

CTE NOTEBOOK

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"Teaching Renewal"

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Reinert CTE Mission Statement

The mission of the Paul C. Reinert, S.J. Center for Teaching Excellence is to support Saint Louis University faculty and graduate students so that they can better serve the intellectual, spiritual, and social needs of all learners.

The Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence

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Teaching Portfolios for Reflection and Change

*Dr. Jim Korn
Department of Psychology*

If the unexamined life is not worth living, then to stay alive as teachers we should be reflecting on the teaching life. A teaching portfolio, with reflection, can produce that insight and help us make significant changes in our teaching lives.

A teaching portfolio is an organized collection of material that reflects your ideas about teaching, your performance as a teacher, and how your teaching has changed over time. Readers wanting a general introduction to this genre should see Peter Seldin's bestseller on this topic, which is available in the CTE resource room. The most common use of these portfolios is for survival in job searches and promotion dossiers. I believe, however, that all faculty could use them as a means to understand their teaching, and perhaps for change.

These are the major elements of the reflective portfolio:

- One's teaching philosophy is the centerpiece of the portfolio as both a summary and a guide.
- A teaching autobiography describes your development as a teacher. Here even the structured vita can be an object for reflection.
- Course materials are included: a syllabus for each course, perhaps an early version along with the current version, examples of assignments and exercises, samples of student work, course evaluations.
- Developmental experiences: what you learned from teaching conferences and workshops, and how you were influenced by conversations with colleagues.

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- The scholarship of teaching. Things you have written, whether published or not.
- A conclusion that relates the contents to the philosophy and an epilogue that looks to the future.

I can anticipate several reactions to this idea of extensive reflection and writing about one's teaching. One reaction might come from someone whose primary commitment is more to research than to teaching, and who would say that all this reflection and writing is nonproductive. Then there is the struggling teacher, who may want to change, but thinking about all the things that could be wrong makes her anxious, so it might be better just to keep plugging along. Another teacher has been teaching the same courses for many years with good student ratings. He is popular and his students are happy. Why mess with a good thing? All these teachers have legitimate concerns about taking the time and the emotional effort required to build a teaching portfolio and to think about it. It will take you away from research, make you anxious, and lead you to take risks with your success, but all that is part of one's development as a teacher.

I did not compile my first teaching portfolio and write my teaching philosophy until 1997, after I had been teaching for more than thirty years. Before then it had been implicit in what I did as a teacher. I have asked many senior faculty to show me their written teaching philosophy. Most of them say they do not have one, but they really do in the same implicit way that I had mine. Making your philosophy explicit helps you understand the basis for your course objectives and methods, but more importantly, a clearly articulated philosophy gives substance and coherence to the brainstorming and fantasies of reflection. Go where no academic mind has gone before, then return and translate your most creative thoughts to ideas and ideals that can influence your

teaching and include those thoughts in your philosophy.

The bulk of a portfolio consists of sections devoted to each of your courses: syllabus, assignments, assessment methods, and evaluation data. For each course you also provide a rationale based on your teaching philosophy and a self-evaluation stating what worked well and what you want to change. Senior faculty might sample three versions of a course to reveal how and why their teaching developed as it did. For those of us near the end of our academic career, this is the greatest benefit of the teaching portfolio: reflection on its contents promotes understanding and appreciation of one's teaching life. It is an archive of the joys and rewards of one's teaching, and can also show how even the best teachers have days, perhaps even years, of doubt and confusion.

It takes a significant amount of time and effort to put together your first teaching portfolio and there are strong academic pressures not to take the time for this. In a research university it will not count as scholarship. However, if you are tempted, you could begin by writing a draft of a teaching philosophy. Then take just one of your courses and think about how your philosophy is related to what you do in that course. Note any inconsistencies, try to explain them, and then change either your philosophy or methods. If that works, write it down, punch holes in the paper, put the pages in a three-ring binder, and you have the beginning of a reflective teaching portfolio.

