis: assessing the "internal" view of the office's operations by means of a focus group interview of the office staff and assessing the "external" view of the office by means of individual interviews with representatives of the various offices that were the major "consumers" or "customers." Analysis of the interview data focused on comparing the internal and external views.

Student researchers were trained by professional consultants in developing interview protocols and leading focus group and individual interviews. Following this training, the entire class created protocols for both types of interviews. Two class members then moderated a focus group interview with the office of institutional effectiveness staff, two transcribed the entire interview, and the remaining class members became observer participants. Subsequently, the entire class coded and analyzed the focus group interview.

Next, 22 individual interviews were conducted with the organization's employees—administration, faculty, and classified personnel. Student researchers, working in pairs, conducted and audio-recorded these interviews, one serving as primary interviewer and the other as observer. Each pair transcribed and coded these interviews. Each interview team produced a set of field notes for each visit and wrote at least one analytical memo summarizing its informal analysis of the interview data.

After all interviews were complete, a three-member coordinating committee was formed to oversee scheduling and production of the final report. The following processes were involved in compiling and reporting the project's qualitative analysis:

- Each interview team developed a set of codes for its interviews, reducing the 22 interviews to eight sets of codes, one set per team.
- Interview pairs organized into two groups of eight (four interview teams per group) to compare codes, reconcile, extend, and produce a set of comprehensive codes for that group. This process ultimately generated two tentative sets of codes.
- Representatives from the two groups then met and negotiated/produced a final comprehensive set of organized codes inclusive of significant

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quotes that were illustrative of each coding category from the individual interviews.

- Major coding categories previously identified from the focus group interview were defined, and illuminating examples were compiled.
- Based on these two major coding lists and representative quotes, a three-member team prepared a comparative analysis of the focus group and individual interviews. The team's analysis was presented to the class as a whole for discussion and development of the final comparison/contrast analysis.
- After analyzing the final interview results, the class as a whole developed a set of responses and recommendations which addressed the client's concerns.

After the project was underway, each session was conducted according to a work schedule developed by the coordinating committee. Updates to the schedule were distributed at the beginning of each class session, which typically would involve a short review and planning session, a meeting of the functional groups to accomplish the work scheduled for that session, and a closing review and planning session. Throughout the process, individual and small-group perceptions and analyses were pooled and checked against one another. Initial observations and perceptions were continually reexamined, discussed, and often modified in the light of these recursive exercises. The results were incorporated into a final written document which represented the significant contributions of several teams. These teams developed draft sections of the document, which were presented to the master document production team for revision, editing, and incorporation into the final report. The results were also presented to the client and his office in an oral report.

Conclusions

From the instructor's perspective, the course design provided the following benefits:

(1) Individual research projects may give students an understanding of the technical or conceptual skills (e.g., how to encode text), but working as part of functional teams to complete a comprehensive large-scale project gives students an understanding of the administrative and logistical aspects of research. Students were required to do a task analysis of the entire project, to organize into functional groups to accomplish each task, and to coordinate the work of different groups to keep the entire project on track.

(2) From a pedagogical standpoint, the collaborative approach attenuates the anxieties that often stymie the individual researcher. The social support received from classmates frees the student to get on with the task (e.g., coding).

(3) By providing on-going checkpoints of feedback and evaluation, learning becomes a formative rather than summative process. For example, when the class came together as a group, students discovered that individually produced codes were quite similar, giving real meaning to the theoretical proposition that reality is socially constructed.

From the students' perspective, the course provided a rich pragmatic and collaborative experience:

(1) The course proved invaluable as a precursor to the dissertation research process.

(2) The experience reinforced the increasing importance of collaborative processes because it was a poignant reminder of how it feels to be that solitary student in the classroom.

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Homegrown Composition

Being asked to teach the honors section of an introductory composition course was not a cause for rejoicing. Previous instructors had told me that these students were interested only in the grade, had no real love of learning, became hostile when grades were lower than anticipated, and were loners.

I decided to take a rather nontraditional approach to this course: push the students out of the classroom and into their community, and provide them with opportunities for social interaction. I called it "Your Hometown: A Great Place to Write From."

We began with a "mail delivery" the second day of class. This was to become a tradition throughout the semester, as well as a source of great humor and a catalyst for cohesiveness among the students. The mail was a letter which I wrote in the guise of an imaginary former native of the area, a Mr. Washington Ford, who had moved away but was writing to request some information before moving his family back to northern New York. Each student was handed his or her own personally addressed, sealed envelope; one student read it aloud to the class.

"Yo, compadre," the letters began, and poor Mr. Ford went on for two pages about his personal and occupational troubles in a Los Angeles suburb. He had lost three jobs in the past five years and wanted to open up a mail order business. His wife was into crafts and genealogy. His son, Jefferson, had three earrings, wore surfer "rags," and wanted to play hockey. His daughter had asthma and needed special medical care. Could the students help him resettle by finding out about housing costs, schools, business regulations, social possibilities, medical care, as well as whether they thought the family could be accepted, coming as they did from such a different environment? And could they reply, by letter, in about a week?

Such was our first assignment. As the students fanned out into their communities to collect information, we used class time to talk about letters as a mode of communication: their varieties and characteristics, strengths and weaknesses, as well as audience, tone and style. At the end of the required time, the students read their replies aloud, one of them beginning with, "Yo, Washington!"

The next day another letter arrived (the students began to express amazement as to how rapidly the mail traveled in this class!). This one was from a "friend" of Washington's, who had heard from him about the excellent research that had been done in reply to his letter. Mr. Sinclair, as this correspondent was called, was an attorney who needed a report on the origins of the area for a client who felt his family might have a claim to some land settled by an ancestor. Could this report be sent back in about ten days? Could a map of the area at that time also be included?

