Faculty Focus

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Declining By Degrees
John Merrow

John Merrow, president of Learning Matters Inc. and a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, produced the documentary “Declining by Degrees: Higher Education at Risk.” To learn more, go to <http://www.decliningbydegrees.org>.

Carnegie Perspectives is a series of commentaries that explore different ways to think about educational issues. These pieces are presented with the hope that they contribute to the conversation. You can respond directly to the author at <CarnegiePresident@carnegiefoundation.org> or you can join a public discussion at Carnegie Conversations. This article is reprinted with permission.

T"all the students I met during nearly two years of working on our PBS documentary about higher education, I continue to be intrigued by a sophomore named Nate. After proudly proclaiming that he was maintaining a 3.4 GPA despite studying less than an hour a night, he wondered aloud, “It’s not supposed to be this easy, is it? Shouldn’t college be challenging?” Nate was one of the more enlightened students that we interviewed.

He talked about his “boring” classes, including an English class he described as “a brain dump.” We sat in on that class. The teacher had assigned students to write parodies of the American poet Robert Frost’s poem. She was meeting students at their level...and trying to push them to go beyond it, attempting to move them out of their “intellectual comfort zone” and lead them in new directions. Tough job, because Nate and undoubtedly most of his classmates had obviously NOT read the assignment. Nate had succeeded in high school by figuring out what was going to be on his tests and doing as little as possible. And since that approach also got him into college and was now earning him a solid B average, he saw no reason to change. Ask Nate the purpose of college, and he would probably say something about “getting a good job.” The learning part wasn’t necessarily what he was paying good money for.

Although we found this English class stimulating, we could see how frustrating it became for the teacher because of the lack of student-directed engagement and motivation. In this case, the students’ expectations didn’t match the professor’s. Teaching becomes a difficult transaction when students expect to get the diploma that they pay for without caring whether they learn anything in the process. The situation is made more difficult because professors begin classroom teaching at a disadvantage. Few have any training in how to teach. We were very impressed by Tom Fleming, a senior lecturer at the University of Arizona, who took advantage of a faculty development course offered by his institution on teaching theory and effective practices.

Using technology in a huge lecture hall, he deftly engaged students, allowing very few to merely get by.

College used to be a “sink or swim” environment, but today, either colleges are giving much-needed “swimming lessons”—investing in student success—or they’re allowing students to “tread water,” giving decent grades for very little work. In the first case, either colleges are giving an education; in the second, they merely get a degree. It’s all too easy for some students and faculty members to settle into a pattern of behavior that looks like an unspoken “non-aggression treaty,” in which professors don’t ask much of students and the students don’t expect much from their professors (as long as they get As and Bs).

Karen L. Smith Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning
www.fctl.ucf.edu
The good news is that many faculty members—those giving swimming lessons—work with energy and imagination to move their students beyond the “diploma=$$” formula. The relationship between Tom Fleming and his students falls into this category. Even more heartening is the fact that many students intuitively know that they’re being denied an education and seek out campus experiences that give them what they need. But that 20 or so percent out there treading water are shortchanging themselves and future employers who think that college costs are already as well as persistence. And those professors who find it more comfortable to demand little of their students are denied the satisfaction that good teaching affords.

The shift in the expectations of students and faculty members began around the time that America learned that college graduates made more money than high school graduates—as much as a million dollars more over their working lives. The mantra became, “If you want an education, then pay for it.” The old social contract—the idea that education of individuals is a public good and therefore should in part be publicly financed—is on life support and barely breathing. Instead, “Education Pays” is proclaimed on billboards around Kentucky, encouraging kids to go to college just to nail down that good job.

Kids arrive on campus determined to major in “business” and often remain impervious to the efforts of their professors to expose them to new ideas and information. Our student financial aid system supports the “investment in me” approach by making less money available in the form of grants to needy students, and instead channeling the bulk of the aid to those who are in the business of public education (or, as was too often the case, not learning). Finding the “how” required that I study my own students and my own classroom with the same methodological rigor and objectivity that I would apply to any interesting social behavior.

About seven years ago, I began to notice a paradoxical trend among my students in Scope and Methods of Political Science (P0037307), a large introductory course in which students are expected to learn methods and a belief that the course was less and less relevant to other substantive courses in the political science curriculum. What was going on? There are, I discovered, two key features of how students best learn methods. First, although their eyes glaze at the sight of tabular displays of data, they are quite adept at constructing and interpreting graphical representations of relationships. Show students a table depicting the huge difference between the gun control opinions of women and men and you will get bewildered looks and collective yawns. Show them a bar chart of the same information and the gender gap hits home. You get substantive understanding and spirited discussion. Second, students actually learn quite well in a more or less self-paced, step-by-step tutorial fashion. Despite our best efforts to make the classroom an open floor, receptive to different ideas and constructive questions, some students’ learning will never speak up. But give them access to an online module or tutorial and they will take much fuller advantage of the material you have to offer. These two basic observations about my students—they can learn better with graphics, and they can learn (some things) better self-paced—led me to develop a series of Web-based modules. In the earliest of these, students used Excel to perform data analysis and create graphic output. Later, they learned to use SPSS, perhaps the most widely available data analysis package in education and business. Students’ satisfaction increased, as did their successful acquisition of important required skills.

Hutch Pollock is a Professor in Political Science, and a 2004-2005 recipient of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Award from UCF. His interests include American national government, interest groups, public opinion, and elections & parties.

One Instructor’s Road to SoTL
Hutch Pollock

What innovative yet practical reforms can enhance student learning and student satisfaction? I have not yet discovered the answer to this question. But thanks to a certain amount of self-reflection—and a large dose of talented collaboration—I have found out where to look and how to conduct the search. Finding the “where” required that I shift my focus away from what a textbook or instructor should be from a public education (or, as was too often the case, not learning). Finding the “how” required that I study my own students and my own classroom with the same methodological rigor and objectivity that I would apply to any interesting social behavior.

