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ABSTRACT

In response to current trends in higher education, the Communication Department at George Mason University in Virginia has developed some innovations which include: (1) a teaching doctorate targeted at community college teachers, including internships in a government agency, a professional association, or business and a dissertation as an applied piece of pedagogical work; (2) an evaluation and feedback program for part-time faculty, including a plan for interaction with the department's full-time faculty; and (3) a graduate course which uses videos to provide about half the sessions with information and visualization while the instructor meets with students for discussions for the other half. In a national project, all seniors are required to participate in a seminar that covers theories of communication--the instructor produces and uses 10-15 minute videos of various theorists to integrate the program. (CR)

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[PANEL:
MAKING SENSE OF MESSAGES]
SCANNING THE PRESENT:
CREATING THE FUTURE--TRENDS IN EDUCATION

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Are We Ahead of the Crowd? Behind?
OR Out in Left Field?

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In higher education, one should ask about each innovation whether it is an innovation by using the wonderful metaphor of being "ahead of?" or "behind?" the crowd as well as the metaphor of "being out in left field after the last pitch was thrown." In this context, I would like to emphasize today that I plan to share what some of the responses about scanning the present and creating the future are in the Communication Department at George Mason University. For each area I will cover what we have done to "scan the present" and the innovations for us that we think are "creating the future" by developing a response to current trends in higher education.

Community College Doctorate Program

SCANNING THE PRESENT: Given that 52 percent of students in higher education are in community colleges across the country, the discipline needs to pay attention to the preparation of those teachers. Given that almost all doctorates in speech communication are "research-'oriented" degrees, most community college instructors do not see that as a welcome option. Thus, George Mason University eight years ago created such a *teaching doctorate targeted at community college teachers*. Aware of this degree and need in the speech communication field, the communication department sought participation in the program. We were approved to start taking candidates in 1995.

CREATING THE FUTURE: This degree has four major elements to prepare people for a life of teaching in the community colleges of America. First, a minimum of 24 hours of graduate work is required beyond the masters degree in the content area. These courses are to help the candidate teach lower division courses at the community college level. Thus, the advisor might be making a different set of assumptions on what types of courses would be helpful to the person. Of the current group of ten candidates several patterns emerged which were not necessarily planned, but do fit the principle involved. The patterns I have identified with the first cohort of students seem to cluster around these three approaches:

- (a) developing background for teaching an array of basic courses in speech communication;
- (b) adding to areas of the masters degree to teach a new set of course within the discipline that have not been taught; and
- (c) enriching current approaches by developing linkages to other bodies of knowledge that were not part of the masters curriculum.

The particular challenge we face at GMU is not having a current graduate program. We are linked to the interdisciplinary Telecommunications Program as one of the four core areas, as well as relating to other graduate programs. Yet, we do not have a planned graduate program in Communication. The strengths of our limited graduate program are in telecommunications, speech activities, intercultural communication, and small group decision making. Several students have enriched these communication classes with approved links to our internationally-respected conflict resolution program.

The second aspect of this program is an internship in a government agency, a professional

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association, or business. [Those returning students who have not taught at the community college level would be doing student teaching for their internship work.] The goal of this segment is to acquaint the student with the community in enhancing their understanding of how another part of the community operates. If community colleges are to be successful in their mission of serving the community needs, instructors need to be knowledgeable of the value and operational structure of organizations beyond educational ones. So far we have had two internships at the Speech Communication Association, which fits into the professional development of the candidate as well as exposure to a non-profit professional organization.

The third segment is to take a set of pedagogical based courses taking seriously the teaching career and emphasis of the community college. Courses vary from the history and philosophy of the community college to "Communication Skills in Community College Teaching." During the hearings held before the original proposal was developed, community college faculties were adamant in not wanting courses designed for elementary and secondary education--they wanted their own pedagogical courses. Since the program is for teaching, the goal was to avoid administrative type of courses. [Other Community College doctorates concentrate upon administration.] Outstanding speech communication community college leaders, like Roy Berko [Speech Community Association; formerly at Lorain County Community College] and Isa Engleberg [Prince George's Community College] have taught the communication skills course.

The fourth segment is the dissertation as an applied piece of pedagogical work. While the traditional dissertation is acceptable, students are encouraged to undertake a study that will have impact on pedagogical practice at the local, state, or national levels. Such topics might be:

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(a) a local study involving the use of diagnostic study sheets in a planned sequence of 28 units for teaching calculus, (b) at the state level a study of Civil War battlefields in the teaching history at all of the community colleges in Virginia, and © a national study of articulation problems for speech communication courses using members of the community college section of SCA.

Additionally, students are encouraged to have not only the traditional defense with their committee, but also to have a public presentation of their results to the appropriate board, state organization, or national organization as a sign of their increased professionalism.

USING PART-TIME INSTRUCTORS

SCANNING THE PRESENT: Nationally the expansion of part-time faculty has been tremendous. This semester the GMU communication department has 42 part-time instructors and eight graduate instructors with 15 full-time people of which four are on restricted appointments. At George Mason in the last five years in the College of Arts and Sciences [the largest college with over 55 percent of the faculty] has increased its tenure track positions by 2 percent, the restricted [non-tenured appointments that are renewed each year] positions by 85 percent, and adjuncts by 27 percent. With such growth for instructional faculty, it is apparent that we need to conceptualize how we integrate these faculty into a teaching program.