Although this assignment required formal research, we used the less familiar archives rooms of the college and local libraries, as well as the local historical societies and the local historians. The college archives librarian, who was also a local history buff, introduced the students to the usual and not-so-usual sources at their disposal and served as a resource person for answering difficult questions. Because these letters were coming from the "outside," the students began to see me more as a resource person and less as a taskmaster. They began to initiate their own questions about audience, purpose, format, style, and tone in order to solve their own writing problems; they looked to each other for help.

Letter three was from a representative of the National Historical Society who had heard of the students via Mr. Sinclair, whom he had met at a conference. This gentleman requested the identification and history of a building in their town that could eventually lead to it being preserved as a national landmark. For this assignment, I invited the teacher of a local history course to speak to the class. He had been directly involved in the process of restoring and preserving a local, historically significant business and was able to provide the students with the foundation for their selection and research. Letter four was from a city council member who—by the merest of chances—had read this history. She explained that at that very moment, the city council was considering demolishing the building! Would the students come to the next meeting and read a persuasive paper against such a demolition? The fifth letter came from the editor of a historical magazine who—again by chance—had been

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sitting in the audience at the city council meeting. She was wondering if the students would be interested in writing a human interest feature article on a street in their hometown, specifically comparing its past to its present. Finally, letter six came from the city manager. She was seeking help on a specific problem the town was facing and what the best possible solution would be.

Six different letters, six different assignments, six different modes of writing, but all involved problem solving, original research and documentation, direct contact with a wide variety of community resources and individuals, as well as more traditional instruction in writing. The class was successful. We all maintained a high level of enthusiasm throughout the semester and developed a strong sense of class unity. Two of the papers written originally as assignments were eventually published in the college's literary magazine. We had no dropouts, and all but one student signed up for the next course in the honors sequence (something which had not happened before).

There were several reasons for this, I think. The main reason was that the assignments were unusual, allowing students more freedom and creativity than they had before. Another, of course, was that they were writing about places and people they knew and in which they had an interest. A final, and unexpected, reason for the success of the course was the camaraderie that developed among the students as they faced a common antagonist in these never-ending letters.

Although this was an honors course with the advantage of a small number of students, I think the ideas here could be adapted to both developmental and non-honors college-level composition classes, as long as they are not too large. Most colleges have archives available, and most communities, however small, have local libraries and historians, or people who serve as repositories of local history and lore. Academic resource people are plentiful.

Assignments can be longer or shorter, more or less complex, depending on the academic level of the students. If research is not to be emphasized, instructors can focus on description, narration, people profiles, community lore, and letters to the editor. Mail from California is optional, of course.

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"3-D" Learning

The learning experience is often limited to a two-dimensional view of the subject matter. In traditional courses, the teacher paints word pictures of the material, then students move into a laboratory setting to convert their mental perceptions into finished products—e.g., a term paper, computer program, chemistry experiment, piece of art work, or a tuned auto. These products are usually incomplete. So it is back to repainting word pictures, trying to fill in the gaps from the original lecture. Over several years, I have developed a new strategy to avoid this instructional inefficiency—the "3D" strategy of teaching, *Describe—Demonstrate—Do.*

In a typical "3D" session, I give a short *Describe* lecture, never more than 15 minutes, covering some of the highlights or key concepts in the chapter. Then I go back to the first major concept and *Demonstrate* how it can be applied. This step can be accomplished with an overhead projector, a videotape or videodisc segment, or any combination of media. The purpose of *Demonstrate* is to help students form better mental images of the process *Described* in the brief lecture. Here we all agree, to some extent, about what the finished product should look like. The *Demonstrate* phase is also limited to about 15 minutes.

The last step, *Do*, allows students to apply what they have heard *Described* and have seen *Demonstrated;* they create a product. Upon completion of this step, we take a short break and start the "3D" process again with the next topic.

Since breaking the traditional lecture-lab time mold, I spend slightly more time preparing for each class session. The positive side of the changes I have made in content and delivery is the increase in the amount of material that can be covered and retained. In the past, I found myself repeating parts of every lecture. Now students busily reinforce what they just heard *Described* and saw *Demonstrated* only moments before, and I watch this new knowledge and skill carry over to the next class session with minimum need for review.

I have discovered that students and I cover 30-50% more material in each course with far greater retention than in previous years. Feedback indicates that almost 100% of the students are in favor of this approach over traditional lecture/lab methods.

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Delivering Test Feedback to Students

Testing communicates our academic expectations and standards to students, and feedback about the test is part of the testing process. Feedback sessions enable us to explain how the class performed as a whole, to identify and clarify conceptual difficulties students had with the exam, and to explain the criteria by which the exam was graded. These feedback sessions, however, tend not to be pleasurable. Students may become quiet and unresponsive, challenge a grade that is lower than expected, or even dispute the validity of the exam. We may feel some anxiety about returning exams to a class that tested poorly, feel responsible about the achievement level of the class, and become defensive in response to students' criticisms about the exam or the grading procedures. In such a heightened emotional atmosphere, communication between instructor and student may become blurred and ineffective. The following procedures can be helpful in delivering clear and effective test feedback to students and decreasing the tension associated with these sessions.

Explain the Characteristics of the Exam

The objective of administering most exams is to test students' knowledge. It is perfectly legitimate, therefore, to give students detailed information about what the exam will include. Students can be informed about the types of questions that will appear, how much each type of question will be "worth," what course material will be covered, and what criteria will be used for grading purposes. Giving students information enables them to better prepare for the exam.