The important thing is not to stop questioning.” —Albert Einstein

Kim Renk

During my time in the field of psychology, I have come to consider teaching to be a challenge and a privilege. As a result, I have tried to build good relationships with my students by being approachable and available. In my classroom, I have tried to marry book learning with applied learning experiences, such as assigning research papers, classroom presentations, the practice of applied skills used in Clinical Psychology. In addition, I attempt to make class time live with a variety of examples, thought provoking videos and role-plays, and interesting discussions on controversial topics. I also try to break the unique sense of alienation from methods and substantive courses in the political science curriculum. What was going on? There are, I discovered, two key features of how students best learn methods. First, although their eyes glaze at the sight of tabular displays of data, they are quite adept at constructing and interpreting graphical representations of relationships. Show students a table depicting the huge difference between the gun control opinions of women and men and you will get bewildered looks and collective yawns. Show them a bar chart of the same information and the gender gap hits home. You get substantive understanding and spirited discussion. Second, students actually learn quite well in a more or less self-paced, step-by-step tutorial fashion. Despite our best efforts to make the classroom an open floor, receptive to different ideas and constructive questions, some students’ learning will never speak up. But give them access to an online module or tutorial and they will take much fuller advantage of the material you have to offer. These two basic observations about my students—they can learn better with graphics, and they can learn (some things) better self-paced—led me to develop a series of Web-based modules. In the earliest of these, students used Excel to perform data analysis and create graphic output. Later, they learned to use SPSS, perhaps the most widely available data analysis package in education and business. Students’ satisfaction increased, as did their successful acquisition of important required skills.

Edrus to be his teacher. Phaedrus does what researchers do; he frames problems and questions, gathers evidence, and renders his arguments in theoretical and practical terms. However, he employs appropriate methods by modeling the process for Phaedrus; by testing Phaedrus’ arguments, he shows Phaedrus where erroneous methods lead to erroneous conclusions, and then Socrates demonstrates his own research methods. Phaedrus learns that he still has more to learn.

Spring 2006 Course Innovation Project

The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning is calling for the submission of proposals by any UCF faculty member who has an interest in improving a course. Our Spring CIPs will occur on the Orlando, Daytona, Cocoa, and Rosen campus. Faculty will participate in several workshops (12 contact hours) and receive support from staff in the Faculty Center and other support units as they develop new approaches and materials for their courses.

These workshops will include a series of hands-on experiences designed to help explore teaching techniques and learning activities that have been proven to be effective. Faculty will complete the workshops, produce a final project for publication, and write a short article for the Faculty Focus. Faculty will receive a $500 stipend for full participation. All applications will be evaluated using the following criteria: project focus, viability and project benefit to the University, and specific plans for accountability of outcomes.

For more information and to download an application, visit [http://www.ucf.edu/events/coursereinnovation]
Dr. Ronnie L. Koroscil
My philosophy about teaching is that is should be highly ‘student-oriented’. I see myself as a partner in education, and I work hard to help my students succeed. I also believe that the classroom should be an exciting environment for students—work hard to help my students succeed. I also believe that the classroom should be an exciting environment for students.

Brian Mauer
I believe that my Scholarship of Teaching and Learning activities have helped me gain new insights into my students’ learning and have thus helped me make a better teacher. My SoTL work has sparked my interest in teaching and has helped me to realize the importance of both theory and practice in teaching. My research on teaching has focused on assessing the effect of online instruction on learning behavior and outcomes. My research on gender patterns in online discussion forums, co-authored with my colleagues Hutch Pollock and Bruce Wilson, has won a “best paper” award by the undergraduate education division of the American Political Science Association, and presenting many workshops and papers at UCF and at conferences.

Russ Kesler
One of my goals as a creative writing instructor is to help my students to see the world of literature in a new light. I try to make my classes as interactive as possible, providing a variety of opportunities for students to practice their own writing. The course I teach is the ‘short story’ writing course, and the students are introduced to the different styles and techniques of short story writing. I try to make my classes as interactive as possible, providing a variety of opportunities for students to practice their own writing. The course I teach is the ‘short story’ writing course, and the students are introduced to the different styles and techniques of short story writing.

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Martin Thompson
Let me start by saying that since my last article, “Technologies Affecting Communication: RSS Readers,” Microsoft has announced that RSS (Rich Site Summary) feeds will be displayed in Internet Explorer and Outlook by the end of 2005. Some of you might use browsers such as Firefox and Macintosh’s Safari and are accustomed to this technology; however, with Microsoft’s RSS truly is here to stay.

You may have heard about Duke University’s initiative that distributed free iPods to every first time student entering in the Fall of 2004. They have since cut back their program, and this year’s freshmen are taking courses that can prove to be a major technology in the classroom. Instructors are finding a variety of ways to utilize the iPods, including the production of “podcasts.”

Many people do not completely understand the technology and wonder how podcasts can be used in a classroom setting. Simply put, a podcast is a digital audio file that can be downloaded and listened to directly through your computer or after you have downloaded it to your iPod or MP3 player. Podcasts can be used in a variety of ways and it is our responsibility to continue the conversation with respect to this rapidly growing technology and the implications of this technology for the future of higher education.

Barry Mauer
Great teachers reveal how they teach. The teacher’s demonstration of learning requires humility since it shows that the teacher is willing to share his or her knowledge with others. It is an essential component of the learning process. It is through the demonstration of learning that a teacher is able to help students develop a sense of self-knowledge. A key text about teaching and learning is Plato’s Phaedrus, a scene in which the wise Socrates and a young man named Phaedrus converse. Plato’s text shows teacher and student switching roles, with Socrates asking Phaedrus to consider this—our students gather information in a variety of ways and it is our responsibility to help them develop the skills to critically evaluate this information. One
of these information sources is a blog, and an extension of a blog is a podcast.

Podcasts, sometimes referred to as “time-shifted radio,” allow a person or small group of people to record their thoughts, opinions and insights and disperse them to the masses. Anyone with a computer is a potential podcast producer as well as a podcast receiver. In the most basic case, the voice is recorded into a computer with a microphone. The resulting file is converted and compressed to an MP3 file. The distribution tool is RSS, a free, subscription-based feed that allows listeners to receive your podcast whenever they choose. You post it on your website. However, you could also just post your podcast to your website and allow listeners to stream the audio in using their media player.

