

# Teaching Matters

The Teaching and Learning Center of the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia

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2003 Fall

## Our progress toward a culture of learning-centered

Phyllis Blumberg

Interest in and implementation of learning-centered teaching is growing since the initiation of the strategic planning process in 2001. Last fall the Dean's Initiative Award was devoted to furthering the creation of a culture of student-centered living and learning-centered teaching. Three grants were awarded. All of the faculty (Catherine Bentzley, Phyllis Blumberg, Leslie Ann Bowman, Barbara Hogan, Pamalyn Kearney, Peter Miller, Michele Mulhall, Andrew Peterson, Glenn Rosenthal, Shanaz Tejani-Butt, Susan Wainwright) receiving these grants volunteered to form a Faculty Learning Community to explore learning-centered teaching, to support each other in their development of their own courses that incorporate this approach and to help other faculty to move toward learning-centered teaching. The group has met one to two times a month for ten months. Each person presented to the group on a different aspect of learning-centered teaching and different implementation strategies. Members of the Learning Community now share their teaching experiences and work together to further improve their teaching.

As a condition of the grant, each Faculty Learning Community member revised at least one of his/her courses to make them more learning-centered. The courses have pervasive learning-centered philosophies and practices throughout all aspects of the course. Revised syllabi feature learning-centered policies and different methods of assessment often using authentic assessments more often than multiple-choice tests of content mastery.

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The Teaching and Learning Center is an educational resource for all USP faculty who are interested in helping their students become more effective learners. It maintains a current collection of books and periodicals relating to teaching and learning and student assessment. The Teaching and Learning Center web page is [www.usip.edu/teching](http://www.usip.edu/teching)

## **Our progress toward a culture of learning-centered (continued)**

Andrew revised a large enrollment course, Pharmacy Systems Management PA 444 to be learning-centered as a model for other large classes. Various approaches are being used including Team-Based Learning (Michaelson, Knight, & Fink, 2002) in Pam's Rehabilitation Interventions course, and using concept mapping as a learning and assessment strategy in Peter's three Kinesiology courses and a Clinical Medicine course. Concept mapping is also used in several other courses taught by Faculty Learning Community members and others. Collaborative group projects were a common approach in courses taught by faculty in the Learning Community including three of Pam's OT's courses, four of Peter's PT courses, Andrew's course on Pharmacy Systems Management, Glenn's capstone course for pharmaceutical marketing and management majors, and Leslie's team taught Information Strategies for Biomedical Writers course. Students have more voice in determining how and when they will be assessed. Andrew and Phyllis implemented contract grading where the students select among options to determine the highest grade they can potentially earn. Peter uses self-assessment (with evidence-based justification) in his courses and Leslie uses peer assessment for group projects. In addition, Leslie gave a workshop to her peers in her department on how to incorporate learning-centered teaching. To date, the faculty Learning Community implemented learning-centered teaching in 22 different courses. These individual courses are being showcased in events hosted by the Teaching and Learning Center.

As a result of the combined efforts of increased awareness through the strategic planning process, the tactical planning groups, participating in the educational events and the encouragement and support of the Faculty Learning Community, many more faculty are employing learning-centered techniques in their courses than just the Faculty Learning Community. Eighteen faculty described learning-centered innovations in the 2003 edition of the Document of Innovations. These innovations emphasize student learning in different teaching and learning interactions, and assessments to engage students in active and deep learning. As of October 2003, 32 faculty are proud to volunteer to join newly forming groups on learning-centered approaches.

For many faculty members incorporating some of the approaches of learning-centered teaching constitutes an important first step within an incremental change process. While some excellent examples of learning-centered teaching occur here, they occur in isolated situations. Sometimes the approach is a single facet of an otherwise traditional, faculty-driven course. In other cases a more learning-centered course is fostered in generally traditional curricula. Certainly, the culture is not yet one of learning-centered teaching and student-centered living, nor is it realistic to expect that in only a short time. Some faculty members are beginning to realize that implementing all of the changes would create a very different type of teaching-learning dynamic. A genuine shift requires more than the application of techniques, such as the use of active learning or collaborative activities.