Make Grading Criteria Clear and Consistent

Make certain students can determine how the grade was achieved. Write out the criteria used to grade an item and the rationale for awarding fewer points than the possible total. Writing out criteria also allows for consistent application across all of the exam. A grading sheet that clearly states criteria and how points are assigned can make grading essay exams faster and provides students with clear feedback.

Each section of the exam should be clearly labeled with both the instructions and the number of points it is possible to earn. For example, the multiple-choice section of an exam might begin, "Each multiple-choice item is worth 5 points." The essay section might include the total number of points possible; for example, "What is the definition of 'mainstreaming'? (15 points)." The student's total points or percentage score should be clearly labeled, along with the possible total. A clear and consistent grading system simplifies the feedback process.

Prepare for the Feedback Session

Once the exams have been graded, calculate several descriptive statistics—e.g, the average score on the exam. This average may be converted into a letter grade or percentage score. The range and the distribution of scores for the class should be discussed.

The difficulty level of each item or question should be computed. The difficulty level of multiple-choice items is the percentage of students who correctly answered the item; on an essay item it is the average score earned. When computing the difficulty level, determine what alternate answers were favored by the class. These alternate answers will be those most likely debated during the feedback session, so it is important to review them and explain why the alternate option is *wrong* and why the correct option is *right*.

Clearly explain grading criteria for essay items. This information, along with the descriptive statistics, can be written on the blackboard or on a transparency.

Establish a Structured Format for Discussion

Structuring the procedures for conducting the feedback session can make it run more smoothly. It is important to explain these procedures at the beginning of the class period *before* returning the exams, as students will be less distracted. Explain how the parts of the exam will be discussed. Give students directions for what they should do if they disagree with the grading of an item. Decide what student interactions are acceptable during the feedback session. Maintaining a calm, businesslike tone can help sessions go more smoothly. The following feedback strategies provide a useful range of discussion options.

Whole-class participatory feedback: The instructor gives feedback to the class as a whole. Each test item may be discussed. Students are invited to make comments and to ask questions about particular items.

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An advantage of participatory feedback is that the instructor may learn about items that were not well written or were ambiguous. The session can be a learning tool to reteach important points. Open discussion about the exam is especially appealing to instructors who want to foster interaction in their classrooms. These interactions, however, can become heated in a test feedback situation. The instructor may need to redirect hostile and escalating verbal behavior from the students.

Whole-class non-participatory feedback: Students are asked to reserve their comments and questions about the exam for a later time. The instructor may have students come during office hours to discuss the exam or have them write out their comments and submit them for consideration.

An advantage to this feedback is that it allows the instructor to complete the feedback to the class very quickly. Items that few or no students missed may be skipped over and explanations limited to the most difficult items. Students are given an alternative format in which to voice their comments when they can calmly and logically reflect on an argument. Both student and instructor are given time to reflect on how an item should have been answered and graded. However, only the more motivated students tend to visit the instructor during office hours or write out an argument about an item. Instructors will not be as likely to hear from less motivated students—the very ones that most likely had difficulty with the exam. Moreover, the instructor will not have an opportunity to monitor the class' understanding of an item.

Small-group feedback: The class is separated into small groups of three or four students, and the groups are asked to develop an "answer key" to the exam. Students discuss each item and come to a conclusion about the correct answer. While the groups discuss the items, the instructor can circulate among them.

There are a number of advantages to using a small-group feedback format. In these sessions all students have the opportunity to be active participants in the discussion. Students who correctly answered items explain them to those students who did not (a peer-tutoring experience). A disadvantage of this feedback session is that it is time-consuming. Also, some students may be reluctant to reveal their errors and discuss them. There may be a tendency for those students who are more verbal and who do well on the exam to dominate the group. Clear explanation of how the groups should proceed and close monitoring of the groups by the instructor can help offset these disadvantages.

Individual feedback: The instructor holds individual test-feedback sessions with each student. These sessions may be scheduled during extended office hours or during a class activity that is not being led by the instructor. The instructor can help the student identify and remediate misconceptions, and strategies that an individual student may use on future exams can be explored.

The advantage of these sessions is that the instructor can target the feedback to particular student needs. Disagreements about particular items may be discussed in a non-public manner and addressed at length by the instructor. The greatest disadvantage is the time they take to complete; discussions with individual students in large classes must be brief.

Conclusion

Test-feedback sessions can be conducted smoothly when instructors help prepare students for the exam, clearly explain the criteria used to grade the exam, prepare for the subsequent feedback session, and structure the feedback session appropriately to the characteristics and needs of the class.

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A Well-Designed Plan: The Key to an Award-Winning Wellness Program

Today, more worksites than ever have either implemented or are investigating the need for wellness programs. While many organizations have successfully designed programs, others have experienced one or more of the common obstacles to success: (1) lack of top management support; (2) insufficient assessment data; (3) fragmented or inappropriate program activities; (4) assigning the wellness program as an "add on" responsibility to an existing employee already working a full-time job; (5) lacking an organized, step-by-step plan for design, organization, and implementation.

Experience indicates that many of these obstacles can be avoided. Many organizations provide resources which contain wellness program planning principles. In the process of developing the Pure Energy Wellness Program at Chattanooga State Technical Community College, we have found the following resources to be invaluable: (1) the six dimensions of wellness model from the University of Wisconsin (Stevens Point); (2) a planning book entitled *Guidelines for Employee Health Promotion Programs* available from the Association for Worksite Health Promotion; (3) local wellness councils; and (4) a comprehensive planning model—The Health Intervention and Evaluation Strategy (HIEST) framework, an organized, step-by-step approach to the design, organization, and implementation of a wellness program.