**TEACHING CREATIVELY:
ENGAGING UNDERGRADUATE
STUDENTS AT SLU**

May 10, 2005 — 12:30 to 4:00 pm
Busch Student Center's Saint Louis Room
For more information or to register:
<http://fyp.slu.edu>



"From the Director"

Dr. Mary Stephen
Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence

Spring always brings to mind thoughts of renewal. As we end one academic year and begin to look to the next, we often feel a need for renewing ourselves as teachers. This issue of the Notebook invites us to focus on ways to experience such renewal. In it, you will find a variety of suggestions from faculty members on strategies they use.

I want to highlight some opportunities for renewal that the Center is promoting beginning with the May 10th workshop on "Teaching Creatively: Engaging Undergraduates at SLU." Details and registration information can be found at <http://fyp.slu.edu>. Many faculty members will recognize the keynote speaker, Alison Morrison Shetlar, from workshops she conducted previously at SLU.

This year, the program committee of the Center piloted a program called the Faculty Teaching Enhancement Program (FTEP). You will find comments from some of the participants in the pilot program in this issue. The success of the FTEP pilot led the executive committee of the Center to recommend that FTEP will become one of the Center's programs. In this program, a faculty member interested in exploring a particular aspect of teaching is paired with a faculty mentor familiar with that teaching area. You will find details of the program on the Center's website, <http://cte.slu.edu>. We encourage faculty members interested in learning more about the program to contact CTE directly at 977-3944.

Two years ago, the Center inaugurated a faculty book club. We invite interested faculty members to read *What the Best College Teachers Do*, the award winning

book written by Ken Bain, director of New York University's Center for Teaching Excellence, over the summer. Dr. Bain will be on campus to present workshops based on his book on September 15 and 17. Information on obtaining the book and participating in discussions next fall can be obtained by contacting the Center directly. Information on the workshops will be available in August.

Whether you learn something new, read a book, participate in a conference, work with a colleague, or create a teaching portfolio, we hope you find some activities that will bring you back to campus for the new academic year feeling revived and excited about teaching.

Ten ideas to encourage renewal

1. **Try a new approach** – include something fun for you and your students in each class period, change your assignments, or change your mode of delivery
2. **Collaborate** – team teach a course or design a research project
3. **Experience life as a student** – enroll in a course
4. **Enhance your office** – invest in a new chair, put new artwork on the walls, or turn your desk a new direction
5. **Get more involved in your community** – campus or otherwise
6. **Take time to reflect** – attend a teaching conference, read teaching journals or books, or keep a teaching journal
7. **Create a network** of people with similar teaching or research interests, or with whom you enjoy spending time
8. **Get to know new faculty** – in and outside your department
9. **Invite guest lecturers** to your class, or volunteer to do the same for a colleague
10. **Temporarily exchange positions** with someone on another campus

Courtesy of Lee I. McCann and Baron, professors in the Department of Psychology at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. For more ideas, check the teaching "Teaching Tips" column in upcoming editions of the *APS Observer*.

Center for Teaching Excellence

Introducing the Teaching Enhancement Program

The Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence is proud to introduce The Faculty Teaching Enhancement Program. The program is designed to offer an intensive, systematic enhancement opportunity emphasizing the unique goals of each participant.

Four faculty members helped pilot the program during the Spring and Fall 2004 semesters. Dr. Jim Korn chairs the Faculty Teaching Enhancement Committee and participated in the pilot. Reflections from other participants are included in this section.

Faculty members at any stage of their career are invited to nominate themselves for the Faculty Teaching Enhancement (FTE) program, which begins with the creation of an individual teaching enhancement plan.

At the beginning of each semester, members of the FTE Committee will review nominations on file and work with participants to identify common interests. Faculty members will then be paired to create two-person learning partnerships for subsequent one-on-one interactions.

During the first phase of the program, both members will formulate specific goals for their personal enhancement program and create a written document including:

- Goals and objectives based on the needs and expectations of both team members
- Responsibilities of each team member
- Activities in which the partners might engage, such as readings, workshops, and seminars
- A demonstrable outcome such as a portfolio, course syllabus, or teaching philosophy
- A schedule for completion

During the second phase of the program, team members will implement the activities and establish a “co-mentoring” relationship in order to facilitate achievement of their teaching enhancement goals and objectives.

The final phase of the program will include the creation of a report describing the activities undertaken by the team members, the outcomes, and a reflection on the experience that serves as an evaluation of the learning partnership.