Given the window of opportunity provided by the strategic imperative relating to student-centered learning and living, the time is right to move the faculty proactively toward more learning-centered teaching. To foster the adaptation of teaching approaches, the faculty Learning Community and I will continue to guide faculty on all aspects of learning-centered teaching. As a result, more examples of learning-centered courses and programs should emerge from their work. Although the initiative seems bold, with continued effort from faculty, administrative support, and a growing infrastructure for education and support, USP can make progress toward changing our teaching and learning culture. The strategic planning process charged us to create a culture of student centered learning and living. Through a two-pronged approach of planning and education/support, much progress has been made. Our progress can be seen as an example of the beginning of a successful diffusion of an innovation.

## On-going support and education for learning-centered teaching

Over thirty faculty have identified themselves as either doing or interested in doing learning-centered teaching. To educate and support these people, as well as others who may want to join in the future, the Teaching and Learning Center will be offering various services. Please contact Mary Rafferty or Phyllis Blumberg if you wish to participate in any of these activities:

- Starting a learning-centered teaching listserv will we can ask each other questions, share a great resource or let others know about something that we did that worked well
- Organizing informal groups that will meet from time to time to share what we are doing with learning-centered approaches or ask for advice
- Scheduling Open Classroom days where you can observe a faculty member using a specific learning-centered technique

## Policy change for the Teaching and Learning Center's Travel Grants

In an attempt to recognize and support long-standing adjunct and part-time USP faculty, these instructors will now be eligible to receive a travel grant from the Teaching and Learning Center provided they meet these special requirements (in addition to all that apply to full time faculty):

- The adjunct or part time faculty should have taught at USP for at least the past three years and should be considered a likely candidate for continued employment.
- The department chair or program director will write a brief letter to support the travel grant. Included in this letter should be a description of the faculty's roles in the department, overall teaching evaluations and why the director or chair supports this grant application.
- As is the case with full time faculty, an adjunct or part time faculty member who receives a travel award must share what (s)he has learned from attending the conference with the USP campus at large. This person may be asked to present at a TableTalk discussion, a workshop for all faculty or a special workshop intended for adjunct or part time faculty or some other venue.
- **All other aspects to the application and grant are the same as with full time USP faculty. See the Center's web announcement for the latest requirements ([www.usip.edu/teaching/basicinfo.shtml#grant](http://www.usip.edu/teaching/basicinfo.shtml#grant)).**

## Upcoming Barnes Trip

Come again to the Barnes before the doors are closed and move out of Lower Merion, Pa.

The Teaching and Learning Center has purchased 25 tickets.

Date of Reservation: January 2, 2004 Time of Reservation 10:00AM

The cost of the ticket is \$5.00. Please write a check to USP and return to Mary Rafferty prior to December 19, 2003. There is limited parking on the grounds and to park the cost is \$10 per car

## Call for Patricia Leahy Award

The Patricia Leahy Memorial Award that fosters student learning. An endowed faculty award sponsored by Charles W. Gibley, Jr., Ph.D. Formerly called the InnOvations With Learning (OWL) Award

Appropriate innovations: All innovations that have a large impact on student learning will be considered. Examples of large impact on student learning include a more desirable outcome of learning (i.e., better overall scores on tests, more students doing well in the course, or better student products due to changes made by the instructor) especially compared to a previous approach; or a more positive attitude towards learning the material. These innovations might include completely revising a course, revising an entire educational program, integrating several courses or disciplines, greatly changing how students learn or are assessed in a course, or a course with a new approach. The innovation must have had an impact on the students' learning. The faculty must have an understanding of why the innovation had an impact. The number of students who participate in the course cannot be a relevant consideration since the course sizes varies so much at USP. Groups of faculty who have collaborated on the development of a new approach are encouraged to apply. Inter-course or interdisciplinary innovations are encouraged. An innovation need not be a success, but it must have been implemented at least once.

Eligibility: Full-time faculty members who are in at least their third year of employment at USP may apply. The award winner(s) from the previous year are not eligible to apply, but may apply again in the future. The innovation must have been developed by the submitter and implemented within the last two years. The strategy need not be totally original, it can be an adaptation of innovations tried elsewhere.