The HIEST framework provides structure, a consistent sense of direction, and a well-designed plan. It also helps avoid most of the common problems associated with many wellness programs.

The first step in the HIEST framework is an analysis of both the current behaviors of the prospective participants in the wellness program and the organizational environment and practices. Individual lifestyle behaviors are identified and analyzed in order to determine the existence of health risk factors and the likelihood of future health problems and work-related accidents. The existing organizational behavior is identified by a review of current business policies and practices, ergonomic practices, lighting, potential exposure to hazardous chemicals, and anything else affecting the health of employees and students.

The second step in the framework is the assessment phase. This is a detailed look at the many aspects of the work environment as well as existing perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and health practices of the potential program participants. When the assessment phase is completed, the program director can better determine the health needs of the individuals and the organization, and establish a baseline upon which to measure ultimate program success.

The assessment phase includes: health data analysis (a review of worker's compensation claims, medical claims and rates of absenteeism); an analysis of individual health behaviors (risk factors, interest and attitude surveys); assessment of organizational health and behavior (environmental health; safety; effectiveness of communication; productivity; job effectiveness; health culture audit).

The strategic planning step involves prioritizing needs and interests, outlining goals and objectives, devising an incentive system, developing an implementation plan, developing a communication plan, and creating some mechanism for evaluation.

After establishing priorities, specific, attainable, and measurable goals can be developed. Written goals and objectives provide a blueprint for program planners to follow. These also help upper management understand the role of a wellness program and its contribution toward fulfilling the institutional mission. Another component of the strategic plan is an incentive system, which can help motivate individuals to seek changes in negative lifestyle behavior and to reinforce favorable changes in health behaviors. A strategic plan should include an implementation plan which contains a summary of program offerings, when they are to be offered, who will handle program administrative duties, etc. This plan provides clarification regarding administrative details and areas of respectability.

After writing an implementation plan, it is important to develop a communication plan. This should include an overall program orientation, a description of how specific program offerings will be promoted, a description of ongoing program communication, and so on.

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Finally, an evaluation plan is essential. It should include: (1) a review of the previously written goals and objectives; (2) a list of evaluation questions which, when answered, indicate program success; (3) a list of activities for achieving the goals and objectives (i.e., a listing of the interventions to be implemented); (4) a list of the results which will demonstrate program success; (5) a summary of the methods to be used for collecting information which will be used to evaluate success; (6) and a plan for information collection (i.e., who will collect information and when it will be collected). The completion of the assessment strategic planning phases provides a solid foundation for the program development phase.

The fourth step in the HIEST framework is the development of specific programs. General categories of programs are health education classes, support groups, special campaigns, seminar series, kickoff events, and wellness resource centers.

On the subject of program development, it is important to understand the dynamic effects of predisposing factors (individual and organizational) and enabling factors on ultimate program success. This interrelationship is a part of the HIEST framework since an understanding of it can help program planners anticipate barriers in the achievement of a program's goals and objectives. A brief look at the subject of predisposing and enabling factors may help clarify this interrelationship.

Predisposing factors can affect program success. If an individual or an organization holds a deep-seated belief that there is little that can be done to improve individual or organizational health, it will certainly hinder programming efforts. However, if such a feeling were detected during the assessment or programming phase, it might be possible to find a way to deal with the feeling. Another predisposing factor is locus of control—whether an individual believes that health is dependent on personal habits (internal locus of control) or whether he believes he has no control over his ultimate well-being (external locus of control). Self-efficacy and self-esteem are other predisposing factors. When an individual or an organization has a strong belief and confidence that significant change can occur, chances for programming success improve greatly.

Enabling factors include a sufficient knowledge base, skills acquisition, social support, and availability and accessibility of resources. As individuals and the organization understand the internal and external variables which affect health, the foundation on which skills, support, and motivation are built becomes stronger. Social support can be provided by family members, co-workers, supervisors, and friends. Finally, the commitment of resources encourages change, stimulates further growth, and enhances program success.

Changes in individual and organizational behavior, described in the framework as "modified behaviors," can be expected. These modified behaviors become the new baseline behaviors and evolve to accommodate emerging trends within the employee population and the organization. The dynamic nature of this process assures that wellness efforts continue to meet the unique needs of both the individual employees and the organization itself.

The final phase in the framework addresses the importance of maintenance factors. As changes in individual and organizational behaviors occur, it is important for the behaviors to be maintained. Maintenance factors are family support, organizational support, social support, and motivational efforts. When maintenance factors sufficiently reinforce the desired behavior for a sufficient time period, a successful behavior change can take place.

Throughout the development of the Pure Energy Wellness Program, we have attempted to utilize the resources and steps in the HIEST framework and to avoid many of the common obstacles. CSTCC has received "bronze," "silver," and "gold" Well Workplace awards from the Wellness Councils of America (1993, 1994, and 1995) and the prestigious "Business and Industry Award" from the Association for Worksite Health Promotion (1994). While much remains to be done, we have made some progress toward the ultimate goal of integrating wellness throughout the organization and permanently changing the corporate culture.

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Suanne D. Roueche, Editor
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Integrating Study Skills into the College Curriculum

The experience is all too familiar. As the semester begins, a class with full enrollment begins slowly to lose students. As the semester ends, nearly one-fourth to one-half of the class may have officially dropped or just quit coming to class. This particular experience was difficult for me to comprehend and adjust to as a first-year instructor at an inner-city community college. I talked with my colleagues who confirmed the same phenomenon occurred in their classes. Their explanations ranged from a sensitivity to the overwhelming difficulties adult students in economically distressed areas encounter to a dismissal of students as too immature and unmotivated for college-level work.

