

# VCU TEACHING

A publication from the Virginia Commonwealth University Center for Teaching Excellence



Volume 1, Number 1

Spring, 2003

## *CTE Vital Workshop Series*

### Spring

March 19 -- Using Cooperative Learning

April 9 -- Testing and Assessment

### Summer

June 2 -- Teaching Large Classes

June 3 -- Active Learning and Writing/Assessing Course Objectives

July 7 -- Teaching Large Classes

July 8 -- Active Learning and Writing/Assessing Course Objectives

August 4 -- Teaching Large Classes

August 5 -- Active Learning and Writing/Assessing Course Objectives

For more information, call the CTE at:  
**(804) 827-0838**

This is an exciting time for the Center for Teaching Excellence. We have now been in existence for almost two years and have been adding programs, resources, and services each semester. This newsletter, as one of our new resources, is meant to bring you up to date on a number of new initiatives, resources, and also alert you to forthcoming programs and events. To continue to receive our e-newsletter, *VCU Teaching*, and to receive other electronic announcements about CTE activities and events, please sign up to our **CTE Mailing List** by visiting our website or contacting us directly at [cte@vcu.edu](mailto:cte@vcu.edu).

Many of the faculty have commented on the usefulness of our **CTE website** and we are very appreciative of the feedback as our website is the primary source of all of our resources, programs and events. Shortly we will be merging the VCU Teaching website with our main CTE website. Some faculty have had problems finding material on the different sites so we believe that merging both of them into one comprehensive site will make searching and navigation easier. *VCU Teaching* will become a traditional e-newsletter published twice a year (at the beginning of each semester) and will contain articles written by VCU faculty and staff, as well as information about upcoming news and events.

We would also like you to be aware that the CTE is currently partnering with the **Professional Development Academy** on a number of programs including this newsletter. The PDA exists here on campus to provide assistance with the delivering of universal access to all our students. They have many resources that faculty may not be aware of and the CTE will try its best to bring those resources to your attention.

Finally, I would like to mention that we are currently developing a faculty development program for junior faculty. This program will include both group mentoring (which we already do) and individual mentoring as well as year round activities to help junior faculty make the transition to Virginia Commonwealth University as quickly and pleasantly as possible.

Remember, the CTE is here to serve the faculty in whatever capacity they desire with regard to teaching and the overall improvement of student learning. Please do not hesitate to contact us regarding anything that you feel we might be able to assist you with.

Joseph Marolla, Director, CTE

In order for the CTE to continue to offer the most necessary and useful resources and services to the widest range of faculty, we need your input. Please take a few moments to fill out a fifteen question online survey at <http://www.pubinfo.vcu.edu/wss/cte/2003facultysurvey.html>.

**SET NET VIDEO TELECAST -- March 26, 2003 -- 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.**

**In the Trenches: What Works in Higher Education Instruction**

Medical Campus: Sanger Hall, 6-032

Academic Campus: Student Commons Forum Room



## CTE Resources and Services

- ◆ CTE Website
- ◆ CTE Mailing List
- ◆ VCU Teaching Newsletter
- ◆ Several National Online Newsletters
  - The Teaching Professor
  - Online Classroom
  - The National Teaching and Learning Forum
- ◆ CTE Small Grants Program
- ◆ CTE Faculty Mentoring Programs
- ◆ VITAL Workshop Series
  - CTE Mobile Workshops
- ◆ Brown Bag Lunch Series
- ◆ STEP Program
- ◆ SmartForce (now SkillSoft)
  - New courses are now available
- ◆ CTE Library
- ◆ Hardware/Software acquisitions, loans, and training
- ◆ Consultations
- ◆ Lecture video--taping and reviewing
- ◆ Classroom observations and reviewing
- ◆ Teaching portfolios

## FOCUSING ON THE FLIP SIDE —TEACHING AND LEARNING

By: Jean M. Yerian, Special Assistant to the Vice Provost  
for Academic Affairs -- jyerian@vcu.edu

When asked about the core missions of the American university, we automatically mouth three words – teaching, research, and service. In recent years, some have shifted “research” to “scholarship,” but the tripartite response remains universally recognizable as what we *do*.

In truth, there has been another shift as well, with even greater implications: those who examine the core contributions of higher education to society are changing the conversation in another way. All around us there are pressures to look not at inputs (teaching), but rather at outcomes (learning).

This shift is certainly evident in university and disciplinary accreditation. In fact, the reaffirmation of accreditation process VCU is currently undergoing will entail the acceptance by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) of a “Quality Enhancement Plan” related to student learning. VCU has chosen to focus on student engagement, getting students involved in and committed to their own learning.

The shift to learning as the flip side of the teaching coin is also obvious in the scrutiny of legislators and parents. We are asked to make sure that tax dollars and life savings result in graduates who have enhanced competencies, both in basic knowledge, comprehension, and application and in higher-level skills, such as those characterized in Bloom’s taxonomy as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. We are being challenged to show that our educational programs lead to “deep” student learning.

Here at Virginia Commonwealth University, the conversation is going on in many quarters. VCU’s Center for Teaching Excellence is an obvious partner for faculty who want to explore how they can increase student engagement and learning in their classes. Student Affairs and Academic Affairs cooperate in offering VCU 101, which talks with new students about the expectations of college and works with them on time management and task/goal commitment.