Submission materials: Each of the following should be submitted as a paper copy and an electronic copy. For the abstracts and summaries use 12 font size and a standard easy to read font.

- Complete Document of Innovation Abstract form so that the innovation will be included in this year's edition. This abstract is limited to two pages.
- Attach additional materials on any section, if necessary. Supplemental course materials or examples of assignments may be submitted.
- <200 word summary for publication in the Teaching and Learning Center's Newsletter

**(Deadline for submission: March 8, 2004)**  
For more information on the Leahy Award go to [www.usip.edu/teaching/owl/shtml](http://www.usip.edu/teaching/owl/shtml)

### Remaining Fall 2003 Table Talk Series

Date-Time	Location	Topic	Presenters
November 11 Tuesday 1-2PM	WCR	Transitioning from student centeredness to patient-centered care	Michele Mulhall
November 17 Monday 4-5PM	WCR	Transitioning from student centeredness to patient-centered care	Michele Mulhall
December 1 Monday 4-5 PM	WCR	Making your student evaluations work for you	Micki Cohen
December 9 Tuesday 1-2PM	WCR	Innovations with Learning Leahy Award Winner Concept mapping	Peter Miller
December 15 Monday 4-5PM	WCR	Innovations with Learning Leahy Award Winner Concept mapping	Peter Miller

## Executive Summary of the May 2003 Consensus Conference on Learning-Centered Teaching

- All faculty, appropriate staff and administrators were invited to participate and informed how important their voices were to reaching a campus-wide consensus on what is learning-centered teaching and how we can achieve it.
- Every academic department was represented. Also represented were Academic Administration, Student Affairs, Student Services, and Institutional Advancement.
- All fifty participants worked in two different small groups to reach a consensus, meaning that all participants of the small group could agree with their statements
- The groups were asked to reach a consensus on six questions:
  - a. What are the key elements of a learning-centered philosophy?
  - b. What is the relationship between active learning and learning-centered teaching?
  - c. What are the characteristics of learning-centered teaching?
  - d. What are the characteristics of graduates of learning-centered institutions?
  - e. How can the above be achieved in a hypothetical college?
  - f. How can we achieve the above?
- The groups turned in a summary sheet of their consensus statements to these questions. These summary sheets were used to craft the position paper.
- Summary of the findings:
  - a. The participants of the consensus conference all agree that learning-centered teaching means developing student responsibility for their own learning and meaning.
  - b. For USP to really achieve a culture of learning-centered teaching, this philosophy must be accepted and implemented consistently across the entire university, not just in isolated experiences. The reward structure needs to be consistent with this value.
  - c. Instructional design and the learning environment should accommodate different learning styles and how students learn.
  - d. Students/graduates of such learning-centered program may be characterized by being lifelong, self-directed, self-initiating learners; leaders; and possessing excellent problem solving abilities
  - e. Methods to achieve these desired outcomes (student characteristics) are less agreed upon. Participants felt that the following would be effective strategies:
    - Having classrooms and a physical environment that is conducive to actively engaging students
    - Educating, orienting all faculty, staff, and students to learn more about learning-centered teaching
    - Infrastructure and dedicated resources
    - Rewards and release time to encourage the transition to learning-centered teaching.
  - f. The participants were at different points in the continuum of how USP can achieve the goal of learning-centered teaching.

The participants' responses were consistent with and validated the proposed action steps of the Tactical Planning Group on Student Centered-Learning and Living

For the complete consensus position paper on learning-centered teaching see [www.usip.edu/teaching/learner](http://www.usip.edu/teaching/learner)