The confusion surrounding the term “podcast” is embedded in the name. Many people believe that podcasts can only be played on Apple’s iPod or that they must have some special technology to listen to the file. This is all untrue. Any MP3 player can play podcasts. It has caused me to think about what I have to do to make all of my resources to become comfortable with facilitating learning to a crowd of students at UCF very different from those I had faced at my previous school. The much smaller size of classrooms and numbers of students there had lent itself to a different approach in teaching and communicating with my mostly international student body from over 100 countries. I now was working with a crowd of native English speakers who had grown up in high-tech households.

Initially teaching here felt like jumping onto a train moving at 70 miles per hour. As a part of that transition was learning to deal with all the new technology. Walking into a classroom populated by as many as 70 students, I found myself looking at a teacher’s console equipped with a touch screen control panel, a video player, a DVD player, an overhead document camera, an additional optical mouse and laptop computer access, in addition to the regular computer.

My first teaching assignment as an adjunct was on the Orlando Campus, and included three courses I had requested. Teaching my first class at a modular unit outside of Classroom Building required that I bring and connect a laptop and a projection unit with me. The next class was at yet another building with a different electronic key card to enter the classroom and another computer access code to work the teaching console computer access. They then moved on to a third building and it had a different classroom access key and of course a different computer access code was required. Some of my students were annoyed that their teacher was not fluent with the apparatus; they were far better acquainted with the teaching console and its features than I was. Many of them were willing to show me “the tricks of the trade” so I would learn what overlooked strokes were required to connect the laptop to the projection unit, which diskette did work and which did not, and I even learned by trial and error that a sideways installed CPU would not be able to handle a mini-CD (because it would fall into the drive unit).

The students who do not have an MP3 player can stream the audio on their computer or burn it to a CD.

In the academic setting, a podcast can have a positive effect and allow auditory learners to listen to your discussion prompts in the car, walking to class, or sitting at their computer. In my SP 103 large lecture class, we plan to use podcasts for lecture supplements and discussion prompts. Of course we are conducting research to see if the podcasts are effective, and I will make our findings public when they are available.

I think there are some important components to consider when using podcasts in your class:

• Use podcasts to provide examples and prompt discussion, not as a replacement for lecture.
• Keep them short. A six-minute podcast, when compressed and converted to an MP3 file, will be approximately 3MB. You do not want to get carried away with the file size, and it is important to remember that a student only has 10 minutes between classes.
• Use all methods of distribution. Allow students to access audio files from a website as well as RSS. Remind students that they can burn the file to CD, stream it in on their computer, and if they own one, download it to their MP3 player. If there are students with no access to computers, you could also make a handout (your “script”) available.

If you have any questions pertaining to podcasts, please do not hesitate to contact me. I know new technologies can seem overwhelming, but in reality the creation of these MP3 files is simple and the good folks at the Faculty Center are more than willing to help.

Old Dogs CAN Learn New Tricks

Wilfried Iskats

Wilfried Iskat is an Associate Professor in the Rosen College of Hospitality. A career in hospitality spanning several decades and aspects of restaurant and hotel businesses, especially training, led Wilfried to a position as lecturer and dean at a school of hospitality and management. Active in professional organizations, he has earned several professional certifications from the Hotel Catering and Industrial Management Association and from the American Hotel and Lodging Association as well as the National Restaurant Organization.

After 11 years as Dean and principal lecturer in the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management at a private school, Wilfried decided to return to teaching. A big part of this transition was learning to deal with all the new technology. Walking into a classroom populated by as many as 70 students, I found myself looking at a teacher’s console equipped with a touch screen control panel, a video player, a DVD player, an overhead document camera, an additional optical mouse and laptop computer access, in addition to the regular computer.

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I did not know a survey does all of these things. I simply asked and searched for my answer with help from the Faculty Center. Student learning relies on my ability to adapt to the current availability of resources. Why struggle up-stream when flowing down-stream is so fun?

How to Cover a Lot in a Little Time

Michele Gregoire Gill

Michele Gregoire Gill is an Assistant Professor of Educational Studies. Her research interests include models of belief change, epistemological beliefs, motivation, and teacher education. She has received two national dissertation awards, one from the American Psychological Association and one from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, for her research on preservice teachers’ beliefs about mathematics education.

Every semester I ask my students for feedback on how to improve each specific aspect of whatever course I teach, including texts, lectures, activities, exams, projects, papers, and discussions. For my class on Classroom Learning Principles, students consistently stated that they felt too much material was being covered in too little time. I agreed with them, but I didn’t know what to do about this, as the content is a key part of their professional teachers’ licensure exam.

I’ve come to think that I was most likely wasting students’ (and my own) time by:

(a) focusing too much on teaching basic skills such as writing,
(b) grading too many assignments, and
(c) not assessing students’ understanding on a regular basis as a means of tailoring my instruction to students’ needs.

One difficulty with the Classroom Learning Principles class is that it is really two and half courses in one—theories of human development and principles of learning combined with classroom assessment and classroom management. Because the course content meets certain state standards for teacher licensure, there was little I could do to reduce the amount of content covered. However, I could implement quick methods of formative and summative assessment, along with the judicious use of technology, to help me focus on promoting student understanding, problem solving, and application of material rather than mere memorization of course content.

I re-envisioned the course along the lines of Bloom’s taxon-
Hands Online Experience  &apos; Mitch Salter

Mitch Salter is a Clinical Education Coordinator for the Program in Athletic Training within the department of Health Professions. Mitch is currently enrolled in the Curriculum & Instruction Program at UCF. Research interests include the use of educational technology to assist instruction of &apos;hands-on&amp;apos; skills in health-related fields.

Athletic Training education is more or less the &apos;hands on&amp;apos; application of health-related principles. However, a recent move towards computer-based testing on the board of certification exam challenges athletic training educators to bridge the gap between physical and computer-learning environments. Custom software and class materials have greatly increased the amount of information our students can access; however, often the physical and computer-learning environments are not well integrated. Our students have a great deal of information available to them, but without considerable advantages. As an educator, I introduce computer-related resources and activities to students each semester through guided discovery on our practicum website.

