



CTL *notes*

the Center for Teaching and Learning

The CTL logo is a mature tree, symbolizing the developed roots and continued growth of Miami University Middletown's excellence in teaching and learning under the canopy of its Center for Teaching and Learning.

Volume 4, Issue 6

APRIL

2008



APRIL

23 Dialogue on Digital Literacy

"Privacy, Identity and Ownership in the (Increasingly) Digital World"

Noon - 1:00 in Rm 137 Johnston
Pizza provided.

29 CTL Special

"Reflections on Student Life (from Real Students)", presented by students from an EDL 110 class.

1:00-1:50 in Room 13 Johnston
Pizza provided

Note the time and room change of this event!

MAY

1 Deadline for application to the BIS Faculty Learning Community

2 Strategic plan conversation with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs

12- 1:30 in Rm 136/137 JHN with a light lunch provided

We hope that you will enjoy this special extended edition of the CTL NOTES for April. The end of the semester is a hectic time for all of us, but it is also a great time to reflect on and measure our growth as teachers and learners. Many of us were involved in faculty learning communities either as facilitators or participants. Others tried new teaching and assessment techniques in their classrooms. Inside this edition you will find many articles that reflect upon and celebrate past ex-



periences and excellent teaching. As spring is a season of blossoming and growth, we hope that you experience a reawakening and renewed growth in your teaching as you move into the summer months and prepare for your next classes.

Wanted: Creative, Collaborative Faculty

To develop and teach seminars for the Bachelor of Integrative Studies degree. Participation in the yearlong faculty learning community is a prerequisite for teaching the BIS 201, BIS 301, and BIS 401 seminars.

This is an exciting opportunity to participate with colleagues in a 21st Century pioneer adventure where innovative, integrated curricular design and teaching methods are encouraged. Hamilton and Middletown colleagues will work together across the disciplines to create unique, challenging, and interrelated courses that build the core for our newest degree program.

Last Friday a number of faculty from both campuses joined together for a "Taste of BIS", where participants brainstormed ideas for seminar themes. The camaraderie and excitement created during that two hour session energized the participants and are harbingers of the great things that will happen in the faculty learning community.

We invite you to apply to the BIS Faculty Learning Community! The application form along with FAQs can be found on the CTL website:

<http://www.mid.muohio.edu/ctl/CAC>

DEADLINE: MAY 1ST!

MELBYE, MCDIFFETT WIN MUM TEACHING AWARD

Eric Melbye and Amy McDiffett are winners of the 2008 Excellence in Teaching Award at Miami University Middletown.

Melbye, recipient of the award for full-time faculty, joined MUM in 2001 and has taught composition and creative writing courses in the English Department. He has an approach to teaching that, in his words, “fosters skills in critical reflection, problem-solving, creative vision, and a comfort level with unfamiliarity that is necessary for innovation.” In the literary journal called *Segue* that he established, Melbye instituted an Author Q&A section where he publishes e-mail dialogues between his students and authors to demonstrate that literature is “written by living people who do not live in ivory towers, who have day jobs, and who make the same kinds of mistakes and cope with the same insecurities as student writers do.” Melbye regularly engages students in community-based learning and encourages his students to explore the connections between creative writing and the community. Melbye also serves as the Director of the Campus-Community Connection and has recently opened the Miami Middletown Downtown facility to provide space for workshops, lectures, seminars, meetings, and cultural events. As his role as an instructor, as advisor for *The Illuminati*, a student publication, and as a leader in community connections, Melbye demonstrates his dedication to his students. As a nominator said, “I

can’t think of a better instructor to learn from, emulate, and nominate for this award.”

McDiffett, recipient of the award for part-time faculty, has taught in the Math Department at Miami Middletown for nearly fifteen years. Her classes have included a variety of math courses, mostly at the developmental and introductory level. One of her nominators said, “It is remarkable that Amy is able to reach such a wide range of different types of students, meeting them where they are at and consistently helping them make that very necessary step forward in math.” McDiffett’s caring and positive approach to teaching has benefited many students who might otherwise be at risk in higher education. As McDiffett put it herself, “I come with the perspective that I will meet the student where their knowledge is, not where I perceive or desire their knowledge to be” Her students also laud her with praise, saying, “Miss McDiffett truly cared whether we understood the subjects taught. She always answered our questions and made sure we truly understood before moving on.”