There is also a new group this year, called the VCU First-Year Learning Forum, with a charge “to build positive student learning engagement patterns and practices in the first undergraduate year.” Twenty Forum members are currently developing a “map” of the first undergraduate year to identify opportunities for greater learning support. One workgroup of the Forum is discussing concrete ways faculty and staff can help first-year students build patterns of increased engagement in and commitment to their own learning.

There are a number of recognized resources to aid us in our task. For example, Arthur W. Chickering and Zelda F. Gamson authored “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education,” an AAHE Bulletin article (<http://home.capecod.net/~tpanitz/seven.html>) which has become a touchstone for anyone



### BROWN BAG LUNCH SERIES

— March 21 -- Plagiarism

April 3 -- Quizzing (Large Class)

April 18 -- Essay Exams

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interested in working with the flip side of the teaching coin. The authors reviewed 50 years of research and concluded that “good practice in undergraduate education:

1. encourages contact between students and faculty,
2. develops reciprocity and cooperation among students,
3. encourages active learning,
4. gives prompt feedback,
5. emphasizes time on task,
6. communicates high expectations, and
7. respects diverse talents and ways of learning.”

Later Chickering teamed with Stephen C. Erhmann to revisit the seven principles, this time using “Technology as Lever.” Especially as class sizes grow and distance learning becomes more prevalent in higher education, technology is an ever-larger aspect of educational practice. It is a tool we can ill afford to ignore.

This year especially, VCU is challenging academic programs and individual faculty to look at student learning outcomes, both as a way of communicating high expectations and as a means of demonstrating accountability through assessment and quality improvement. Consultation is available to faculty interested in **W**riting learning outcome statements, **E**stablishing target levels for outcomes achievement, **A**ssessing outcomes achievement, **V**iewing assessment results, and **E**ffecting program improvements. Academic programs will capture this whole W-E-A-V-E process in WEAVEonline, an assessment database tool debuting this spring.

In truth, there is no question that the coin has been flipped: learning is the name of the game, both for faculty and for students. Make no mistake – many are watching how well we play. The Center for Teaching Excellence is positioned to play a pivotal role for us all as the conversation continues.

*Jean M. Yerian is Special Assistant to the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, chair of the VCU First-Year Learning Forum, and an assessment consultant. Please contact her if you have assessment questions or wish to join the First-Year Learning Forum. [jyerian@vcu.edu](mailto:jyerian@vcu.edu) or 827-1494*

## **CTE PARTNERS WITH THE VCU PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ON INSTRUCTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**



By Liz Getzel, PDA Project Coordinator  
[lgetzel@mail2.vcu.edu](mailto:lgetzel@mail2.vcu.edu)

The VCU Professional Development Academy (PDA) was established in 1999 in collaboration with the Division of Student Affairs and the School of Education’s Rehabilitation Research and Training Center. The Academy was established to develop and implement disability-related information, and to provide technical assistance, and training for faculty and staff. The intent of the PDA’s activities was to provide an array of ongoing supports and resources to enable university personnel to responsively and effectively meet the educational needs of students with disabilities at VCU.

The **Professional Development Academy** is now in a new three-year phase with a focus on integrating existing disability related training and information into the CTE’s faculty development activities. This new partnership will

insure that information on instructing students with disabilities is included in materials and information that is developed and disseminated across the VCU community. It is our hope that this collaborative relationship will assist in meeting future trends in higher education, which include educating students with diverse learning needs, and emerging technologies and strategies for instruction.

Another area of focus for the Academy is to provide intensive training and technical assistance activities for adjunct faculty/graduate teaching assistants, and faculty liaisons for internships and clinical experiences. These activities will also be conducted through CTE, however, the training for these groups will be very specialized and will provide numerous technical assistance activities as a follow-up to any training or information provided.

*If you would like further information about the VCU Professional Development Academy, please check our web site at [www.students.vcu.edu/pda](http://www.students.vcu.edu/pda) or contact Liz Getzel at [lgetzel@mail2.vcu.edu](mailto:lgetzel@mail2.vcu.edu).*

## National Conferences on Teaching and Learning—

**14th International Conference on College Teaching and Learning -- Teaching, Learning, and Technology: Thinking Outside the Box...No Boundaries...No Limits**  
Location -- Jacksonville, Florida  
Date -- April 1-5, 2003  
<http://www.teachlearn.org/final.html>

**The Lilly Conferences on College and University Training**  
Location -- Towson, Maryland  
Date -- April 12-13, 2003  
<http://www.iats.com>

**The Forum -- Teaching in Higher Education's Annual Showcase Conference: Keeping the Touch in Technology 2003**  
Theme -- The Knowledge Enterprise: New Century Learning  
Location -- LSU and A & M College, Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
Date -- April 27-29, 2003, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday  
[bdanos1@lsu.edu](mailto:bdanos1@lsu.edu)

**Twenty-Fifth Annual Summer Institute on College Teaching**  
Location -- The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia  
Date -- Sunday, June 8-13, 2003  
[http://www.vtc.odu.edu/summer\\_institute.htm](http://www.vtc.odu.edu/summer_institute.htm)

**Lilly Summer Institute -- Three Tracks: Developing Faculty Learning Communities; The Psychology of Learning; and Designing Preparing Future Faculty Programs.**  
Location -- Ashland, Oregon  
Date -- July 17-19, 2003  
<http://www.iats.com>

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