I assess and document students online experience through an end-of-term survey performed on WebCT. This semester the website simply includes a resource page, professional links, and class grades. Using survey results, I focus on activities that students report to enhance the teaching and learning of class material. Collaborative and threaded discussions are often considered to be an important aspect of distance learning, but not without foreseeable advantages. As an educator, I introduce computer-related resources and activities to students each semester through guided discovery on our practicum website.

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learning into the classroom, was potentially short-changing my students. In order to be a great multi-unit manager, you must be able to process information and challenges in a way that was very different than the ways that I was teaching and assessing my students.

From the over-arching course goals, I chose one of the objectives of the course, “to introduce students to the various skills necessary to be a successful single unit manager versus a successful multi-unit manager,” and determined that I would incorporate the case study method into my class to help students learn more deeply about skills required of these different positions. Traditionally, this skill was taught by using a group discussion where I divided the class into two sections, one with the single unit manager skills listed and one with the multi-unit manager skills listed. The case study method is related to problem-based learning, where students are given a scenario and asked to determine the solution based on the facts presented to them, previous discussions from the semester, textbook, previous experience, group dynamics, etc.

Using the new and “improved” course design, I set up four objectives for the case study exercise: 1) to use problem-based learning in order to help foster teamwork in the class, to get students to stretch their learning to incorporate and synthesize the lecture material and content with “real life” skills that they will need in their future careers; 2) to have students determine the skills needed to effectively manage one restaurant unit; 3) to have students determine the skills needed to effectively manage multiple restaurant units; and 4) to demonstrate the skills of critical thinking and problem solving.

For the case study, I broke the class into groups of five students each, and had everyone read the case study. Their goal was to choose a leader for their group (the CEO), process through the case study, list the skills that single unit managers and multi-unit managers needed to be successful in their jobs, and then respond to the questions guiding the discussion of the topic. The questions were directed at choosing who in the case study organization would be the best multi-unit manager for the company based on the information they were given in the case study. I also asked questions such as: what traits or characteristics make these people the best fit for their role in the organization and what can the company do in terms of setting up a development program for their employees to move them forward and make them ready to take over various management positions?

Through the use of the case study method, I was able to direct the discussions of the group to the goals and objectives of the course. Halfway through the process, I intentionally threw a wrench into the works. Because I wanted to make this experience seem like “real life” in the multi-unit restaurant industry, I had the “CEO” or the person in charge of the group leave that group and move with their knowledge to another group. This caused a couple of minutes of disruption in the classroom. Some of the groups adapted quickly and moved forward with their discussion of the questions, while other groups had to find a new center and regroup.

Toward the end of class we got back together as a group and had a discussion about how the process worked. Some of the groups were stressed by the move of their leader, while other groups loved the process and said that, since many managers and CEOs leave companies, the experience of changing leaders was good practice. I was happy with the way that the students learned and explained the material to me. It was one of the best discussions that a class of mine has ever had. The discussion was thoughtful, inclusive of everyone in the class, and passionate, and it captured the essence of the course.

I believe that case studies or problem-based learning, when administered correctly, help process material that is presented in class. It is more work to prepare and process a case study than a lecture, but the rewards can be great.

Top 5 Things That I Learned Through This Process:
1. It’s not about my “reality”, but how the students process through the learning incorporating their reality.
2. Students need to be engaged in the learning when dealing with service and people tasks that are best practices for the “real world.”
3. Incorporating things that actually happen in the business world in class can be done effectively.
4. Natural leaders often show up in case study groups who can use their leadership skills in helping other students.
5. Students and teachers can learn with each other.

I tried this new method of teaching (new to me at least!) in my class last semester and found that the students really enjoyed the process. Many of the students were engaged in the process of solving the problem and coming up with logical ways to explain the material to each other. They seemed to be patient when explaining their rationale to other students yet very passionate about their beliefs. It was great to see them so engaged in class material. As I walked around and made sure that everyone was focused, I found myself feeling good about how well the students understood the material.

Assessing Students Using Simulations and Video Case Studies
Laura Blasi, Ph.D.

Laura Blasi is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Research, Technology, and Leadership (ERTL) in the College of Education. She teaches graduate-level courses on research methods, measurement, and evaluation, and her research has focused on equity issues in education with an emphasis on the use of technology in K–12 education and in teacher education. She also researches the use of the microscope in high school science classrooms, specifically using the Virtual Lab simulation developed by NASA Kennedy Space Center.

“Through the use of the case study method, I was able to direct the discussions of the group to the goals and objectives of the course.”

AS A scientist and an early pioneer in the field of micros-copy, Robert Hooke, has described an inalienable right of humanity that is denied to all but the gods. “The very first thing that we, the poor wretches of slippery name of creatures, that we are not only able to behold the works of Nature, but barely to sustain our lives by them, but we also have the power of considering, comparing, altering, assisting, and improving them to various uses.”

Robert Hooke, **Micrographia**, 1664

Laura Blasi

“it is the great prerogative of Mankind above other Creatures, that we are not only able to behold the works of Nature, or barely to sustain our lives by them, but we also have the power of considering, comparing, altering, assisting, and improving them to various uses.”

Robert Hooke, *Micrographia*, 1664

The video case studies and the simulations enable our discussion in this completely online course to extend beyond theory when examining actual practices. My work followed these steps after previewing the multimedia that would be used in the course:

- Identify a common framework regarding teaching and learning;
- Develop a set of common experiences working in the content area;
- Pre-test regarding content knowledge and assessment;
- Test the content and learning that was covered;
- Identify the skills related to the content area evident in the multimedia;
- Develop instructional materials to structure students’ initial viewing of the media;}
I tried this new method of teaching (new to me at least!) in my class last semester and found that the students really enjoyed it. I was able to provide them with an experience where they were engaged in the process of solving the problem and coming up with logical ways to explain the material to each other. They seemed to be patient when explaining their rationale to other students yet very passionate about their beliefs. It was great to see them so engaged in class material. As I walked around and made sure that everyone was focused, I found myself feeling good about how well the students understood the material.

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Top 5 Things That I Learned Through This Process:
1. It’s not about my “reality”, but how the students process through the learning incorporating their reality.
2. Students need to be engaged in the learning when dealing with service and people tasks that are best done in teams.
3. Incorporating things that actually happen in the business world in class can be done effectively.
4. Natural leaders often show up in case study groups.
5. Students and teachers can learn with each other.