Faculty, staff and students submitted nominations for the Excellence in Teaching Award. The nominees were then asked to provide a statement about their teaching philosophies and practices. A committee of six faculty members who were all former winners of the award then selected the recipients. The awards will be formally presented at MUM’s annual Awards Ceremony on April 24.

CTL Special

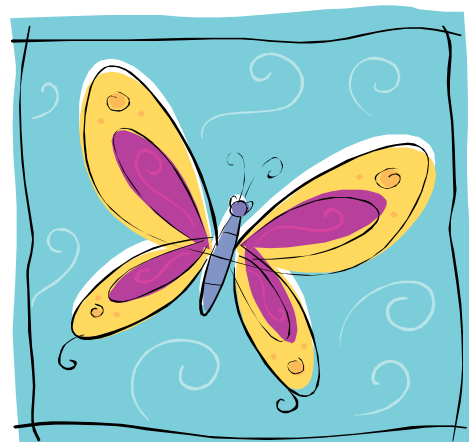
Reflections on Student Life (from Real Students)

Have you ever wished you could just talk with our students about what they experience while here?

Come hear students from EDL 110 discuss their reflections on various aspects of student life and their advice to incoming students. This class represents both MUM and Oxford students at various points in their college careers.

April 29 1-1:50 p.m. - JHN 13

(note both time and room number differ from other CTL events)



KATE'S CORNER



In one of the classes I attend, my professor had each of us think back to that special teacher who we would never forget. That teacher who made you believe you could do anything and maybe even inspired you to start teaching. Then he asked us why they were such great teachers. Chances are, if you think back, that one teacher shared some, if not all, of these eight characteristics of an effective teacher.

Are you an effective teacher? Were you effective when you first started teaching, but have since fallen into the washout effect? Have you enhanced your potential for effective-

ness? Take a minute and reflect on these eight characteristics of effective teachers, which was presented by Lynn Owens at an AAPERD conference.

Character based: Always trying to do the right thing. Keeping in mind and following a set of ethics.

Competent: To have a strong knowledge of your area, along with extensive experience. Constantly staying informed on issues and developments pertaining to your field.

Committed: Having a strong desire to teach and being completely invested in doing it.

Caring: Showing genuine concern for students.

Confidence builders: Help students to believe in their own

potential and abilities for success.

Communicators: Be clear and direct when you give instructions. Be honest with your students and open-minded to their questions and ideas.

Consistent: Your work in the classroom strongly reflects your philosophy of teaching.

Credible: Your students believe what you say.

I hope this has been insightful for you. If you have any comments or suggestions, feel free to e-mail me at hesskl@muohio.edu.

Kate Duskey is the student assistant in the Center for Teaching and Learning.



CTL BOOK NOOK

Since some researchers find that our students, even some of the stronger ones, may not have progressed as much as we expected, Mr. Bain, the Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at NYU, recently published "*What the Best College Teachers Do*," challenging us to reflect on our teaching paradigms and the methods by which we conceptualize our teaching practices.

Mr. Bain's analyses and suggestions are based on the findings of reliable pedagogical research and his own interviews with some of the most effective college instructors for more than fifteen years. He organizes his own findings about the roles of college teachers in six categories of "Learning-Based" teaching and assessment: what the best teachers know about how we learn, prepare to teach,

share expectations of their students, conduct their class, treat their students, and evaluate their students and themselves.

Are we wondering: What do we mean by the "learning process?" How are we able to organize a "natural critical environment of learning?" How do the best learning environments differ from teaching as a matter of a "few good tricks?" What are the factors (internal and external) that inspire and/or discourage students to learn effectively? How do we know what students have actually learned from our teaching? In answering those questions and many more, Mr. Bain offers us not only his analytical answers but also useful suggestions.

