

# VCU TEACHING

A publication from the Virginia Commonwealth University Center for Teaching Excellence



Volume 2, Number 1

Spring, 2004

## Summer 2004 CTE VITAL Workshops

### TLC Series 2-day workshop

- ◆ Teaching Large Classes
- ◆ Infusing Technology
- ◆ Active Learning
- ◆ Teaching with BlackBoard

#### Dates:

- June 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> -- 9:00 - 3:30  
Academic Campus
- July 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> -- 9:00 - 3:30  
Academic Campus
- Aug. 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> -- 9:00 - 3:30  
Health Sciences Campus

### New Faculty Institute 2-day workshop

- ◆ Teaching Philosophies
- ◆ Creating a Syllabus
- ◆ Teaching and Assessment

#### Dates:

- August 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> -- TBA
- August 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> -- TBA

**For more information,  
contact the CTE at:  
cte@vcu.edu  
(804) 827-0838**

Greetings from the Center for Teaching Excellence. Once again this has been an extremely busy year for us and the many faculty who help us with all of our programs. This past spring and fall we will have conducted over 25 workshops with faculty on both campuses. Later this spring we will be doing special workshops for the School of Medicine, School of Dentistry, the College of Humanities and Sciences and possibly a few other schools that we are currently working with on focused programs.

This past fall we instituted a number of programs, some of which are described within the newsletter. One of our major initiatives was the CTE Junior Faculty Mentoring Program. This is an integrated program whereby we link a 1st or 2nd year faculty member with a senior member within their school or college. We also conduct at least one workshop every month on topics that the new faculty have determined are important to them. The highlight of last semester was a workshop in getting started with writing for publication. The program now includes 25 faculty from almost every school in the university. The mentors are paid a stipend for their participation. We are looking for faculty who would like to be mentors next year so if you are interested please contact us at [cte@vcu.edu](mailto:cte@vcu.edu) and we will put you on our list. During the summer we will meet with all new faculty and offer this program to them.

This summer we will rerun our very successful series of summer workshops on teaching in the large classroom, integrating active learning in the classroom and integrating technology into large classes. We will also run another series of workshops on Teaching with Blackboard during the summer. Finally, Don Forsyth has agreed to work with us to develop a two-day workshop on teaching for all new faculty. We intend to do this workshop twice during the summer.

On a final note I want you to be aware that the CTE is heavily involved in almost all the major university initiatives involving teaching. We are a major part of the PRISM grant that is working with chemistry, biology and math in Humanities and Sciences. We are also a major part of the Quality Enhancement Program (QEP) that will be instituted over the next ten years as part of our response to the SACS accreditation process. But most importantly I feel the CTE is the voice of the faculty in the classroom. We are here to serve you and your interests. The Classroom Performance System (CPS) described below was initiated by the CTE in an attempt to promote active learning and student engagement in the classroom. We are committed to helping you improve student learning and making your experience as a faculty member at VCU a more positive one. Contact us or join our mailing list at <http://www.vcu.edu/cte>. Help us make the university the kind of place you want it to be.

Best Regards,

Joseph Marolla, Director, CTE



## CTE Resources and Services

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

## STUDENTS TECHNOLOGY EXPERTS PROGRAM

Last Fall, the CTE began a pilot program known as STEP (Students Technology Experts Program). The program is designed to match student interns who have skills in particular areas of technology with faculty members who are interested in learning the same skills in order to improve upon their courses and their teaching. We began the recruitment process last fall and we received over 75 applications from students along with 14 proposals from faculty members. Ultimately, we were able to match nine students with nine faculty members. Most of the faculty members who submitted a proposal were interested in developing a web-presence-from learning how to use Blackboard more effectively, to using web-authoring software such as Dreamweaver or Frontpage, or some combination of the two. Some faculty are also learning about media conversion as they work with digitizing images and audio files that they will later make available on the web. The interns work approximately 10 hours a week for the duration of the project, or the semester, whichever comes first. In addition to the monetary compensation, the interns acquire valuable experience working with others, teaching others, and the opportunity to continue honing their skills and building their resumes. We deliberately kept the program small due to both budgetary constraints, as well as our desire to keep the program manageable. We intend to expand the program during the 2004-05 academic year so if you have any teaching projects that will require you to learn a new technology, please consider submitting a proposal to the CTE STEP this Fall. For more information, please visit our website at <http://www.vcu.edu/cte>

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## USING A CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE SYSTEM TO ENGAGE STUDENTS

By: Darcy Mays, Chair and Associate Professor  
Dept. of Statistical Sciences and Operations Research

Basic Practice of Statistics (STAT 210) is a large lecture course of approximately 200 students, and student attendance and engagement has been a problem. This semester we are piloting the use of Classroom Performance System (or CPS) by E-Instruction, an interactive student engagement program. The goal is to increase attendance and increase attention and by engaging students with simple questions that are projected during lecture that students' answer using hand-held remote response pads. The distribution of the student responses is then displayed. This technique can also increase knowledge retention when coupled with active learning techniques. Upon providing immediate feedback on the results of the answers, the professor can prompt students to discuss the material with other classmates before the question is posed again.