I was happy to have prepared students in the process through the learning incorporating their critical thinking and problem solving.

For the case study, I broke the class into 8 groups of five students each and had everyone read the case study. Their goal was to choose a leader for their group (the CEO), process through the case study, list the skills that single unit managers and multi-unit managers needed to be successful in their jobs, and then respond to the questions guiding the discussion of the topic. The questions were directed at choosing who in the case study organization would be the best multi-unit manager for the company based on the information they were given in the case study. I also asked questions such as: what traits or characteristics make these people the best fit for their role in the case study organization would be the best multi-unit manager, and determined that I would incorporate the case study method into my class to help students learn more deeply about skills required of these different positions. Traditionally, this skill was taught by using a group discussion where I divided down into two sections, one with the single unit managers skills listed and one with the multi-unit manager skills listed. The case study method is related to problem-based learning, where students are given a scenario and asked to determine the solution based on the facts presented to them, previous discussions from the semester, textbook, previous experience, group dynamics, etc.

Using the new and “improved” course design, I set up four objectives for the case study exercise: 1) to use problem-based learning in order to help foster teamwork in the class, to get students to “stretch” their learning to incorporate and synthesize the lecture material and content with “real life” skills that they will need in their future careers; 2) to have students determine the skills needed to effectively manage one restaurant unit; 3) to have students determine the skills needed to effectively manage multiple restaurant units; and 4) to demonstrate the skills of critical thinking and problem solving.

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FACULTY FOCUS 5

“Hands Online” Experience
Mitch Salter

Mitch Salter is a Clinical Education Coordinator for the Program in Athletic Training within the Department of Health Professions. Mitch is currently enrolled in the Curriculum & Instruction Program at UCF. Research interests include the use of educational technology to assist instruction of “hands-on” skills in health-related fields.

A thletic Training education is more or less the “hands on” application of health-related principles. However, a recent move towards computer-based testing on the board of certification exam challenges athletic training educators to bridge the gap between physical and computer-learning environments. This move can be difficult, but with perseverance and understanding we already bring as dedicated teachers in the classroom. In this way technology can be a means for positive change in education; not just by using tools alone, but by the use of tools with the purpose of strengthening teaching and learning. As Hooke would say, “By the addition of such artificial Instruments and methods, there may be, in some manner, a reparation made for the misuse of tools with the purpose of strengthening teaching and change in education; not just by using tools alone, but by the understanding we already bring as dedicated teachers in the classroom.”

Hooke believed in the power of human observation and advocated the use of tools. Both the tools we have developed to measure student achievement and the tools we can use in class to simulate experience and to evaluate student understanding we already bring as dedicated teachers in the classroom. In this way technology can be a means for positive change in education; not just by using tools alone, but by the use of tools with the purpose of strengthening teaching and learning. As Hooke would say, “By the addition of such artificial Instruments and methods, there may be, in some manner, a reparation made for the misuse of tools with the purpose of strengthening teaching and learning.”

I assess and document students’ online experience through an end-of-term survey performed on WebCT. This semester the website includes a resource page, professional links, and class grades. Using survey results, I focus on activities that students report to enhance the teaching and learning of class material. Collected data was then used to promote the school’s goals of developing and maintaining a culture of evidence-based practice.

Online student and clinical site evaluations allow use of mas- sive data to assign student clinical rotations and review needed skills. In the current hard copy form, evaluation results are not effective or easy to manage, and primarily serve the purpose of class innovations driven by data. By constructing a continuous feedback loop from students, the progressive application of web-enhanced modules is measured. The survey provides direction for future possibilities such as online clini- cal evaluations, journal club entries, and discussion boards.

Using Case Studies: Bringing Reality Into the Classroom
Robin DiPietro

A s a new professor, I thought that the original format of the course for HFT 3807 Multi-unit Foodservice Operations was very efficient for teaching the class. I felt that lecturing on the important topics in the textbooks and then talking about the reality of my life in a restaurant setting was helpful. The multi-unit management would be enough for students to learn valuable skills and to gain knowledge of the hospitality industry from the restaurant and foodservice industry perspectives. After selecting a seminar class for the fall, I had to start thinking about the delivery of the course material—did I want the students to learn about the concepts by listening or by active participation?

As I started digging a little deeper into what the main objec- tive for the course was, I realized that I had a lot to learn about effective teaching and learning strategies. The overall course objective for HFT 3807 is to introduce students to the breadth of challenges, possibilities, opportunities and risks in multi-unit restaurant management. In reviewing my syllabus, I was interested in learning more about case study analysis and helping students think more critically rather than incorporating case study analysis or problem-based
Old Dogs CAN Learn New Tricks

Willfried Iskat

After 11 years as Dean and principal lecturer in the Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management at a mid-sized private university, I had found that some of my resources to become comfortable with facilitating learning to a crowd of students at UCF very different from those I had faced at my previous school. The much smaller size of classrooms and numbers of students there had lent itself to a different approach in teaching and communicating with my mostly international student body from over 100 countries. I now was working with a crowd of native English speakers who had grown up in high-tech households.

Initially teaching here felt like jumping onto a train moving at 70 miles per hour. A big part of the transition was learning to deal with all the new technology. Walking into a classroom populated by as many as 70 students, I found myself looking at a teacher’s console equipped with a touch screen control panel, a video player, a DVD player, an overhead document camera, an additional optical mouse and laptop computer access, in addition to the regular computer.

My first teaching assignment as an adjunct was at the Orlando Campus, and included three courses I had requested. Teaching my first class at a modular classroom building with a different electronic key card to enter the classroom required that I bring and connect a laptop and a video projection unit, which diskette did work once I inserted it into the teacher’s console. Some of my students were amazed that their teacher was not fluent with the apparatus; they were far better acquainted with the teaching console and its features than I was. Many of them were willing to show me “the tricks of the trade” so I would learn what overhead strobes were required to connect the laptop computer to the projection unit, which diskette did work and which did not, and I even learned by trial and error that a sideways installed CPU would not be able to handle a mini-CD (because it would fall into the drive unit).