I felt these explanations accounted for some of the factors involved in the high drop-out rate but that other factors might be unacknowledged and uninvestigated. My hunch was that many of these community college students enrolled in general education courses not only struggle with what to learn but also with *how* to learn. Fortunately, at the end of my first semester, one of our learning specialists approached me with the idea of collaborating on a pilot study of college study skills. Opportunity and motive connected.

Of 57 students enrolled in three General Psychology classes, 40 volunteered to participate in this study. The experimental group was composed of nine students who volunteered to complete a one-hour credit course on college study skills taught by the learning specialist. The control group consisted of the remaining 31 students. The instrument used in this study was the LASSI (Learning and Study Strategies Inventory). This assessment tool consisted of ten scales (attitude, motivation, time management, level of anxiety, concentration, information processing, selecting main ideas, study aids, self-testing, and test strategies) that measured the student's study strategies and methods. The LASSI was administered to both the experimental and control group after the first unit exam and then readministered after the fourth unit exam.

Results of this pilot study revealed that the average scores on each scale of the pretest LASSIF for *all* 40 participants was at or below the 50th percentile. The experimental group revealed a positive change in selecting main ideas, study aids, attention, level of anxiety, and information processing. Also by the end of the semester, only three study skills remained at or below the 50th percentile for the experimental group, and all students enrolled in the experimental group passed the course. In the control group, five scores (motivation, time management, anxiety handling, self-testing, test-taking strategies) actually decreased further over the course of the semester. Of the 31 students in the control group, eight (26%) withdrew from the course and five (16%) completed the course with a D or F grade.

Following this pilot study, the learning specialist and I recommended developing study skill college credit courses for incoming freshman students. However, I felt that the results of the study presented another problem. Of the 57 students, only nine (16%) actually signed up and completed the college study skills credit course. I understood that community college students are already overburdened with the responsibilities of family, work, and traditional curriculum courses; for many, the addition of another class would be very difficult. As I approached my second year of teaching, I decided to redesign my General Psychology course by integrating a metacurriculum of study skills. The five new instructional sections I added included time management, test-taking skills, textbook reading, note-taking skills, and learning preferences. I implemented this new metacurriculum during the next fall and spring semester.

As part of the introduction to General Psychology, I now have my students fill out a time-management survey and discuss time-management skills needed for successful college work. We discuss how much time is needed to study, how to set priorities, how to plan for long-term tasks, and how to schedule daily study time. After the first multiple-choice exam, I give my students another exam—on how to prepare for and take multiple-choice exams. We then discuss how to review for the test, some strategies for actually taking the exam, and test anxiety.

About halfway through the course, we focus on textbook reading, and I demonstrate how to preview textbook material, identify the main idea, and analyze the information. I then give students paragraphs to

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read and require that they practice these skills. Note-taking skills fall naturally within our course material on learning and memory. To demonstrate effective note taking, I deliver a lecture on note-taking skills and ask my students to take the best notes they can over this lecture. I then give them a copy of the lecture and of accompanying notes taken by an expert note taker. The students compare their notes to the "expert's," and we discuss the difference. As we approach the end of the semester, I administer the Gregoric Style Delineator, a learning preference instrument, and we identify and discuss the different learning styles apparent in the classroom. In particular, we discuss strategies to use when student and instructor learning styles are different.

I request that students write a Personal Reflection Paper at the end of the course—explaining what they have learned about themselves as learners and what college study strategies and skills they have developed or revised. These reflection papers have been very positive about the metacurriculum and have validated my hunch that students need and appreciate explicit training in college study skills.

By offering both credit classes and metacurriculum in the classroom, more students have the opportunity to learn the skills and strategies for successful college work. The loss of five sessions of content time is effectively balanced by the larger gain of student recognition and understanding of the learning process.

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Learning Mathematics by Helping Others

What does service learning have to do with math? That was my response to the suggestion that I offer a service option in one of my math courses. Despite my doubts, I incorporated a service learning option into College Algebra, giving my students an opportunity to become volunteer tutors.

The service learning option placed my student volunteers with a math instructor, or lab coordinator, to tutor in either Intermediate or Elementary Algebra for 16 hours during the semester. These volunteers could choose to tutor one student, a group of students, students in a high school algebra class, or students in the computer-assisted instruction (CAI) lab on campus.

Service learning was not another chore or topic, but rather an opportunity for my College Algebra students to review and explore mathematical concepts by assisting their peers who were in need of help. It provided the tutors with the opportunity to synthesize, analyze, and evaluate the mathematical concepts they had studied.

Student tutors in College Algebra showed a significant (25.3%) increase in average test scores after taking part in the service learning option. This increase may have occurred because students had to organize their ideas in order to present them, or they found gaps in their own knowledge and filled them as they planned their tutoring lessons.

Academic credit or incentive is given for learning, not for serving, in a service learning option. I chose tutoring because I knew students would be learning math concepts while they were helping others. The tutoring option must balance the needs of the tutors against those of the tutees. The intellectual gains of tutors will usually be the greatest when the students they tutor are as near to their own achievement level as possible. Tutors benefit by reviewing topics they have recently studied. Students who are being tutored benefit the most from having older, more advanced tutors who will bring a wider range of knowledge and experience to the sessions. If the academic level of tutees is within two courses of College Algebra, the review of material is still useful to the tutors.

Tutors are placed by the service learning office on campus, but I verify that students are located in a comfortable atmosphere where learning can take place. Also, I have students report their feelings and attitudes about tutoring in a daily journal so problems can be shared and discussed openly. Students need support in their new teaching roles, but teaching provides the best opportunity to learn.