## Summary of Previous events: TableTalks

**September 2003**

**Enhancing Students' Ability to self-evaluate: using exam responses to refine study skills**

**Ellen-Flannery-Schroeder**

- This technique helps students to use their exam performance as feedback on efficacy of their studying
- When the instructor returns an exam, give additional information for every question on a multiple-choice or short answer exam. For example:
  - Was it a factual or application type of item
  - Did the information come from the textbook or the lecture
- Students make a grid of what type of questions they got wrong, e.g., application from the textbook
- Students found this information very helpful to prepare for future exams and wanted to continue getting this information on all exams
- Students could complete grid as a self-assessment prior to getting the results and then compare to actual results
- Technique could be adapted for essay tests in terms of where the students lost points i.e, got facts correct and how well argument was developed or supported
- This would be useful information to gather to see if students worked on their weaknesses

**September 2003**

**Using cooperative learning, peer modeling and e-mail to help students learn more**

**Miriam Diaz-Gilbert**

- The following are very effective techniques for teaching ESL students to read and write English better. They also work very well with other types of classes:
  - cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students can work together to accomplish a common purpose and maximize learning ( Johnson and Johnson, 1983)
    - in small groups students discuss essay questions, brainstorm how to answer question, write an essay together
  - peer modeling allows students to show each other their own work and have peer, formative evaluations
    - process provides peers with tips for better writing
  - email each other drafts and revisions
    - get feedback highlighted in yellow
- These techniques
  - Must be guided and purposeful
  - Are time consuming
  - Need to integrate individual learning needs and styles with processAre very rewarding for both student and instructor

## Summary of Previous events: TableTalks continued

### September- October 2003

#### Using handheld devices for educational purposes Jacqui Smith

- Advantages of handheld devices:
  - Small, portable
  - Low cost
  - Ease of use
  - Can save to desktop or laptop computer
- Many different palm devices available including:
  - Science lab kits are available for data collection in the field
  - Can present PowerPoint presentations that have been created on regular computers
- Excellent educator's guides are available to see what is available:
  - HICE University of Michigan
  - [www.k12handhelds.com](http://www.k12handhelds.com)
  - [www.electronic-school.com](http://www.electronic-school.com)
  - classroom management
  - avantgo
- Pedagogy and objectives need to guide if and what handheld device is used
  - Often tempted to let technology and new toy appeal guide decisions to use these devices
- Must align use of handheld devices with university goals and personal instructional goals

### October 2003

#### Revising courses to foster student learning: Close contact calculus Lia Vas

- Traditionally calculus courses emphasized techniques. Now with advances in technology and greater understanding of how people learn and remember, reformed calculus courses emphasize why are we doing this
- Lia's personal version of reformed calculus involves
  - more dynamic classes, more motivated and engaged students
  - using computer labs once a week
  - an interdisciplinary approach using examples from sciences
- In each class students work on worksheets consisting of
  - Summary of new concepts that the class will cover
  - Short introductory problems or solved examples that the instructor will go over
  - The main is problems for students to solve on their own to help them master the content
  - Applications from other disciplines
- Overall course structure involves:
  - Assignments often using technology
  - Individualized take home exams
  - Projects
  - Student presentations or posters
- Student reactions have been very positive

## Overview of Selected Previous Workshops

**August 2003**

### **Implementing Learning Centered Teaching Phyllis Blumberg**

- What is Learning-Centered teaching?
  - Learning drives the system
  - Students are actively engaged in their learning process
  - Students take responsibility for their own learning, faculty help students to learn how to do this
  - Faculty facilitate students learning
  - Faculty design learning environments, not just cover content
  - Students have some say on how they will learn, but not what they will learn
  - Learning how to learn, understanding importance of learning
  - Students should become self-directed, lifelong learners
- Summary of Maryellen Weimer, Learner Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2002
  - For teaching to promote more effective learning, instructional practice needs to change in 5 key areas:
    - The function of content to include learning skills and learner-self-awareness
    - The role of the teacher is to facilitate learning,
    - The responsibility for learning rests with the students.
    - Evaluation activities should also promote learning. Peer and self assessments are important
    - Faculty need to share decision-making about learning with the students

**August 2003**

### **Making a good beginning to a class Kevin Wolbach**

- In addition to getting contact information from the students ask them
  - To tell you a little about themselves
  - What they have heard about you
  - If they have any questions about the courses
- Address this acquired information, questions in an early class
- Allow the students some say in deadlines on the syllabus
- Tell them about yourself as a person
- Make content relevant to them or to common life examples
- Explain why and how they will be learning this content
- Be sure the students understand the syllabus