Even with the American Association of University Professors recommended restrictions for hiring people on restricted positions to only five years, our university dropped that guideline in the new Faculty Handbook. The reasoning was based upon the need to have a series of classes taught at the lower level by people who are not expected to publish. In the mid 70's Clara Lee Moody pointed out in an article in the Chronicle of Higher Education that part-time instruction is a dangerous trend as Lansing Community College had three full-time people in

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English and over 70 adjuncts. She noted how the high percentage of part-time people means a loss of curricular control as consistency is hard to establish.

CREATING THE FUTURE: The Communication Department realizing our growth of adjuncts developed two initiatives to work with part-time faculty. First is an evaluation program that would occur in the first year of teaching for us and then a review every three years. Second is a twice a year workshop to work on specific teaching challenges facing the department.

The evaluation of part-time instructors is based on a "partial teaching portfolio" system that asks the part-time instructors to place in their portfolio for either the first or second semester the following: a) copy of their grades, b) student evaluations, c) a 15 minute video tape of a lecture or instructional presentation, d) the syllabus, and e) other relevant materials. We do not want letters from students. A three-person committee examines these materials during the semester break and writes a feedback letter. During the first year we dropped one person from teaching as he gave a lecture on public speaking in a group discussion class--the inconsistency here was apparent from comments the chair had received from students. The most common feedback to faculty was in reference to a perceived high grading scale.

We believe that as a department we are obligated to both evaluate adjuncts and provide them feedback as to their teaching. While actual visits to the classroom would be ideal, given the 57.4 student/faculty ratio this option was the best choice for us. That way the committee could spend a full day examining records and viewing video tapes. Several of the experienced faculty avoided this task the first year, but most, but not all have done it this year. From the chair's perspective this process has led to an increase in pedagogical discussions with part-time faculty. Also during the last grading period more faculty called to consult on grading problems.

Besides providing feedback about teaching, the department felt obligated to provide a type of interaction with the full-time faculty over issues common to the mission and goals of the department. Thus, each semester a Saturday afternoon general department meeting and in service session is held. All new faculty have a two-hour orientation to university and department procedures by the Chair and the Associate Chair. People teaching in the basic courses have their own two or four hour workshop before the general faculty meeting. Then we have the general faculty meeting of which an hour is spent for "in-service workshops" led by appropriate faculty--full or part time. For example the session on "Integrating First Amendment" freedoms into courses was led last time by our regular instructor, Dr. Taylor and an adjunct, Dr. Paul Siegel from Gaulladet University. Paul is an active publisher in the First Amendment area as well as the instructor of our Journalism Law class. With seven different topics ranging from "Using Guest Speakers from the DC Area," to "Improving Writing Instruction," we switched after a half-hour so people could be in two different discussion groups.

Since the department adopted a series of computer integration goals for this spring, next fall that will be a major session for all faculty before the workshops. These meetings in August and January also have a social side to them as every meeting begins with self-introductions so other people can develop commonalities. The attitude behind them is to share teaching goals, strategies, and points of integration.

INTEGRATING VIDEO INTO CLASSES

SCANNING THE FUTURE: A sure impact of television has been on student learning by video. With over five hours a day exposure to television by most children, the college

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student today is conditioned to absorb information by video. With higher education being on the brink of major changes as we adapt to the information age, it is clear that more information will be sent out in visual and/or digital formats. We expect the next decade to be one of experimentation and adaption to new forms of education.

Three thousand miles from my campus, I watch Frank Dance teach speech for the Mind Extension University in my parent's nursing home room. As I watch Dance's clear, accurate, and helpful presentation, I wonder why I should spend between \$10,000 and! 5,000 each semester to get the same type of information to students. The issue becomes clear economically--can I use that same money to provide better teaching situations for our students? Video does provide one way of getting information across to students.

CREATING THE FUTURE: This year we supported two initiatives for video. The first is to create a graduate course that uses videos to provide about half the sessions with information and visualization while the instructor meets with the students for discussions the other half of the time. This schedule provides the instructor more flexibility and a way to respond to more students. The cost is the time developing these videos. Thus, the product has to be conceived in almost a five year cycle to make the effort worthwhile for the instructor and the resource support required for shooting the videos. [Almost three-fourths of the scenes were shoot out of the studio and two-thirds of those were done off-campus.]

Another approach has been a national project also led by Dr. Lont. All of our seniors are required to participate in a senior seminar that covers theories of communication. Prof. Lont has taken to making ten to fifteen minute videos of various theorists to integrate into the program. The pedagogical theory behind this strategy suggests that seeing Sam Becker or Michael

Burgoon helps students relate to their theories. The feeling of the instructors so far has been that this strategy is a major success. For example, the video clips capture a personal aspect of each person.

CONCLUSIONS

Michael Dolence and Donald Norris in *Transforming Higher Education* argue "Those who realign their practice most effectively to Information Age standards will reap substantial benefits" (1995, p.3). Thus, new ways of training professors, new ways of viewing how one integrates into a faculty, and new ways of teaching will all be part of our challenge in the next decade. While I have focused on three small changes for one department, the changes in student demographics, delivery systems, and organizational structures will all be part of the teaching life we encounter.

The question is now will we change, but rather it is "How will we change?" All of us will be participants in the diffusion of innovations. It may be that all of us will need to be students of Everett Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovation*.