Service learning opportunities tie important mathematical ideas to students' daily lives while improving their understanding of mathematical concepts, increasing confidence in their mathematical abilities, improving their academic achievement, and helping others in the community.

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Grading Collaborative Activities

How should individuals be graded for their contributions to collaborative projects? Grading the team's project for quality and allowing team members to grade each other for relative contributions to the task is a workable strategy.

In my technical communications course, this assessment challenge frustrated me semester after semester. On several occasions, I considered abandoning collaborative activities altogether. Yet, when they were well-planned, collaborative projects proved to be a powerful learning instrument. They provided students with modeling for their own individual projects and helped them learn collaborative skills they would soon be using in the workplace.

However, when I sat down to grade collaborative activities, I was trapped. I disdained blanket grades that rewarded achievers and slackers equally, but neither did I trust that my direct observations of individuals in their groups yielded accurate data. I pestered groups heartlessly while they worked. I snooped. I prodded. I interrogated. I nagged. I studied service charts, leadership models, interaction analyses, and metacognition journals. Semester after semester, method after method, I tried and erred, groped and despaired. Then one wakeful night about six years ago, an idea for evaluating collaborative projects bubbled forth unexpectedly.

The logic was simple and nothing new: Effective groups consist of team members who share the time, effort, and work products equally. In other words, each team member gives her *expected contribution*, that part of 100% divided by the number of members in the group. Groups that function otherwise are relatively unsuccessful and ineffective. For example, in a two-person group, each member represents an *expected contribution* of 50% of the time, effort and product. In a four-person group, 25%, etc. If a person's contribution to the group is significantly higher than what is expected, then her grade should be proportionately higher; similarly, if she contributed less, her grade should be lower.

If I developed a simple way for students to assess themselves and their collaborators on the basis of *expected contribution*, I could use their assessment as a plus or minus deviation from the grade which I give to their group's collaborative product. In a nutshell, I would grade their product, and they would determine how that grade should be divided among themselves. I created the following system.

1. On the due date, I collect the collaborative projects, and grade them as products. At this point, the grade belongs only to the product, not to its producers.

2. On the day they submit their projects (written, oral, etc.), the collaborators discuss among themselves exactly what contributions they each made. This discussion clears up any misunderstandings or lack of awareness. Then privately they rate each other and themselves, assigning percentages of contributions to the whole (100%). Their "percentage of contribution to the whole" is a holistic individual judgment based on their analyses of each other's work as well as their own. The sum of their individual percentages must equal 100%.

   Example: **Karen's Self- and Peer-Assessment**

Sally designed pages and produced drawings; she was absent 3 out of 7 meetings:	25%
Bart drafted most of the text and typed and pasted up pages; no absences:	40%
Karen did a lot of overall planning and collated the roughs and final version copies; one absence:	35%
TOTAL (must be 100%):	100%

3. I collect these assessments and calculate a simple average of the actual contribution according to each student's self- and peer-assessments.

   Example: **Karen's Self- and Peer-Assessment Average**

Karen's assessment of herself:	35%
Sally's assessment of Karen:	40%
Bart's assessment of Karen:	40%
TOTAL:	115%
Karen's Avg. Contribution: (115%/3=38%)	**38%**

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4. I compare each student's average contribution to a deviation chart. A portion of that chart is included here:
   Share of Total as part of 100%:

2-Person Group	3-Person Group	% Expected	Project Grade (of ltr. grade)
35	23	70	-3/3
40	27	80	-2/3
45	30	90	-1/3
50	33	100	0
55	37	110	+1/3
60	40	120	+2/3
65	43	130	+3/3

5. I determine the plus or minus deviation for each student and add it to the project's grade to arrive at the individual's grade.
   Example: If Sally, Bart, and Karen's project received a B, then I would follow the chart to determine that Karen's grade should be a B+ since her share of the total according to the calculation of averages was 38%.

6. I report each student's grade in a summary similar to the following:

Collaborative Project Grade:	B (85%)
Your Deviation:	+1/3 grade
Your Individual Grade:	B+ (89%)

* * *

This grading system for collaborative projects rests on two assumptions. First, I am going to grade the product. That's my territory of expertise, and I want to keep it. The system would still work, however, if the instructor graded the product with a student jury system. The point is that the product's grade stands as a separate factor from any judgment of individual contributions. Second, students are going to judge their relative contributions since they are in a better position than I to observe the group and individuals at work. I grade the product; the students grade each other.

This system depends upon insight, honesty, fairness, good judgment, and accurate memory and records. It can be used maliciously, of course. Also, I have found it necessary to encourage students not to be too lenient and forgiving with each other; especially in relation to absences and missed deadlines. After all, students are prone to avoiding the social discomforts of negatively sanctioning their peers.

Nevertheless, I have found that this method sharpens students' judgment skills. They find themselves forced to weigh and balance the values of their various contributions from the beginning of the project. In technical communications, for instance, the individual tasks of planning the project, designing documents/pages, producing graphics, drafting text, keyboarding, editing and proofreading, and collating final versions force each participant to acknowledge the importance of each others' time, efforts, and skills. To assess relative contributions, they must compare apples and oranges, graphics production to graphics. Each must reflectively answer the questions, "To what extent did each of my colleagues and I fulfill our expected contributions to the collaborative project? What would this document have been like without any one of us?"

I'm sure that I will rework and massage this system every time I use it. I may even find that it ceases to work well for some reason I don't foresee. In the meantime, with proper introduction, it's a valuable teaching tool.