**August 2003**

### **Using Blackboard as an Effective Educational Tool Jeanette McVeigh, Tamara Case, Cathy Poon**

- Start small
  - Start with 1 aspect of your course, grading or 1 assignment
- Think from the perspective of students in your particular course
  - Ask yourself how should students access your material easily
- It is easy to import files from other word or excel
- It is easy to link to the internet html or pdf files
- Blackboard is especially good for doing self-assessments of knowledge and other quizzes
- For more information or help, contact one of the presenters

## Overview of Selected Previous Workshops continued

**August 2003**

### **Incorporating learning centered teaching philosophies and practices in large classes or with heavy teaching load Phyllis Blumberg**

The workshop participants planned one or more activities to help make a change in one of the key practices as outlined by

- The function of content
  - Develop a classroom activity or assignment to foster the students ability to take useful notes, review for a test, find appropriate literature in the discipline, critically evaluate the literature or communicate
- The role of the teacher
  - Participants used a decision tree analyses to determine how and where material should be covered to facilitate learning
- The responsibility for learning rests with the students.
  - Participants reviewed policies. Most of the policies tend to inhibit students taking responsibility for their own learning.
  - Participants developed a mechanism for the students and instructor collaboratively to describe student and instructor expectations
  - The role of evaluation includes learning
  - Participants decided what kind of assessments should be done by whom. They developed an instrument for peer and self-assessment.
- The balance of power
  - Participants developed a way to allow students more say in how they are graded through a contract grading system

**August 2003**

### **Making teaching a large number of students a manageable experience Phyllis Blumberg**

- Logistics Plan in advance
  - Organize paper distribution and collection through using groups of students and folders for each group, set out paper in advance in folders
  - use technology for efficient distribution of materials
- civility
  - The larger the class the greater the chances for incivility.
  - Get to know students as individuals
  - Have the class develop their own rules for their conduct
- Assignments
  - To facilitate students working together, give them 5-10 minutes in class just to set up a meeting
  - Larry Michaelsen lists five characteristics of good group assignments.
    1. Ensure individual accountability
    2. Promote close physical proximity
    3. Promote discussion among team members
    4. Provide teams with meaningful feedback
    5. Reward group success
- Assessment and evaluation
  - Provide individual and group feedback or formative assessments.
  - Prior to grading papers, make up a numbered checklist of your criteria that you will use in grading. Comment on one of these by putting the number of the checklist item beside the sentence. Distribute the checklist to your students.

## Faculty Awards 2003

### **Special Recognition Award**

**John Porter, Ph.D.**

Awarded for outstanding rating on the annual faculty evaluation. Individuals are nominated by department chairs, and the recipient is selected by a vote of the department chairs and deans.

### **Adjunct Faculty Members of the Year**

**Roxanne Evans, Humanities**

**Michael Saulino, Occupational Therapy**

**Jacqueline Grimenstein, Physical Therapy**

**Ben Hurwitz – Pharmacy**

Awarded in recognition of outstanding adjunct faculty for their enthusiasm, organization, knowledge, and accessibility to students. Nominations are submitted by students, faculty and chairs.

### **Faculty Advisor of the Year**

**Eric Boyce, PharmD**

Awarded to recognize and honor a faculty member for excellence in academic advising. Nominations are submitted by students, staff and faculty

### **The William F. Homiller Award**

**Andrew Peterson, PharmD**

Awarded to honor a full-time faculty member who broadly implements innovative teaching techniques and improves his or her teaching. Candidates are nominated by faculty.

### **Leahy Award for Teaching Innovations**

**Peter Miller, Ph.D.**

Awarded to faculty whose innovations and instructional strategies increase student learning. Recipients are selected by the previous Leahy winners

### **Lindback Distinguished Teaching Award**

**Julian Snow, Ph.D.**

Awarded to for distinguished teaching the recipients is typically a faculty member who has been repeatedly nominated by students. The recipient is selected by a committee comprised of both students and faculty.