I have found that I was most likely wasting students’ (and my own) time by:

(a) focusing too much on teaching basic skills such as writing,
(b) grading too many assignments, and
(c) not assessing students’ understanding on a regular basis as a means of tailoring my instruction to students’ needs.

One difficulty with the Classroom Learning Principles is that it is really two and half courses in one—histories of human development and principles of learning combined with classroom assessment and classroom management. Because the course content meets certain state standards for teacher licensure, there was little I could do to reduce the amount of content covered. However, I could implement quick methods of formative and summative assessment, along with the judicious use of technology, to help me focus on promoting student understanding, problem solving, and application of material rather than mere memorization of course content.

I re-envisioned the course along the lines of Bloom’s taxon-

How to Cover a Lot in a Little Time

Michele Gregoire Gill

Every semester I ask my students for feedback on how to improve each specific aspect of whatever course I teach, including texts, lectures, activities, exams, projects, papers, and discussions. For my class on Classroom Learning Principles, students consistently stated that they felt too much material was being covered in too little time. I agreed with them, but I didn’t know what to do about this, as the content is a key part of their professional teachers’ licence exam.

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of these information sources is a blog, and an extension of a blog is a podcast.

Podcasts, sometimes referred to as “time-shifted radio,” allow a person or small group of people to record their thoughts, opinions and insights and disperse them to the masses. Anyone with a computer is a potential podcast producer as well as a podcast receiver. In the most basic case, the voice is recorded into a computer with a microphone. The result is converted and compressed to an MP3 file. The distribution tool is RSS, a free, subscription-based feed that allows listeners to receive your podcast whenever they choose.

You, however, could also just post your podcast to your website and allow listeners to stream the audio in using their media player.

The confusion surrounding the term “podcast” is embedded in the name. Many people believe that podcasts can only be played on Apple’s iPod or that they must have some special technology to listen to the file. This is all untrue. Any MP3 player will play an MP3 file. Your computer, and if they own one, download it to their top computer to the projection unit, which diskette did work once I inserted it into the teacher’s console. Some of my students were amazed that their teacher was not fluent with the apparatus; they were far better acquainted with the teaching console and its features than I was. Many of them were willing to show me “the tricks of the trade” so I would learn what overhead strobes were required to connect the laptop computer to the projection unit, which diskette did work and which did not, and I even learned by trial and error that a sideways installed CPU would not be able to handle a mini-CD (because it would fall into the drive unit).

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omy. I expected students to come to class with basic skills, such as writing. For those who lacked these skills, I would recommend a strategy called Revising Prose for their independent review. Next, I would hold students accountable for obtaining a basic understanding of core course content through class readings, mini-lectures, and activities. I decided to use WebCT as an assessment and re-teaching tool, thereby freeing up class time for helping students apply what they were learning to possible teaching situations. I would create a short online quiz for each student to test their knowledge and understanding. I would then use in-class activities and group discussions to help students apply what they were learning to teaching situations. Finally, I would assess higher levels of thinking, such as synthesis and evaluation, through class projects and papers.

However, it was also the addition of formative assessment tech-
Richard A. Ajayi

My primary objectives are to inspire students to learn and to strive for excellence. This leads me to develop a curriculum that focuses on undergraduate education. My aim is to create an environment that fosters learning and growth. I believe that my Scholarship of Teaching and Learning has contributed significantly to this goal.

I have been involved in various research projects that have helped shape my teaching philosophy. For example, I have published several articles in national journals with a SoTL focus, reviewing the effect of online instruction on learning behavior and accomplishments. My research on teaching has focused on assessment and cultural contexts.

I believe that my Scholarship of Teaching and Learning activities have transformed me into a more effective teacher. My involvement in teaching and learning research has been instrumental in my development as a scholar-teachers.

David Brunner

Making music a part of a performing ensemble is an activity that unites both mind and spirit in an authentic and holistic way. My teaching of the choral ensembles at UCF involves the students in ways that unite the three aspects of themselves into one. Singing is a physical activity that coordinates muscles and breath in ways out of the ordinary; the spirit enlivens the performance, the self and the community.

Involving the physical body in movement and vocalization; and stimulating the spirit to feel deeply, all within a holistic way. My teaching of the choral ensembles at UCF is an experience that unites body, mind and spirit in an authentic and significant way.

Dr. Ronnie L. Koresce

My philosophy about teaching is that is should be highly ‘student oriented’. I see myself as a partner in education, and I work hard to help my students succeed. I also believe that the classroom should be a place where students can share experiences, where they are exposed to new and innovative principles, where they are encouraged to use their skills and knowledge to shape future events in a positive, meaningful way.

I rely heavily on interactive methods where students are directly involved in the learning process. Some of these include role-playing, trivia, challenges, collaborative group assignments, debates, and exchanges with practitioners in the field. I am dedicated to teaching models that stress hands-on, real-world applications of skills and knowledge. I have worked hard to find interesting ways of delivering information that is sometimes boring or dry by creating web-based instruction and on-line assignments for students. I also believe that education is a life-long, evolving process, so I am frequently looking for new and better ways to present information. It is my philosophy to provide students with support and encouragement to take risks with their writing while emphasizing the importance of craft. I hope that these practices instill in my students a new understanding of and appreciation for the achievements of the literary artists whose work and lives they study and hope to emulate.

Russ Kesler

One of my goals as a creative writing instructor is to help my students write about literature as writers first, rather than primarily as readers. The focus in their literature courses demands that they approach writing from both theoretical and interpretative perspectives. But in the courses I teach, the students must draw upon their experience while striving for honesty and clarity of expression. The role of reader/interpreter, the mode of interaction with literature with which many students are unaccustomed to, is made more accessible by utilizing the RST format. The students met in the lecture setting once a week and supplemented this traditional instruction with a series of learning modules. The students read and discussed specific literary excerpts and the student-to-content interaction and focused the students’ research and critical thinking skills. Because of our quasi-experimental research design—both course formats had the same instructor, same textbook, and the same exam—we were able to isolate the effects of format on learning outcomes. Our findings showed that, controlling for selection effects (students who signed up for the RST format were more innovative) and gender (junior and senior level students), RST students posted larger gains in substantive course content. Further analysis revealed particularly beneficial effects of the RST format for female students. This mode of computer-mediated instruction—anynchronous learning modules performed by individual students—yielded positive outcomes for all participants, and for female students in particular.