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Oral Grammar and Written Grammar: The Place of Grammar in the Developmental Writing Class

Many teachers of developmental students are hard-pressed to define the *developmental student*. We respond in an intuitive and impressionistic way, much like the person asked to define great art: "I don't know what it is, but I know it when I see it." Our analysis of developmental texts often gets stuck at the level of the sentence and the word, and there we see what we would quickly label *bad grammar*. We see bad grammar and short compositions: the developmental student's compositions seem to be shorter than the "regular" student's. Thus, many developmental courses begin with sentence- and word-level work and move to paragraph development. The curriculum concentrates on sentence and paragraph exercises; its aim is to help students acquire standard grammar and formal development. In short, it strives for formal correctness.

But many of us have known for years that this curriculum does not work. Students may improve their grammar and write more formally correct paragraphs, but they do not seem—by our impressionistic standards—to become better writers. This kind of training does not appear to prepare these students for the regular freshman English course. This curriculum would seem to confirm that the teaching of gran ıar does not improve writing. But I disagree with this conclusion. Years of experience with developmental students and analyses of developmental texts give me reason to believe that there is a place for grammar in the developmental curriculum. If taught in a timely and relevant way, the study of grammar can help students become writers strong enough to move on successfully.

Analyses of developmental writers' compositions provide a useful description of the developmental writing student. This student brings an aural/oral mode of knowledge to the writing task. In short, the student is competent in oral rhetoric—discourse shaped by the sense of shared knowledge with an immediate audience, people participating in the conversation. The oral writer has internalized discourse as dialogue with others who share certain knowledge and who are *right there*. Obviously, the developmental student perceives that fellow conversers and listeners are not really there, but the writing implications of their absence are not apparent to them. The student brings the immediacy of direct address to his or her writing. Conceptualizing the reader as an audience close by—with whom context and knowledge are shared—causes the student to leave out necessary orientation and information. The developmental writer leaves out the appropriate context for readers, assuming they would know the context or help shape it. In making this assumption, the oral writer creates absences for academic readers, absences about which the writer is unaware. While the developmental student brings the competence of speaking to the writing situation, the differences between speaking and writing are so significant that this competence may be misleading.

Oral competence brought to writing results in compositions that appear as transcriptions of speech. The writing looks different to us, but we may not have a way of understanding the differences and have noticed only the non-standard grammar.

On the other hand, we are quite familiar with academic composition. This composition may be defined as the rhetoric of distance, a rhetoric which recognizes and accounts for the distance from audiences and readers that writing imposes and which the writer, paradoxically, must overcome by more writing. As such, the writing is marked by elaboration of context, coherence, discussion, and meaning. In the *introduction*, the writer invites the reader to join a community of readers, where shared meanings are created, contexts provided, purposes made clear, and propositions advanced. The introduction carefully structures the text to orient readers and to overcome the distance that writing imposes. In the *body*, the writer elaborates upon and amplifies the information in order to anticipate objections and responses from absent listeners and to compensate for that absence. In the *conclusion*, the writer reflects upon the significance of the information just developed in order to assign value and utility that would be granted by immediate listeners. This description of academic texts is broadly

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conceived, but it can be seen across such diverse disciplines as the hard sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities.

In other words, the distance which writing imposes—and the overcoming of which allows for readers to enter the world of academic writing—is not yet a part of a student's oral knowledge. Oral knowledge is communal and immediate. Developmental writers do not feel distance as they write and consequently make no effort to overcome distance; or, as they learn this knowledge and begin to sense the distance, they do not know how to overcome it. These factors help explain why developmental writing, at best, is insufficiently developed or, at worst, disorienting.

The Grammar of Transcriptions

The grammar of transcriptions may be called oral grammar and is different from written grammar. Oral syntax may be called conversational: sentence structure is collapsed, little detail is added to main ideas; subordination is restricted mainly to adverbials of time. Vocabulary is conversational: verb endings are reduced—e.g., "I'm goin' to school" or "I'm gonna go to school," "had walk," "had live"; verb forms are limited in tense, aspect, mood; tense moves between past and historical present, as it does in conversational story telling—e.g., "Yesterday, I went to the student center and I see my best friend"; pronoun case is oral—e.g., "Me and my sister are goin' to school." These are the forms and the syntax that some developmental students hear and speak. Not being fluent readers, developmental students have not internalized the fully elaborated forms and syntax of writing and, therefore, cannot reproduce them when they write.

The Place of Grammar within the Writing Process

There is a place within the writing process for an insightful discussion of grammar, but the timing of the discussion is very important. The discussion of grammar should take place only within the larger, self-conscious shift to written rhetoric. We cannot begin our teaching of writing by discussing grammar and punctuation. We cannot require oral writers to switch to a written grammar while they are still writing oral transcriptions. We must first immerse them in writing, in a recursive process of drafting and revising, acting not as correctors but as readers, showing them real readers' needs. Only then is the writer prepared to see the difference between an oral grammar and a written grammar as a part of the larger strategy of elaboration and precision which writing imposes. The writers' perspective requires a commitment to the strategies of elaboration of rhetoric and grammar. Grammar and punctuation can be discussed as a part of the revising process, which, in this sense, may be seen as a movement from transcribing to writing. In this process, we help the student see the necessity for contextualizing, elaborating, amplifying, and making coherent.

The study of written grammar and syntax is appropriate within a curriculum which promotes acquisition of written rhetoric. Within this context, the sentence may be seen as fully and precisely explicating a claim. Subordination may be studied as a way of making precise qualifications. Verb forms may be shown to offer writers greater precision of tense, aspect, mood, and voice. Punctuation may be seen as an essential guide to readers, as indicators of the nature of relationships between sentences and parts of sentences, and as opportunities for a writer to further meaning and control the relationship of ideas. The study of written grammar at the right time may aid the student in the transformation from *transcriber* to *writer*.