Participant Reflections

Dr. Mary Rose Grant

Director, Core Curriculum and Faculty Development, School for Professional Studies

When my colleagues on the Teaching Enhancement committee asked me to participate in a pilot for the Faculty Enhancement Program, I agreed. I knew the program would be more successful if those who created it were fully involved as active participants.

Joanne Schneider and I began this partnership with somewhat linear and formal parameters, not unlike most mentoring-like partnerships. What emerged, however, was truly a collegueship focused on expanding and enhancing teaching and learning.

Informal e-mail exchanges with phone or face-to-face follow-up proved to be an efficient method for us to build rapport and guide the process. These methods provided the time needed to expand our relationship and provided the backdrop for creating a true collaboration.

Open conversation, as well as sharing stories and resources, drove the partnership. Commitment of time and energy was essential in maintaining rapport and support for the partnership, allowing us to engage in a number of activities resulting outcomes which included:

- Identifying and applying Constructivist learning

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Teaching Enhancement Program

Participant Reflections

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theory in course goals.

- Formulating and adapting learning activities for practice.
- Expanding relationships with other SLU faculty via introduction to and participation in SLU's Virtual Community of Practice.

Reflecting on the lessons learned, I think the best words to describe the faculty enhancement partnership are: rewarding, transformative, and encouraging.

Dr. Lorenzo Covarrubias

Assistant Professor of Anthropology
Dept of Sociology and Criminal Justice

Beginning in the Spring 2004 semester, Dr. James Korn (Psychology) and I formed a “partnership” to develop a teaching philosophy statement that would act as a foundation and support for my teaching style.

Through this partnership – as Dr. Korn coined our teaching and learning relationship – we sought to accomplish a number of objectives. Foremost was to develop a document that would account for and support the way I teach — that would provide a blueprint for and coherence to previously diverging and teaching and learning formats.

By reviewing course syllabi and including them in our discussions, we arrived at the conclusion that, to be able to fully agree and enjoy what and how I taught, I need a vision for why I did so.

In addition, my Philosophy seeks to respond to the question, “How can a professor attain a dynamic fusion of individual and institution at the conceptual and/or applied level?” I found our conversations on this topic

among the best times we spent together. I believe that encountering a fellow academic who thought that this was a valid concern helped our partnership prosper.

Other gains from this partnership included our agreement that a teaching philosophy can be amended and that we should reflect on it when doing “basic” things such as preparing a syllabus. While all of our methods cannot be reflected in a philosophy, and the whole philosophy cannot be incorporated in every course taught, the process of crafting the document places it in the center of how I view teaching and learning. Moreover, the process helped me reflect on my own place and expectations in the teaching and learning process.

Dr. Joanne Schneider

Associate Professor
School of Nursing

I initially went into the Teaching Enhancement Program wanting to learn more creative learning activities for my graduate-level quantitative research methods courses offered both online and onsite. My conversations with Mary Rose led me to readings about constructivist learning theory.

Mary Rose was wonderful at pointing me toward some classic readings in that area. I learned that some of the activities I already utilized follow the constructivist principles. Yet, there are some activities that I wanted to adjust in order to incorporate more of these principles.

For me this process has been really great. Although we were formally partnered for only one year, I will be thinking about this for many years.

Tips From Faculty

The staff of the Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence chose the theme for this newsletter — Teaching Renewal — based on our belief that most University professors have times when they feel they are drained, lacking focus, or otherwise uninspired in their teaching. There are a number of approaches to rediscovering that inspiration — the comments on this page include ideas from three faculty members as they reflected on their strategies for renewal. We hope they will inspire you to consider your own strategies.

Joya Uraizee
Associate Professor
Department of English

I try teaching different kinds of courses and texts to liven things up and to give myself a bit of a challenge e.g. alternating writing courses with literature ones, alternating sophomore courses with doctoral level ones, alternating poetry with scholarly essays, etc.

I try to do something different even if the course and format are the same e.g. a different kind of in class exercise or a different home work assignment.

I try to get students to give me lots of feedback on texts because there's always something they see that I've missed that can make the subject live once more.

