

Center for Teaching Excellence

This is the second of a series of newsletters encouraging faculty enrichment and excellence in teaching by announcing opportunities, sharing ideas, and promoting collaboration.

On-Campus Opportunity for All Faculty: Using Blackboard Effectively

Friday, November 16 or 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. Computer Training Room Payson Library	Wednesday, December 12 (during exam week) 8:00 to 10:00 a.m. Computer Training Room Payson Library
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Alan Regan will conduct a session on how to use Blackboard more productively and more skillfully in our teaching. He will focus on Blackboard 7.2. We will also have time for discussion.

Alan works for Information Technology as the Senior Technology Liaison for the Business Administration Division. He has provided a computer link for you to register for one of these times.

Instructions for instructors who want to attend:

1. Visit: <http://www.pepperdine.edu/it/training/registration.htm?loc=mal>
2. Select one of the two "Blackboard for Seaver Faculty" training sessions:
"Blackboard for Seaver Faculty, 11/16/2007 2:30-4:30, CCB 242"
"Blackboard for Seaver Faculty, 12/12/2007 8:00-10:00, CCB 242"
3. Enter your contact information.
4. Click Submit.

Also, please let me know if you plan to attend. I hope you will!

Off-Campus Opportunities

A Lilly Conference on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning will be held March 20-21, 2008, at Cal Poly, Pomona, California. Go to the website <http://www.iats.com> or Google Lilly Conferences 2008.

The Teaching Professor Conference will be held May 16-18, 2008, in Kissimmee, Florida:

Go to <http://www.magnapubs.com>. Click on Conferences at the top of the page and then on The Teaching Professor. At this website you may also sign up for a free newsletter about teaching called *Faculty Focus*.

Here is an excerpt from this free newsletter mentioned above: *Faculty Focus*, Volume 4, Issue 10.

Sign up to receive this newsletter or the one mentioned at the end of the article. The link is <http://www.magnapubs.com>.

Some Lessons Learned about Learner-Centered Teaching October 2007

Because so much of what college teachers learn about teaching they learn from experience, there is a bit of a tradition of senior faculty sharing instructional wisdom with beginners. It's not a strong tradition or one that has any consistent format, but, with some regularity, articles and sometimes even books appear in which the "senior" attempts to distill lessons that can be passed on to those more "junior." If the "senior" is insightful and the lessons are articulated ably, then those lessons benefit not just beginners but all faculty. And that is certainly the case with a wonderful piece authored by management professor David A. Whetten, who now directs a faculty development center.

Whetten admits with honesty that for some years he didn't think there was much he could learn from people who "studied" education. After all, he was in the classroom doing education and had learned much from that experience. He explains how a conversation with his golf instructor resulted in an important insight about the nature of experiential learning. "One day on the driving range, I was demonstrating my swing while remarking, 'Practice makes perfect.' His disarming response was, 'Only if you begin with a good swing. My advice to you is to either stop practicing or change your swing.' In teaching, as in golf, repeating poor teaching mechanics can actually move us away from, not closer to, our performance objective of effective student learning." (p. 340) Faculty do learn from experience; that's true. However, the more salient question is what have they learned.

"So what changes in my swing as a teacher am I trying to make that I wish someone had corrected early in my career?" Whetten asks. (p. 340) He explains that early in his career a new faculty member asked advice about teaching at a top-tier private business school where MBA students would not tolerate poor teaching. "My recommendation at the time was to find the highest-rated MBA teacher and attend every class for a semester, taking copious notes." (p. 341) But that's not the recommendation he'd give today. Now he'd find the MBA course where students report learning the most, and then he'd carefully examine the design of that course. "It's not that we can't learn anything of value about learning by observing great teachers; it's that emphasizing classroom observation perpetuates the myth that the key to learning is a talented instructor." (p. 341)

And this leads Whetten to the most important lesson he's learned: course design. He explains with another example. As a teacher he prizes discussion and he reports working diligently to learn how to lead those discussions effectively. ". . . as I crafted provocative discussion questions, I did so with the expectation that my answers needed to be significantly more profound than those offered by the students—otherwise, I reasoned, I wasn't adding value as a teacher. In contrast, I have come to understand that the most important things I can do to influence student learning involve carefully planning what my *students*—*not* their teacher—will do before, during and after each class." (p. 341)

The remainder of this excellent article then articulates some of the most important principles of learning-centered course design. They include beginning with explicit, high-level learning objectives, using valid developmental assessments of student learning, selecting course activities that foster active and engaged learning, and aligning course design elements. The alignment issue is not one easily understood by most faculty. It relates to whether what is taught is consistent with stated objectives for the course and whether students are tested on what they have been told is important to learn.

Whetten concludes with this observation: "I went into this experience [referring to his work in faculty development] expecting to pick up some useful teaching tips for polishing my performance as a teacher; I will leave this experience with a very different view of teaching—focused on student learning outcomes and framed as teacher-as-course-designer." (p. 356)

Reference: Whetten, D. A. (2007). Principles of effective course design: What I wish I had known about learning-centered teaching 30 years ago. *Journal of Management Education*, 31, 339-357.

Ed.'s note: This entire issue of the Journal of Management Education is devoted to articles from senior and well-respected faculty in the field. Guest editor Janet Gillespie describes the issue this way: "Wisdom from Our Sages: Advice and Reflections for Early-Career Faculty (and for the Rest of Us)." What a wonderful idea and how appropriate for all discipline-based pedagogical periodicals to give some permanence to the lessons of those who have learned much and well.

This article first appeared in *The Teaching Professor*, a newsletter written for everyone involved with classroom instruction in higher education. See for yourself what a great tool *The Teaching Professor* is - [sign up for a free 3-month, no-obligation trial subscription.](#)

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Ideas for the Future

- ❖ **Jordan Smith, Asian Studies, has suggested holding a reading and discussion workshop devoted to examining strategies suggested in the text *Classroom Assessment Techniques*, edited by Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross. Would you be interested in doing this or something like this? Let me know, and I will set up a series of meetings or a one-time meeting to share ideas.**

- ❖ **Khan Bui, Psychology, has suggested a workshop on the use of PowerPoint.**

- ❖ **I am also anxious to have additional suggestions from each of you.**