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The Reflective Retreat

The reflective retreat at Richland College (TX) is a professional development activity for administrators, instructors, staff, and students interested in improving their communication skills, especially in multicultural situations. The retreat allows time away from the bustle of everyday college activities and provides the necessary time for intimacy and focus. Participation is by invitation or expression of interest in the retreat topic, which usually centers around personal development. Between 25 and 40 people attend the retreats. Administrators, faculty, and staff are granted professional leave to attend. Students are invited, as space permits, and are excused from classes if necessary. The retreat lasts for two days, including an overnight stay at a wooded retreat center, and is often facilitated by an outside expert in some area of interest related to cultural sensitivity.

Much of the success of the retreat is due to the leveling of the college hierarchical playing field. At the retreat, all participants are equal, from occasional appearances by the president to students. Although levels of authority inevitably follow people to the retreat, every attempt is made to reduce the cultural trappings of status. First names are used without regard to titles. For two days and one night, every person in attendance is regarded as a person without rank. The participants communicate with each other as people first and foremost, irrespective of their position at the college.

Two types of activities fill the majority of retreat time. The first is the group session, led by an experienced facilitator in group dynamics. The second is the reflective writing sessions, which give participants opportunities to process and synthesize information obtained at the retreat. Many choose to use the writing sessions to walk through the many acres of wooded grounds at the retreat site, or to reflect silently in their own rooms. The rigidity of structure is minimized. It is to the advantage of the group to attend the large sessions; otherwise, participants are encouraged to use the time in ways of most benefit to them.

Specific topics vary but are constant within each retreat and used as a means of focusing the group. Past topics have included the impact of attitudes in the classroom, cultural inclusiveness, and global awareness. Interpersonal communication is at the forefront of all activities, with an ear turned towards the potential strengthening of classroom techniques. Given the circumstances and opportunities, it is not surprising that the participants establish many strong ties at the retreats and carry them back to the college and beyond. Those who choose to attend the retreats are privy to a unique and intimate culture.

Each retreat usually begins with an orientation with ample opportunity for the participants to get to know one another. The facilitator gradually brings the group together with an activity designed to focus everyone's attention on the topic. Lectures are used sparingly, giving way instead to more participatory activities. From this point on, everyone becomes engaged in group processes, interspersed with time-outs for reflective writing or thinking. The evening is spent in informal, and often animated, discussion of related issues. Friends are made, partnerships are formed, and links are established between people usually separated by walls of formal titles and ranks. Throughout the retreat, relationships are explored in contexts beyond the scope of normal college boundaries. Cultural awareness, minority sensitivity, and learning styles are brought to the table and magnified through the vision of the facilitator. The result is a level of awareness that follows the group back to the college, where it is shared with other educators and students.

Many relationships have been built at this retreat. Part-time faculty have bonded with administrators whom ordinarily they would not have met. Students get to know faculty, staff, and administrators on a first-name basis, and faculty learn to interact across disciplines. The congeniality spreads across campus and is reflected in the classroom. Deans of the departments rotate invitations each semester so that each person has an opportunity to attend. Every year, a growing number of individuals throughout the college count themselves as grateful participants.

The retreat is not a replacement for other forms of professional development at Richland College. Rather, it supplements the more traditional programs that have a more narrow focus, such as the yearly convocation

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sessions. These formal programs are designed for specific groups, such as faculty only, and cover topics of a less intimate nature. The retreat is much more—a chance to reach through the levels of formality and culture that inhibit open communication between the diverse groups which function within the community college.

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Cultural Reflections of a College

Organizational behavior theorists observe that employees can derive a sense of belonging, achieve positive motivational gains, and develop a healthy sense of security from a strong organizational culture. Organizational culture is unique in that it is more than a group's commitment to the mission of an organization. It encompasses a dimension of loyalty that emerges from within the individual. The degree to which an individual feels secure and accepted by peers is critical to the development of a positive culture.

Yet, organizational culture is an obscure concept. How can something as intangible and delicate as emotional commitment to an organization be determined, much less measured? Experienced organizational behavior analysts delve into the language of an organization to gain insight into its culture—unique expressions and acronyms in the shared vocabulary of an organization are sometimes cited as evidence of the culture's current status. However, beyond statements and beliefs about the organization and the use of acronyms, organizational culture becomes nebulous, and theorists search for other ways to identify cultural influences.

Clovis Community College has found several ways to express its own organizational culture—one was discovered quite by accident. Some CCC art students had envisioned a project that would involve all of the employees at the college and asked everyone to take part in creating a mosaic.

Each employee who joined the project chose a single tile from the general design (that the students had created) and made the tile by hand. The tile's pattern was cut into wet clay, and the major lines were carved in low relief. These lines matched the adjoining tiles, and each tile pattern followed a particular color scheme. Other than meeting the line and color specifications, employees were allowed to customize their tiles. Many personalized their work by including their initials, small drawings, or favorite imagery.

Participants committed an average of one hour to the project; the time spent in carving and painting was one great hour of escape. While work was in progress, it was apparent that participants were immersed in something important. Group comments and laughter were evidence that the activity was a welcome diversion from regular work-related activities.

After all the tiles were fired, they were arranged and fixed permanently to a plywood panel for display on campus. The finished mosaic is an original—the design reflects the entire organization, and each tile represents each individual's place and uniqueness within the grand scheme. The most astounding revelation for participants was that art can be a reflection of an organization's culture. The finished project is a good conversation piece and has become something we all enjoy sharing.

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