As a member of Miami's Teaching Communities and Teaching Paradigms (TCTP), I have read the book, joined the group discussion, and been stimulated by Bain's many insights. We do face a diversified student body, but do we know how different students are having different motivations for their successes in college education? We do

realize that we are going through a pedagogical shift toward the "student-centered" paradigm, but have we improved our strategy and tactics of engaging students? We do care about how students evaluate our teaching, but do all of us pay enough attention to what they actually learned from our classes and how better informed they became and their views were improved or changed according to the norms set by instructors? While reading the book and having dialogues with my colleagues, I have to think repeatedly about these issues and many others.

I am attempting to schedule a visit by Mr. Bain to our campus in the fall. In preparation for this event, the TCTP has agreed to provide some copies of the book to be circulated among us. If you are curious or share Mr. Bain's concerns, email me or the CTL, and we shall distribute to you the copies for review when they become available.

(This book review was submitted by Dr. Wenxi Liu, Assoc. Professor of History)

Life as a CTL Newbie

(Confessions of a new LC member)



My pre-newbie life was pretty simple. There was no CTL, no LC, no SGID, no SoTL or any other academic alphabet soup to distract me from just doing my thing and having fun in the classroom. My M.O. was simple, too. After 26 years in the corporate world, I had a story to share with anyone who would listen. For seven years, I told that story in the classroom, essentially without application of what I am now learning to be the finer points of the art and science of teaching. I taught accounting as a teacher like I studied accounting as a student: grind it out; three yards and a cloud of dust; the Carnegie Hall drill – practice, practice, practice. A mental “sledge hammer” was my SoTL tool of choice.

My life as a CTL newbie has substantially changed much

of that. Joining the Leadership Collaborative (LC) of the CTL this past fall has provided me with a whole new and positive perspective on my approach to teaching. Through a close association with my fellow LC colleagues and other faculty as a result of my CTL affiliation, I felt I have grown as a teacher. The ongoing exchange of teaching ideas, techniques and other pedagogical perspectives facilitated by the CTL has given me many valuable insights into the dynamic disciplines of teaching and learning.

I am very grateful to be serving in a leadership role on the LC, where I am working closely with some very talented and creative educators. I figure that some of that talent and creativity for sure will rub off on me. It has definitely been a rewarding experience for this newbie.

Chris Metcalf



The Sharing Space

After accepting the position of editor of the National Council of Teachers of English journal *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, I wrote my first editorial and entitled it “Opening Doors, Opening Pages.” I argued that journals like *TETYC* are designed to encourage English faculty to open the doors of their classroom in order to share their experiences, their successes, their challenges with one another and that the journal existed in order to provide a space for that sharing.

As our campus Center for Teaching and Learning nears the end of its fourth full year, it has served that same purpose for Miami Middletown—it has provided a space for sharing. And it’s become a very busy space. The first year of the CTL featured the initial series of Conversations about Teaching, focusing on assessment issues. From the beginning, the conversations drew 25-30 faculty, staff, and students. In the ensuing years, the opportunities to open our classroom doors to one another have only increased with a panoply of pizza and problem days and a plethora of potent special presentations. We’ve heard from faculty, full-time and part-time, staff members, current students, and former students. And always we have shared.

The CTL website and the new digs in Johnston Hall have expanded the opportunities to make connections. And we are now about to host our colleagues from other regional campuses at the AURCO conference next year as well as through the pages of a new journal devoted to CTL work.

The sharing, however, has extended to the governance and operation of the CTL. The 25+ faculty and staff who designed the CTL deliberately created a Leadership Collaborative to administer the CTL, and how appropriate a choice of words *collaborative* has been. For four years the CTL has been tended to by volunteers from among its different constituencies: faculty, staff, and students. And things get busier and more folks get involved.

In my editorial I urged *readers* of the journal to become *writers* for the journal, to participate in the ongoing conversation by throwing open their own classroom doors. I anticipate that the door-opening so skillfully managed and promoted by the CTL for the past four years will expand next year in new and exciting ways. I hope the invitation to walk through those doors opened by the CTL entices you as it continues to draw me into that sharing space.

Jeff Sommers