Paul Shore
Professor
Department of Educational Studies

I have no magic formula for being an effective teacher (if indeed I am), but there are several things that seem to help maintain energy levels and interest. First, as part of a self-imposed program to improve my research skills, for several years I have spent 90 minutes each day reading or listening to Hungarian. While the intention was practical, an important side effect has

been provide a complete break from my other tasks, while focusing on a time and place very removed from teaching at SLU. Letting go of my concerns for a while brings renewed energy and a sense of perspective. At first the language lessons were a chore, but now I would miss them if I stopped!

After years of teaching, courses or lessons become familiar enough to teach easily, but also threaten to get stale. At that point I go back to basics, recombine elements or just start over completely. A quote worth considering in this regard is from Golda Meier: "Don't wait until you're ready, because you're never ready."

Darina Sargeant
Assistant Professor
Department of Physical Therapy

Generally it is not so much the act of teaching that drains me but other responsibilities associated with it. I find test writing to be tedious and I am always concerned about whether I am being as comprehensive and fair in my tests as I can possibly be. I am sometimes disappointed with the scores the students have earned and I wonder about my effectiveness as a teacher. That is when I feel most drained.

One of the best cures I have for that feeling is meeting with students one-on-one or in small groups and discussing the material. As I watch the material finally make sense for them I am rewarded and once have the energy to move forward. For me the renewal in teaching is the individual contact with my students. The moments of watching them discover that they understand what I am trying to share with them.

I also find that reading Parker Palmer's books are very inspiring or I go to Thoreau or Emerson.



The Technology Corner *Sandy Gambill, Assistant Director* Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence

Are you looking for a path to teaching renewal through technology? The Reinert Center for Teaching Excellence and ITS Educational Technology are pleased to announce a summer faculty development program. "Reinventing PowerPoint as a Teaching Tool," which will be held July 11-14, 2005, is open to full-time Saint Louis University faculty who are interested in exploring new ways of using PowerPoint in the classroom. This workshop will assist faculty in moving beyond the linear capabilities of PowerPoint to explore its creative navigation components and how those can enhance the learning experience. Participants will learn how to:

- Create smaller linear teaching elements that are linked from a single main slide. This authoring approach enables you to teach linearly or change the order of the content easily to reflect class interest.
- Enhance presentations with audio and video components. In addition to working with commercially available resources, you'll learn how to capture original audio and video.

- Use PowerPoint as a tool to create dynamic posters for class and research presentations. Participants who complete the week long workshop will be able to create one free poster, compliments of ITS Educational Technology.

Participants should have a basic working knowledge of PowerPoint. If you have questions or have difficulty meeting this requirement, please contact Sandy Gambill at 977-7202.

Registrants are required to attend daily sessions Monday July 11 through Thursday July 14. Each session will begin at 9:00 am in Verhaegen 212, with a continental breakfast, and conclude no later than 4:00 pm. Lunch will be provided on the first day. At the end of the program, participants will have at least one completed project ready for classroom use.

Register by calling Sandy Gambill at 977-7202 or e-mailing gambill@slu.edu Space for the project is extremely limited; priority will be given to full-time faculty.



Read the Book, Meet the Author

"What the Best College Teachers Do" by Ken Bain

Recognized as the best 2004 book on education and society
by Harvard University Press

Faculty members are invited to join Dr. Bain September 15 & 17, 2005 for workshops based on the book. Contact CTE at 977-3944 or cte@slu.edu for information on obtaining the book and participating in discussions.

2005 Faculty Portfolio Retreat Participants



Left to right: Joseph Fortier, S.J. (Biology), Cornelia Horn (Theological Studies), Jan Barber (Biology), Peter Lah, S.J. (Communication), David Kaplan (Management), Elizabeth Zeibig (Clinical Lab Science), Sarah Coffin (Public Policy), Keely Cook (Physician Assistant Education), Christine Werner (Physician Assistant Education), Michael Mancini (Social Work), Maulik Shah (Pediatrics), Jami Curley (Social Work), Marilyn Miller (facilitator), Chammie Austin (Psychology), Ana Iltis (Health Care Ethics), Elouise Mintz (Management), Bidisha Chakrabarty (Finance), Dorothy Becvar (Social Service), Angela Walmsley (Research Methodology), John Martin (Surgery), Ayesha Malhotra (International Business).

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