Thus far the program has been popular and it appears successful. For most questions at least 90% of the students are getting the question correct, indicating understanding of the topic. In cases in which a higher number of students do not answer correctly, time can be spent immediately further elaborating on the topic. Many students have indicated that it improves their attention efforts in class, and gives them an idea of what is important and how well they understand the material. One student indicated that on a few questions where most students were correct, she was incorrect, telling her that while she did not understand the concept most students did and hence she needed to make an extra effort to understand the concept. I have noticed an increase in the attendance rate, and in the number of students stopping by my office for help. The following are some direct student feedback:

"I do think that this is a good way for us to learn. Not only is it interactive, but it allows you to see if you really know the material, and kind of forces you to pay attention in class. I have missed a question or two and know its because I either wasn't paying close enough attention or wasn't understanding the material. This also helps me to highlight things that I need to go over more in my notes or ask the lab instructor about. It wasn't that expensive, so it helped, but I hate spending lots of money on books and stuff...but who doesn't??"

"I am really enjoying your class. I have to admit that I've heard negative remarks about statistics, which made me pretty nervous. So far, though, I'm liking the subject a lot. I love the CPS system. It works very well for me. I haven't encountered any problems thus far."

"To respond to your question about the CPS system I find it very helpful and I hope that any class of this size should have a system like it. It seems to be a good way of telling the teacher if what they are going over is getting through to the students."



## THE VCU SUPPORTED EDUCATION PROJECT : HELPING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS SUCCEED IN COLLEGE

<http://www.students.vcu.edu/pda>

By: Shannon McManus, Elizabeth Getzel, and Lori Briel  
VCU Professional Development Academy

The Virginia Commonwealth University-Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (VCU-RRTC) supported education program is designed to provide intensive educational supports to students with learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorders within the existing service delivery structure on campus. The VCU program uses the principles of supported education, which is a consumer-driven, individualized support system utilizing community and university resources (Pettella, Tarnoczy, & Geller, 1996; Unger, 1998).

A key component of the VCU-RRTC supported education program is the exploration and utilization of technology to assist students with their academic coursework. Very few students with disabilities who entered our program had knowledge of or exposure to the variety of technology available. Such technology includes text-to-speech software for reading, writing, and test taking; speech recognition software for writing; electronic organizers for time management and organization; and electronic graphic organizers for reading comprehension, writing, and studying. These types of technology are used in a myriad of ways depending on each student's needs, strengths, weaknesses, and familiarity with technology.

During the development of an individualized academic support plan, students meet with an Academic Specialist (VCU-RRTC staff) to determine the most appropriate and effective method for meeting their needs. If the Academic Specialist and student decide that technology would be most suitable and effective, different options are explored. Background information on the technology is given such as the purpose, possible uses within their academic area, and how the technology works. The Academic Specialist demonstrates the technology and customizes the demonstration to meet the student's unique needs. Following the demonstration, the student then tries the technology with the assistance of the Academic Specialist. This enables a student to learn how to correctly use the technology and to determine if it is suitable to meet his or her needs. This is an important step in the process to insure that the student continues to use the technology and does not abandon it because of using it incorrectly.

If students decide that they would like to continue to explore the technology independently, and in relation to their academic course work, they receive a demonstration disk or sample of the technology. Additionally, students receive information about the location of technology on campus, as well as what financial assistance is available for purchase. If students find the technology beneficial, the program can loan the technology on a temporary basis. Students are able to use the technology throughout their participation in the VCU supported education program and receive technical assistance on an on-going basis. Once a student leaves the program, the technology is returned in order to make it available for other students.

Participating students have reported that the supported education program at VCU enabled them to gain a better understanding about themselves and how they learn. Increased exposure to technology and software coupled with training and follow-up were also extremely beneficial in assisting students to progress in their programs of study. It is critical for students with disabilities transitioning to postsecondary education to be knowledgeable about technology and how it can be incorporated into their academic studies. All too often students with disabilities enter postsecondary education with a limited understanding of technology devices and software, and their benefits. We have seen tremendous academic progress of students with disabilities who entered our program either on probation, failing in one or two courses, or falling behind in their coursework after they have been introduced to technology and shown the benefits of its use.

### **Make Plans to Attend the CTE Summer Workshops**

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



# National Conferences on Teaching and Learning



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## CELEBRATING TEACHING AND PROMOTING LEARNING

May 21-23, 2004 -- Hilton Philadelphia/Cherry Hill Hotel  
<http://www.teachingprofessor.com/>

Four Tracks offered: **TRACK I** - Flexibility, Adaptability, Vitality, and Advocacy  
**Track II** - Learning  
**Track III** - The Sensible Use of Technology  
**Track IV** - Teaching as Scholarly Work

## DEVELOPING TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

May 23-27, 2004 -- Notre Dame University, South Bend, Indiana  
<http://learning.nd.edu/summer/>

## TWENTY-SIXTH ANNUAL SUMMER INSTITUTE ON COLLEGE TEACHING

June 6-11, 2004 -- The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg  
<http://www.vtc.edu.edu>

## ASSESSING OUR WORK: DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED, DATA-DRIVEN EVALUATION SYSTEM

June 25 & 26, 2004 -- The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH  
<http://www.osu.edu/education/ftad/institute.html>

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