More recently, I have joined Kerstin Hamann and Bruce Wilson in their efforts to identify the most important element of “active learning.” The notion that learning is best achieved through student-to-content interaction, student-to-student, or student-to-instructor interaction. We have been particularly interested in the gender composition of asynchronous online discussion groups, forums in which relatively small numbers of students (groups generally range from 7 to 12 students) interact and discuss course content. Our primary aim is to provide practical insight into how instructors, by determining the composition of these online forums, can achieve optimum pedagogical benefits. In addition to a general interest in describing gender differences in online rhetorical styles, we are also investigating the effects of gender composition on the level and character of student give-and-take within the groups.

The research results thus far have been striking. We found that male and female students, regardless of group size, tend to post relatively short, independent messages that take little account of other students’ inputs. As group composition shifts toward gender parity, however, students engage in longer, more interactiive posts, moderate their use of independent postings, and increase their reliance on direct or indirect interaction. These findings have direct relevance for those who are addressing issues of gender differences in online forums, and may be applicable to other contexts as well.

Student interaction may be an inherently good thing. On the other hand, student discussion may also be less valuable if it is not in some way linked to enhanced student performance in the course. (We have all known in-class “talking” whose exam performance is less than stellar.) So Hamann, Wilson, and I have been examining the connection to the contribution of gender disparities and class participation to student outcomes. The results are interesting. The most “passive” component of active learning, reading fellow students’ online posts, is more strongly predictive of course success than either of the other two components: posting direct responses to group participants, or carrying the discussion farther with in-depth comments. But of course there is a twist. The relationship between discussion group participation and student outcomes is different for males and females. This difference continues to hold even after controlling for major opportunities and major challenges. We hold ourselves to the principle that in the majority of circumstances, both of which we have direct relevance for the way instructors can most fruitfully affect the composition of these online forums, can achieve optimum pedagogical benefits. In addition to a general interest in describing gender differences in online rhetorical styles, we are also investigating the effects of gender composition on the level and character of student give-and-take within the groups.

Technologies Affecting Communication Part II: Podcasts

Matthew Thompson

Mathew Thompson is an Instructor in the Nicholson School of Communication. His main interest is integrated marketing communications, focusing on the use of technology to affect communication. He has published in the National Teaching and Learning Forum on the use of technology to teach in the classroom and was a contributor for the AASCU conference held at UCF in June 2005.

Let me start by saying that since my last article, “Technologies Affecting Communication: RSS Readers,” Microsoft has announced that RSS (Rich Site Summary) feeds will be displayed in Internet Explorer and Outlook by the end of 2005. Some of you might use browsers such as Firefox and Macintosh’s Safari and are accustomed to this technology; however, with Microsoft’s adoption, RSS truly is here to stay.

You may have heard about Duke University’s initiative that distributed free iPods to every first time student entering in the Fall of 2004. They have since cut back their program, and now only give iPods to certain courses that can prove that the technology will enhance student learning. Instructors are finding a variety of ways to utilize the iPods, including the production of “podcasts.”

Many people do not completely understand the technology and wonder how podcasts can be used in a classroom setting. Simplt put, a podcast is a recorded audio file that any user can download to their iPod or computer. You can choose the length of your audio recording and it is distributed through Apple’s iTunes, or it can be published on your website.

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For more information, visit Microsoft’s website and sign up for the RSS Readers (Rich Site Summary) feed. You can find more information about RSS Readers at Microsoft’s website.
The good news is that many faculty members—those giving
swimming lessons—work with energy and imagination
to move their students toward the Bloom’s “SSS” formula.
The relationship between Tom Fleming and his stu-
dents falls into this category. Even more heartening is the fact
that many students intuitively know that they’re being denied
an education and seek out campus experiences that give them
what they need. But that 20 or so percent out there treading
water are shortchanging themselves and future employers
who think they’re getting a good education as well as
perception. And those professors who find it more com-
fortable to demand little of their students are denied the satis-
faction that good teaching affords.

The shift in the expectations of students and faculty mem-
bers began around the time that America learned that college
students made more money than high school graduates—as much as a million dollars more over their working lives. The
mantra became, “If you want an education, then pay for it.”
Old social contract—the idea that education of indi-
viduals is a public good and therefore should in part be pub-
licly financed—is on life support and barely breathing. In-
stead, “Education Pays” is proclaimed on billboards around
Kentucky, encouraging kids to go to college just to nail that
master degree.

Kids arrive on campus determined to major in “business” and
often remain impervious to the efforts of their professors to
expose them to new ideas and new information. Our student
financial aid system supports the “investment in me” approach
by making less money available in the form of grants to needy students, and instead of aiding students in returning
a return on the individual’s investment in themselves. The
message our kids get is that they’re not students; they’re consum-
ers. And if they’re willing to settle for “purchasing” a degree
that means nothing in terms of educational achievement, it’s
their right. It’s their investment. In this environment, pro-
fessors, colleges, and universities are forced to giving
the customers what they want, not necessarily what they
should want.

I admire students who squeeze as much as they can from the
college experience, and I salute the teachers who dedicate
their energies to seeing students succeed. Too much is left to
their students to make the most of their college experience, and I salute the teachers who dedicate
their energies to seeing students succeed. Too much is left to

W what innovative yet practical reforms can enhance stu-
dent learning and student satisfaction? I have not yet
discovered the answer to this question. But thanks to a certain
amount of self-reflection—and a large dose of talented collab-
orization—I have found out where to look and how to conduct
the search. Finding the “where” required that I shift my focus away
from the what to the how—where students were being sub-
learning (or, as was too often the case, not learning). Finding the “how” required that I study my own students and my own
classroom with the same methodological rigor and objectivity
that I would apply to any other interesting social behavior.

About seven years ago, I began to notice a paradoxical trend
among my students in Scope and Methods of Political Sci-
cence (PO30370), a research methods and data analysis course
required of all majors in Political Science. Despite a grow-
sing sophistication in their desktop computing skills, students
displayed a heightened sense of alienation from methods and
a belief that the course was less and less relevant to other sub-
stantive courses in the political science curriculum. What was
going on? There are, I discovered, two key features of how
students learn both methods and substantive courses.
First, although their eyes gleam at the sight of tabular displays of data, they are quite adept
at constructing and interpreting graphical representations of
relationships. Show students a table depicting the huge dif-
gression between the gun control opinions of women and men
and you will get befuddled looks and collective yawns. Show
them a bar chart of the same information and the gender gap
should come into focus. Second, students actually learn quite well in a more or less self-paced, step-by-step tutorial fashion. Despite
our best efforts to make the classroom an open forum, receptive
to different ideas and counter examples, some students
ply will never speak up. But give them access to an online
module or tutorial and they will take much fuller advantage of
the material you have to offer. These two basic observa-
tions about my students—they can learn better with graphics,
and they can learn (some things) better self-paced—led me
to develop a series of Web-based modules. In the earliest of
these, students used Excel to perform data analysis and create
graphic output. Later, they learned to use SPSS, perhaps
the most widely available data analysis package in education and
business. Students’ satisfaction increased, as did their suc-
cessful acquisition of important required skills.

“the important thing is not to stop questioning.”
—Albert Einstein

Spring 2006 Course Innovation Project
The Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning is calling for
the submission of proposals by any UCF faculty member who has an interest in improving a course. Our Spring CIPs will
occur on the Orlando, Daytona, Cocoa, and Rosen campus
es. Faculty will participate in several workshops (12 contact hours) and receive support from staff in the Faculty Center
and other support units as they develop new approaches and
materials for their courses.

These workshops will include a series of hands-on experienc-
es designed to help explore teaching techniques and learning
activities that have been proven to be effective. Faculty will
complete the workshops, produce a final project for publica-
tion, and write a short article for the Faculty Focus. Faculty
will receive a $500 stipend for full participation. All applica-
tions will be evaluated using the following criteria: project fo-
cus, viability and project benefit to the University, and specific
plans for accountability of outcomes.

For more information and to download an application, visit
<http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/events/courseinnovation>.
Faculty Focus

Volume 4  Number 4  October 2005

Submissions
The Faculty Focus is a publication for all instructors at the University of Central Florida. This includes full- and part-time faculty at all UCF campuses. Its purpose is to provide an exchange of ideas on teaching and learning for the university’s community of teachers and scholars. This represents an opportunity for faculty to reach their peers throughout the growing UCF community. The Faculty Focus invites you to contribute your ideas on teaching and learning in a short essay.

See the guidelines for submission online at <http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/publications/focus/guidelines.htm>. Publication dates will be the middle of the first and last full months of each semester, and submission deadlines will be the Friday of the week prior. MLA format is preferred. Please send your submissions to Faculty Focus, fctl@mail.ucf.edu.

Check us out online!
www.fctl.ucf.edu

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Faculty Focus is a publication for all instructors at the University of Central Florida. This includes full- and part-time faculty at all UCF campuses. Its purpose is to provide an exchange of ideas on teaching and learning for the university’s community of teachers and scholars. This represents an opportunity for faculty to reach their peers throughout the growing UCF community. The Faculty Focus invites you to contribute your ideas on teaching and learning in a short essay.

See the guidelines for submission online at <http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/publications/focus/guidelines.htm>. Publication dates will be the middle of the first and last full months of each semester, and submission deadlines will be the Friday of the week prior. MLA format is preferred. Please send your submissions to Faculty Focus, fctl@mail.ucf.edu.

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- Declining by Degrees
  John Merrow

John Merrow, president of Learning Matters Inc. and a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, produced the documentary “Declining by Degrees: Higher Education at Risk.” To learn more, go to <http://www.decliningbydegrees.org>.

Carnegie Perspectives is a series of commentaries that explore different ways to think about educational issues. These pieces are presented with the hope that they contribute to the conversation. You can respond directly to the author at <CarnegiePresident@carnegiefoundation.org> or you can join a public discussion at Carnegie Conversations. This article is reprinted with permission.

O
t all the students I met during nearly two years of working on our PBS documentary about higher education, I continue to be intrigued by a sophomore named Nate. After proudly proclaiming that he was maintaining a 3.4 GPA despite studying less than an hour a night, he wondered aloud, “It’s not supposed to be this easy, is it? Shouldn’t college be challenging?” Nate was one of the more enlightened students that we interviewed.

He talked about his “boring” classes, including an English class he described as “a brain dump.” We sat in on that class. The teacher had assigned students to write parodies of “The Road Not Taken,” knowing that to do the assignment well, they would have to read and understand Frost’s poem. She was meeting students at their level... and trying to push them to go beyond it, attempting to move them out of their “intellectual comfort zone” and lead them in new directions. Tough job, because Nate and undoubtedly most of his classmates had obviously NOT read the assignment. Nate had succeeded in high school by figuring out what was going to be on his tests and doing as little as possible. And since that approach also got him into college and was now earning him a solid B average, he saw no reason to change. Ask Nate the purpose of college, and he would probably say something about “getting a good job.” The learning part wasn’t necessarily what he was paying good money for.

Although we found this English class stimulating, we could see how frustrating it became for the teacher because of the lack of student-directed engagement and motivation. In this case, the students’ expectations didn’t match the professor’s. Teaching becomes a difficult transaction when students expect to get the diploma that they pay for without caring whether they learn anything in the process. The situation is made more difficult because professors begin classroom teaching at a disadvantage. Few have any training in how to teach. We were very impressed by Tom Fleming, a senior lecturer at the University of Arizona, who took advantage of a faculty development course offered by his institution on teaching theory and effective practices.

Using technology in a huge lecture hall, he deftly engaged students, allowing very few to merely get by. College used to be a “sink or swim” environment, but today, either colleges are giving much-needed “swimming lessons”—investing in student success—or they’re allowing students to “tread water,” giving decent grades for very little work. In the first case, students actually receive an education; in the second, they merely get a degree. It’s all too easy for some students and faculty members to settle into a pattern of behavior that looks like an unspoken “non-aggression treaty,” in which professors don’t ask much of students and the students don’t expect much from their professors (as long as they get A’s and B’s).